

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

FIFTY-SIXTH PARLIAMENT

FIRST SESSION

WRITTEN ADJOURNMENT RESPONSES

Tuesday, 2 February 2010

(Extract from book 1)

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By authority of the Victorian Government Printer

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The Lieutenant-Governor

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Privileges Committee — Ms Darveniza, Mr D. Davis, Mr Drum, Mr Jennings, Ms Mikakos, Ms Pennicuik and Mr Rich-Phillips.

Select Committee on Train Services — Mr Atkinson, Mr Barber, Mr Drum, Ms Huppert, Mr Leane, Mr O'Donohue and Mr Viney.

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Standing Orders Committee — The President, Mr Dalla-Riva, Mr D. Davis, Mr Hall, Mr Lenders, Ms Pennicuik and Mr Viney.

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Parliamentary Services — Secretary: Dr S. O'Kane

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FIFTY-SIXTH PARLIAMENT — FIRST SESSION

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Kronberg, Mrs Janice Susan	Eastern Metropolitan	LP	Viney, Mr Matthew Shaw	Eastern Victoria	ALP
			Vogels, Mr John Adrian	Western Victoria	LP

¹ Appointed 3 February 2009

² Resigned 9 January 2009

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WRITTEN ADJOURNMENT RESPONSES

Responses have been incorporated in the form supplied by the departments on behalf of the appropriate ministers.

Tuesday, 2 February 2010

Williamstown Cricket Ground: redevelopment

Raised with: Minister for Sport, Recreation and Youth Affairs

Raised by: Mr Pakula

Raised on: 5 February 2008

REPLY:

At the time the Adjournment matter was raised, the Victorian Government was considering financial support to assist in improving the quality of, and broadening community access to VFL venues.

The 2008-09 State Budget allocated \$10 million to the Improving Community Access to VFL Grounds Program.

Key objectives of this program are to assist in the establishment of:

- More economically sustainable VFL football clubs;
- Higher quality competition with talent pathways to elite levels and community football, from juniors through to seniors;
- Improved infrastructure in suburban growth areas and regional Victoria; and
- Improved community access to VFL grounds and increased opportunities to participate in community life.

On 27 May 2008 I approved a \$3 million grant from the Improving Community Access to VFL Grounds Program to the City of Hobsons Bay for the redevelopment of facilities at the Williamstown Cricket Ground.

Albert Park, Warrnambool: trail network

Raised with: Minister for Sport, Recreation and Youth Affairs

Raised by: Ms Tierney

Raised on: 5 February 2008

REPLY:

At the time the Adjournment matter was raised Warrnambool City Council had submitted one application to the 2008/2009 Community Facility Funding Program (CFFP)—Minor Facilities category requesting \$60,000 for the Albert Park Trail Network-Stage 1 project.

In March 2008, following the assessment of applications to the CFFP—Minor Facilities category, I approved a grant of \$60,000 to Warrnambool City Council for the Albert Park Trail Network-Stage 1 project.

Chiltern: skate park

Raised with: Minister for Sport, Recreation and Youth Affairs

Raised by: Ms Darveniza

Raised on: 6 February 2008

REPLY:

At the time the Adjournment matter was raised Indigo Shire Council had submitted one application to the 2008/09 Community Facilities Funding Program (CFFP)–Minor Facilities category requesting \$57,000 for the development of Chiltern Skate Park.

In March 2008, following the assessment of applications to the 2008/09 CFFP–Minor Facilities category, I approved a CFFP grant of \$57,000 to Indigo Shire Council for the development of Chiltern Skate Park.

Aireys Inlet tennis club: facilities

Raised with: Minister for Sport, Recreation and Youth Affairs

Raised by: Ms Tierney

Raised on: 11 March 2008

REPLY:

At the time the Adjournment matter was raised Surf Coast Shire Council had submitted an application to the 2008/2009 Community Facility Funding Program (CFFP)–Minor Facilities category requesting \$51,460 for the Aireys Inlet Tennis Courts Upgrade project.

In March 2008, following the assessment of applications to the 2008/2009 Community Facility Funding Program–Minor Facilities category I approved a \$51,460 grant to the Surf Coast Shire Council for the Aireys Inlet Tennis Courts Upgrade project.

Brimbank: sporting facilities

Raised with: Minister for Sport, Recreation and Youth Affairs

Raised by: Mr Pakula

Raised on: 8 April 2008

REPLY:

At the time the Adjournment matter was raised, Brimbank City Council had submitted three applications for funding through the Drought Relief for Community Sport and Recreation Program (DRCSR).

Following the assessment of applications to the DRCSR, I approved DRCSR grants to the Brimbank City Council for the following projects:

- \$11,130 for the Brimbank Sportsground Warm Season Grass Conversion Program-Baseball project;
- \$29,108 for the Brimbank Sportsground Warm Season Grass Conversion Program-Cricket project; and
- \$32,120 for the Brimbank Sportsground Warm Season Grass Conversion Program-Soccer project.

Indigo: sporting facilities

Raised with: Minister for Sport, Recreation and Youth Affairs

Raised by: Ms Darveniza

Raised on: 16 April 2008

REPLY:

At the time the Adjournment matter was raised, applications to the Drought Relief for Community Sport and Recreation Program (DRCSRP) had been submitted by the Indigo Shire Council.

On 29 April 2008, following the assessment of applications to the DRCSRP, I approved grants to the Indigo Shire Council for the following projects:

- \$24,400 for the Coulston Park-Installation of Bore and Infrastructure project; and
- \$40,000 for the Barnawartha Recreation Reserve-Installation of Automatic Irrigation and Bore Systems project

Golden Plains: sporting facilities

Raised with: Minister for Sport, Recreation and Youth Affairs

Raised by: Ms Tierney

Raised on: 17 April 2008

REPLY:

At the time the Adjournment matter was raised, applications to the Drought Relief for Community Sport and Recreation Program (DRCSRP) had been submitted by the Golden Plains Shire Council.

On 29 April 2008, following the assessment of applications to the DRCSRP, I approved grants to the Golden Plains Shire Council for the following projects:

- \$20,000 for the Inverleigh Sporting Complex Irrigation project;
- \$40,000 for the Linton Recreation Reserve Water Storage and Irrigation project; and
- \$40,000 for the Woody Yaloak Recreation Reserve Water Storage and Sprinkler Irrigation project.

West Preston Cricket Club: funding

Raised with: Minister for Sport, Recreation and Youth Affairs

Raised by: Mr Elasmarr

Raised on: 8 May 2008

REPLY:

At the time the Adjournment matter was raised, the West Preston Cricket Club had submitted an application for funding under the *Emergency Grant: Sporting and Recreational Equipment Program*.

This Program provides assistance to local sport and recreation clubs and organisations to replace essential sports and first aid equipment lost or destroyed due to unpreventable or exceptional events.

The West Preston Cricket Club was subsequently successful in obtaining a grant of \$1,138.00 to replace the stolen equipment.

Housing: Heathdale neighbourhood renewal project

Raised with: Minister for Sport, Recreation and Youth Affairs

Raised by: Mr Pakula

Raised on: 27 May 2008

REPLY:

At the time the Adjournment matter was raised, a funding application for the Heathdale Active Places project, led by Heathdale YMCA and located within the Heathdale Neighbourhood Renewal project area had been submitted to Sport and Recreation Victoria and was under assessment.

In June 2008, funding of \$80,000 was approved to this project.

The Heathdale Active Places project commenced in July 2008 and will run through until June 2010 with an aim to increase participation levels in physical activity, as well as community engagement among Heathdale residents.

Warrnambool: football and netball facilities

Raised with: Minister for Sport, Recreation and Youth Affairs

Raised by: Ms Tierney

Raised on: 21 August 2008

REPLY:

At the time the Adjournment matter was raised, the Warrnambool City Council had submitted an application to the Victorian Government's Country Football and Netball Program for the Old Collegians Football Netball Club project.

On 1 September 2008, following the assessment of applications I approved a \$60,000 grant for the Old Collegians Football Netball Club project.

Altona Primary School: bike shed

Raised with: Minister for Sport, Recreation and Youth Affairs

Raised by: Mr Pakula

Raised on: 10 September 2008

REPLY:

At the time the Adjournment matter was raised on 10 September 2008 regarding Altona Primary School's application for a 'Go for your life' Bike Shed Seeding Grant, applications for these grants were being assessed by the Department of Planning and Community Development, Sport and Recreation Victoria.

The Bike Shed Seeding Grant program is part of the broader 'Go for your life' Flagship Bike Plan to which the Government has allocated funding of \$2.9 million over four years (2006-10). Altona Primary School's application was successful and the school received a grant under this program in October 2008.

Lakes Entrance Surf Life Saving Club: funding

Raised with: Minister for Sport, Recreation and Youth Affairs

Raised by: Mr Hall

Raised on: 15 October 2008

REPLY:

At the time the Adjournment matter was raised East Gippsland Shire Council had not submitted an application to the Community Facilities Funding Program (CFFP) to develop facilities at the Lakes Entrance Surf Life Saving Club.

I have been informed that the Lakes Entrance Surf Life Saving Club has since been successful in receiving funding from Regional Development Victoria for the project.

Melbourne to Warrnambool Cycling Classic: funding

Raised with: Minister for Sport, Recreation and Youth Affairs

Raised by: Mr Vogels

Raised on: 30 October 2008

REPLY:

I refer to the matter you raised in the Legislative Council on Thursday 30 October 2008 regarding State Government support for the Melbourne to Warrnambool Cycling Classic.

The Victorian Government is committed to developing the sport of cycling in Victoria. For several years, the Government has supported the staging of cycling events such as the UCI Women's World Cup, and will continue to support the sport through the UCI Track Cycling World Cup (2008–2010), the 2010 UCI Road Cycling World Championships, and the Jayco Herald Sun Tour which showcases the very best of provincial Victoria.

The Victorian Government also provides funding opportunities for events and activities that provide significant economic impact to Victoria and broad media exposure of Victoria in interstate and international markets.

In addition, Tourism Victoria and Regional Development Victoria currently provide funding to support the staging of a number of other cycling events held across regional Victoria.

At the grass roots level, Sport and Recreation Victoria provides funding through the *Supporting Grassroots Sport Program* to Cyclesport Victoria for a recreational cycling club, Club Cycloportif (CCS).

At this stage, the Melbourne to Warrnambool Cycling Classic has not qualified for funding under the existing funding programs.

Rail: level crossing safety

Raised with: Minister for Public Transport

Raised by: Mr Drum

Raised on: 4 December 2008

REPLY:

The report you have cited refers to a presentation by Mr Spicer of the Department of Transport to RoadSafe 2008, a conference involving Victorian RoadSafe Community Road Safety Councils and road industry stakeholders.

Mr Spicer's paper included reference to a convention which applies throughout Australia regarding the application of new and/or updated Standards. Your assertion that Mr Spicer stated that 93 per cent of all railway crossing safety

signs and road markings are not up to the standards set by the Government was an inaccurate assessment of the point made by Mr Spicer. As is accepted practice and convention, signs and road markings comply with the Standards applicable at the time they were installed. Practice and convention requires these signs and road markings be upgraded to the current standard when the existing signs are replaced, when road marking is again undertaken or when major works are undertaken at the railway level crossing concerned.

The Government has been very active in rail safety with considerable resources committed to upgrading level crossings throughout Victoria. In 2007, the State Government introduced amendments to the *Rail Safety Act 2006*, which become effective on 1 July 2010. These amendments make it mandatory for road and rail authorities to liaise on the content of formal railway crossing safety interface agreements, which clearly identify risk mitigation obligations and responsibilities for safety management at rail/road interfaces. This amendment reinforces the need for road and rail operators to coordinate their activities so that both can reduce the safety risk at level crossings.

Australian Level Crossing Assessment Model (ALCAM) risk assessments of all public road and pedestrian crossings were completed in Victoria in 2007. ALCAM field surveys are now being repeated once every five years and are also being conducted on approximately 1,450 'occupation and private' crossings throughout Victoria. This will guide maintenance and upgrade programs into the future.

These measures are in addition to the \$33.2 million package of railway crossing safety initiatives announced by the State Government in July 2007. In December 2008, the State Government released *The Victorian Transport Plan* which includes a funding commitment of \$440 million for grade separations, starting at Springvale Road, Nunawading. The State and Federal Governments are working closely with the City of Whitehorse to deliver the project by early 2010.

In addition, the Parliamentary Road Safety Committee released its report, *Inquiry into Improving Safety at Level Crossings*, on 18 December 2008. The report contained a total of 54 recommendations covering progress reporting, the uniformity of safety standards and the introduction of new and developing technologies. The Government response was tabled in Parliament on 18 June 2009. A total of 51 of the 54 recommendations were fully supported, supported in principle, or supported in part.

The State Government will continue to work to address the issues identified in the three recommendations that were not supported. An action plan containing an ongoing status report on all 54 recommendations has been prepared and will be progressed at the monthly Railway Crossing Technical Group meetings and the quarterly Victorian Railway Crossing Safety Steering Committee (VRCSSC) meetings, commencing in November 2009. Each of the 54 recommendations will remain on the action plan until such time as the VRCSSC is satisfied that the action has been addressed.

Roads: Footscray tunnel

Raised with: Minister for Roads and Ports

Raised by: Ms Hartland

Raised on: 5 February 2009

REPLY:

The Government recently announced a \$10 million planning and consultation study to determine the best route for WestLink and to work with the community on the best way to build the road while reducing impacts on houses and delivering improvements to the local area.

The study will be managed by Linking Melbourne Authority whose senior staff attended the rally in Footscray on 21 November 2009 to hear the views expressed on the day. In addition, these staff members have had lengthy meetings with both groups involved in the rally and are aware of their concerns.

While the general study area for the project was identified in the *Victorian Transport Plan*, a detailed planning and consultation program is needed to determine the exact location of the road and tunnel. The community would

expect, and legislation requires, the Government to undertake a thorough assessment of the social, environmental and economic impacts and benefits of the project. This must happen before the project route is finalised and any suggestion the Government develop and release a project route earlier is inconsistent with the established planning processes for large infrastructure projects like WestLink.

It should also be noted that it is incorrect to suggest that formal acquisition notices have been issued for WestLink. Further, there is no suggestion the entrance to the tunnel (which would include the ventilation system) will be located in Seddon. The project route will be determined during the two year planning and consultation study that has just commenced, with potential route options to be released to the community for comment by the middle of next year.

Melbourne's west will be home to an additional 375,000 people by 2026—that's more than one and a half times the size of Geelong. The expansion of the Port will double the number of freight movements on both road and rail. The Government's *Victorian Transport Plan* responds to these challenges by investing in our public transport system, our roads and bike paths.

Eltham: roads and bridges

Raised with: Minister for Roads and Ports

Raised by: Mrs Kronberg

Raised on: 11 March 2009

REPLY:

I am informed that as at the date, the question was raised:

Just as Victorians are preparing their properties for this fire season, VicRoads is also getting ready, working with the Country Fire Authority (CFA), Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) and local councils to clear roadsides.

The extent of our fire prevention work on roadsides does vary, depending on the local conditions and surrounding environment.

Our major activity is cutting or slashing vegetation at least three metres behind the line of the guideposts on most arterial roads where conditions allow. This aims to reduce the risk of vehicles or drivers igniting fires, for example from vehicle exhausts, discarded cigarettes or a crash.

This work is prioritised and undertaken in accordance with both the municipal fire prevention plans, agreed with local councils and the CFA, and the CFA's roadside fire management guidelines.

This clearing has been carried out on Research Warrandyte Road, Kangaroo-Ground Warrandyte Road, Eltham Yarra Glen Road, Yan Yean Road, Kurrak Road, Heidelberg Kinglake Road, Kangaroo Ground St Andrews Road, and Greensborough Highway in November and December 2009. We will continue to inspect the area as part of our maintenance routine over the summer months. There is only some minor outstanding weed control works to be completed by early February 2010.

Recognising the high traffic numbers using the major freeways and highways across the state, VicRoads has carried out extra grass cutting on routes like Greensborough Highway, cutting grass right up to the fence line.

We're also focusing additional efforts on preparing for the fire season, carrying out additional clearing on the entrance and exit roads serving communities in higher fire risk towns across Victoria.

VicRoads will continue to work with all the relevant organisations to carry out activities under the interim arrangements put in place by the Victorian Government during this fire season.

We will also work with CFA, DSE and local councils to implement any recommendations on roadside clearing arising from the Victorian Bushfire Royal Commission in the future.

Deakin Reserve, Shepparton: lighting

Raised with: Minister for Sport, Recreation and Youth Affairs

Raised by: Ms Darveniza

Raised on: 29 July 2009

REPLY:

At the time the Adjournment matter was raised, the City of Greater Shepparton had submitted an application to the Victorian Government's Country Football and Netball Program for the Deakin Reserve Netball Court Upgrade-Shepparton and Shepparton United Football Netball Clubs project.

Following the assessment of applications I approved a \$15,000 grant for the Deakin Reserve Netball Court Upgrade project.

Caulfield Racecourse: water pollution

Raised with: Minister for Environment and Climate Change

Raised by: Mrs Coote

Raised on: 29 July 2009

REPLY:

Thank you for your Adjournment debate matter, raised by your constituent Mr Frank Penhalluriak, about stormwater management at Caulfield Racecourse.

EPA has been working cooperatively with the Melbourne Racing Club (MRC) to ensure the improvement of the stable waste and stormwater management practices at the Racecourse.

Wastewater from the Racecourse facilities is discharged to sewer in accordance with a Trade Waste Agreement with South East Water Limited. While some of the stables are connected to sewer or have a closed stormwater system, stormwater from other stables and hard stand areas discharges to the Glen Eira City Council Stormwater drainage system.

MRC recognises the need for structural improvements to internal stormwater collection and reuse systems and is progressively implementing these improvements.

MRC have issued Notices to Trainers outlining the legal obligations of stable occupiers to prevent stable wastes and contaminants from entering the stormwater system. Individual trainers, as the 'occupiers' of their Caulfield Racecourse stable complexes, are responsible for preventing pollution from their premises and ensuring the provisions of the Environment Protection Act 1970 are met.

The Victorian Amateur Turf Club (incorporating the MRC) is also participating in EPA's Environment and Resource Efficiency Plans (EREP) program. Key actions identified in the approved EREP will be implemented to improve the efficiency of water and energy using activities and minimise waste generation at the Racecourse.

EPA is satisfied that MRC's proactive approach to reviewing current practices at the Racecourse and investigating best practice stormwater and waste management options is appropriate to meet their responsibilities under relevant State environment protection policies.

EPA does not specifically regulate this industry, but will continue to work with MRC to ensure that appropriate action is taken to protect the environment.

RSL Tongala: funding

Raised with: Premier

Raised by: Ms Lovell

Raised on: 1 September 2009

REPLY:

Thank you for your question in the Adjournment Debate of the Legislative Council on 1 September 2009.

Provision of these funds is governed by a single funding agreement with the RSL State Branch to fund work in 20 RSL local branches around the state to ensure that they are of an acceptable standard for use by the wider community use. This includes meeting all relevant health and safety standards.

The RSL has appointed a state wide project manager to manage implementation across the state. The project management costs as negotiated between the RSL and its project manager are entirely appropriate and relate to insurance, design, building permit fees and site staff and vehicles.

There will be no duplication of work for this project. The RSL State Branch is reviewing the works required at the Tongala Sub-Branch, and a revised project plan will be developed in consultation with the Sub-Branch and the Department of Planning and Community Development.

Liquor: licences

Raised with: Minister for Consumer Affairs

Raised by: Mrs Coote

Raised on: 2 September 2009

REPLY:

The Brumby Labor Government has responded to community concerns about licensed premises and has given local councils power to consider:

- the impact on the amenity of the surrounding area, and
- the cumulative impact of any existing and the proposed liquor licence, the hours of operation and number of patrons on the amenity of the area

Clause 52.27 requires a planning permit to use land to sell or consume liquor if any of the following apply:

- A licence is required under the *Liquor Control Reform Act 1998*.
- A different licence, or class of licence is required from that which is in force.
- The hours of trading allowed under any licence are to be extended.

A database of all current liquor licences is available online on the Department of Justice website and is accessible to the public. A register of new liquor licence applications is also available online. The register is updated weekly and contains information in relation to applications for new licences, variations to existing licences and the relocation of existing licences.

Since releasing the *Victorian Alcohol Action Plan* in May last year, the Brumby Labor Government has:

- Funded the recruitment of 120 additional police, over and above the Government's commitment of 350 more police this term.
- Introduced the Compliance Directorate, a dedicated squad of liquor licensing inspectors to enforce Victoria's liquor laws.
- Granted police powers to ban troublemakers from designated areas.
- Granted police and the Director of Liquor Licensing stronger powers to act more quickly to shut down problem venues.
- Doubled penalties imposed on licensees for breaches of liquor laws.
- Introduced tough new weapons laws.

The Coalition has refused to support the Brumby Labor Government's measures to promote public safety, including:

- Powers to ban dangerous and anti-social drink promotions.
- Stronger powers for the Director of Liquor Licensing to close down problem venues.
- Police powers to issue banning notices to immediately remove troublemakers from venues and entertainment precincts.

Ambulance services: south-eastern suburbs

Raised with: Minister for Health

Raised by: Mr Rich-Phillips

Raised on: 3 September 2009

REPLY:

Improving timely transfer of patients between ambulance service and emergency departments is a priority for the Government.

The Government has boosted recurrent funding for health services by 130%, and recruited an additional 3,150 doctors and 10,516 nurses.

Last year's Budget provided a \$186 million boost to ambulance services to deliver 59 new and upgraded services and recruit 258 additional paramedics. For the residents in the South Eastern suburbs, this has delivered additional services in Patterson Lakes, Frankston, Berwick, Hallam, Dandenong, Pakenham and Beaconsfield.

In December 2008, I announced a \$321.5 million beds package which included:

- \$34 million per year for 100 acute beds;
- \$10 million per year for four ICU and two NICU beds;
- \$31 million per year for 170 sub-acute beds; and
- \$10 million per year for diversion programs for emergency department and short stay capacity, community based rehabilitation and additional ED diversion under the hospital admission risk program.

This package will treat extra patients by improving bed access and patient flows with a balanced investment of acute, sub-acute and critical care beds. Southern Health received \$12.7M for an extra 23 acute beds and 28 sub-acute beds as part of this package.

In addition, the 2009-10 Budget provides \$237.1 million over four years to meet growth in emergency department demand and critical care services, providing capacity to treat an additional 30,000 patients each year in emergency departments.

Women: political representation

Raised with: Minister for Women's Affairs

Raised by: Mrs Coote

Raised on: 15 September 2009

REPLY:

I write in response to the matter raised during the Adjournment Debate in the Legislative Assembly on 15 September 2009.

I thank you for your interest in and support for women's representation in the Victorian Parliament.

I note that there are currently 40 women in the 56th Victorian Parliament, of which 27 or 67.5% are Labor. 10 are from the Victorian Liberals, 2 are from the Victorian National Party.

Suicide intervention: Avoca program

Raised with: Minister for Mental Health

Raised by: Mr Vogels

Raised on: 16 September 2009

REPLY:

Every life is precious, so any death by suicide is a tragic event. This government is committed to implementing initiatives to prevent suicide and to assist those who are affected by suicide. These can vary from multi-level statewide programs addressing multiple risk factors, through to targeted local community awareness programs.

The CORES (Community Response to Eliminating Suicide) program is an example of local communities coming together to promote awareness about suicide and address concerns about its impact. Programs like CORES are often sustained by community interest and supported by local community services and infrastructure.

In accord with the National Suicide Prevention Plan (LIFE—Living is for everyone), all programs that address suicide issues, including local initiatives, need to be evidence-based and subject to independent evaluation. We must be sure that funded programs are effective and do no harm.

While there are many factors that contribute to a person taking their own life, people who suicide are more likely to have a mental illness such as clinical depression, behavioural disorders or bipolar disorder and psychotic disorders. In light of this, the Victorian Government is a major funding partner of beyondblue: the national depression initiative, which is focused on increasing our understanding as to how depression can be recognised and responded to early.

The government has also provided funding for the implementation of ASIST (Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training) and Mental Health First Aid suicide prevention training for staff in various sectors such as mental health

services and schools. These programs have been tailored to the needs of different groups including young people and those working in Indigenous communities.

Crisis Support Service funding is provided for SuicideLine Victoria telephone counselling service and Lifeline for regional telephone counselling services in Southwest, Gippsland, Geelong, Central Victoria and Mallee regions.

I encourage the CORES program to discuss how they can link into, and work with, other local initiatives including primary care and community and mental health services in suicide prevention. For example, the work of community health services in providing counselling and support services within drought affected communities would be an important link.

Promoting mental health and wellbeing is a key reform area of *Because Mental Health Matters: Victorian Mental Health Reform Strategy 2009-2019* and attests to Victoria's commitment to suicide prevention. A Strategy implementation plan is currently under development that will further strengthen initiatives specifically targeted at reducing rates of suicide in rural communities.

Bendigo Senior Secondary College: redevelopment

Raised with: Minister for Education

Raised by: Ms Lovell

Raised on: 17 September 2009

REPLY:

I am informed as follows:

Since the 2007-08 State budget the Victorian Government has committed over \$63 million towards the Bendigo Education Plan. This development will provide four brand new junior secondary colleges for the Bendigo district. These projects will make a significant contribution towards improving educational outcomes for the Bendigo community.

As part of the Commonwealth-funded Building the Education Revolution (BER) program, Bendigo Senior Secondary College has been allocated \$1.97 million towards the establishment of a language centre under the *Science and Language Centres for 21st Century Secondary Schools* program, up to \$10 million towards the development of the Bendigo Trades Training Centre and a further \$200,000 to upgrade school facilities under round one of the *National School Pride* program. This is a massive commitment to the future of students at Bendigo Senior Secondary College.

A master plan had been developed for the Bendigo Senior Secondary College site to incorporate the adjoining former Bendigo gaol into the school site. With the recent inclusion of the federally funded projects, this master plan will be reassessed to incorporate these new projects.

City of Latrobe: conflict of interest

Raised with: Minister for Local Government

Raised by: Mr P. Davis

Raised on: 17 September 2009

REPLY:

I refer to the matter raised in the Adjournment debate of the Legislative Council on 17 September 2009 in which Mr Philip Davis expressed concerns about the actions of Councillor Lisa Price, the then Mayor of Latrobe City Council.

The Local Government Inspectorate is currently investigating the matter.

Government: advertising

Raised with: Attorney-General

Raised by: Mr Koch

Raised on: 13 October 2009

REPLY:

This matter does not fall within my portfolio responsibilities as Attorney-General. The Department of Premier and Cabinet is responsible for the *Guidelines for Victorian Government Advertising and Communication*.

Schools: Seymour

Raised with: Minister for Education

Raised by: Mrs Petrovich

Raised on: 13 October 2009

REPLY:

I am informed as follows:

The four current school councils in Seymour have each agreed to merge into a single school entity. This was approved by the Minister in August 2009.

Prior to this decision, extensive consultation regarding the regeneration project was undertaken with the four schools, school councils and community organisations through community stakeholder days and meetings, and combined school council meetings.

All four schools consulted with their communities through school council meetings, regular newsletter articles, parent club information sessions and regular staff meetings.

A 'Regeneration Bus', located in the central Seymour shopping precinct during Education Week and staffed by the schools' principals, provided the broader community with an opportunity to view the first draft of the proposal and provide public comment. This was then passed onto the Seymour Regeneration governance board for consideration.

A community meeting was held on 25 May 2009 and presentations were given to a number of Seymour community organisations including the University of the Third Age, and Rotary and Lions clubs.

The Seymour Regeneration project executive officer, governance board and Departmental staff from the Hume regional office have met with concerned community members to obtain feedback and to hear viewpoints.

The four current school councils are presently considering formal motions of:

- the official merger date of 12 July 2010;
- the size and configuration of an interim school council;
- the size and configuration of the elected school council; and
- the date of the first school council election.

The Victorian Government has taken the opportunity to provide an additional \$4.15 million Victorian Schools Plan funding to the Economic Stimulus Plan allocations of \$6.82 million. The total funding package of \$10.97 million can deliver stage one development of the Seymour Regeneration project providing an administration complex and P-4 learning community.

During construction of stage one, planned to commence in June 2010, Seymour Primary School will relocate to the Seymour East Primary School site and both schools will operate on this one site in tandem. At the completion of stage one construction, both Seymour Primary School and Seymour East Primary School will move to the merged site, into the new facilities.

Further stages of construction will be considered in future budget cycles.

West Gate punt: access

Raised with: Minister for Roads and Ports

Raised by: Ms Hartland

Raised on: 14 October 2009

REPLY:

The Brumby Government recognises the importance of cycling as part of Victoria's transport solution. To support this, the Government has allocated \$115 million to improving cyclist access in Melbourne and regional areas under the \$38 billion *Victorian Transport Plan*. In Melbourne's west, the aim is to improve cycling access between the western suburbs and to the Footscray Central Activity District, the Melbourne CBD and other key destinations.

In October 2005, Bicycle Victoria initiated a three month trial of a weekday punt service. The City of Hobsons Bay extended the trial until June 2006 with additional funding from the Cities of Melbourne, Port Phillip and Maribyrnong and Parks Victoria. An evaluation of the trial conducted by those funding it found that the service did not attract sufficient users to justify its continuation. On this basis, re-introduction of the weekday service is not supported at this time and the Department of Transport is not aware of any interest from local municipalities wanting to conduct trials in the near future.

Conscious of the importance of cycling in the west, VicRoads is working with Bicycle Victoria and the Cities of Hobsons Bay and Maribyrnong to extend the Federation Trail at Millers Road (Brooklyn) to Hyde Street in Yarraville. Under the *Victorian Cycling Strategy*, \$9.2 million was allocated to extend the trail to Williamstown Road, Yarraville. Completion of the trail to Hyde Street is a priority under *The Victorian Transport Plan* and is to be implemented as part of the *Truck Action Plan*.

In October 2009, the \$3.7 million shared path along Hyde Street, Somerville Road, Whitehall Street and Moreland Street was completed to connect Williamstown with the Melbourne CBD via the Footscray Road shared path. Widening Shepherd Bridge on Footscray Road will also occur under the *Truck Action Plan*.

Working Victoria: website

Raised with: Minister for Skills and Workforce Participation

Raised by: Mr Leane

Raised on: 14 October 2009

REPLY:

I am informed as follows:

The Working Victoria website provides a comprehensive list of all the Government capital works right across the state and highlights to the community activities under way in their local area.

It is a very good reference source for construction companies, contractors and tradespeople to understand the Government projects that are in progress and those yet to be tendered.

While the website is not specifically designed to be a job site, it does provide jobseekers with information on contracted projects so that they can enquire about job prospects directly with the contracted company using the contact details provided.

The Working Victoria website has been promoted to the general community since August this year through television and on line media.

It has also been promoted more specifically to businesses through a range of free business road shows and seminars which are being rolled out in both the regional and metropolitan areas.

In November, the Victorian Government added to the Working Victoria website direct links to the Government's Tenders and Construction Supplier Register in order to make it easier for businesses to find out information about current Government tender opportunities and to register their interest.

Recently, a direct link to the Industry Capability Network (ICN) Regional Industry Link program was included on the Working Victoria website. The Regional Industry Link is a Government funded and state-wide initiative that encourages local businesses to register their interest and capabilities for projects. With registration, businesses will receive automatic notification of opportunities where their skills and capabilities are required.

Donburn Primary School: building project

Raised with: Minister for Education

Raised by: Mrs Kronberg

Raised on: 14 October 2009

REPLY:

I am informed as follows:

Donburn Primary School received \$150,000 for a covered outdoor learning area under the National School Pride program and \$2.5 million for a new multipurpose centre under the Primary Schools for the 21st Century program.

The siting of this new facility has been undertaken by a range of professional consultants and the endorsed plan is the best option to meet the needs of the school now and into the future.

The project will incorporate soft landscaping to reduce horizontal noise, appropriate siting considerations as well as additional noise suppression measures incorporated in the design.

In response to privacy issues from local residents, alterations have been made to the end of the template building. The end facing residents will now be constructed as an all brick façade. An elevation drawing has been provided to the residents for their information.

The new basketball courts to be constructed at Donburn Primary School are to be equipped with spoon drainage. This will divert rainfall from the area into the stormwater drains.

In addition, the drains from the field above the courts will also be captured in the new drainage system, where they previously ran into the neighbouring properties.

The school and project managers will continue to work with the local community to address all other community issues as they arise.

Springvale Road, Nunawading: grade separation

Raised with: Minister for Roads and Ports

Raised by: Mr Atkinson

Raised on: 14 October 2009

REPLY:

I am informed that, as at the date the question was raised:

A number of factors have influenced the decision to remove the right-turn facilities at the intersection of Laughlin Avenue and Springvale Road. These are:

- widening six lanes to the current road standard;
- a longer deceleration lane for vehicles turning right into Station Street; and
- an indented bus bay adjacent to the new premium Nunawading Station.

These changes mean it will no longer be safe for people to turn right into and out of Laughlin Avenue, because vehicles will not have room to stop safely in the centre median, whilst waiting for a break in traffic to turn.

There are U-turn opportunities to the north and south of the Laughlin Avenue intersection, which would cater for access into and out of the road. To turn out of Laughlin Avenue, there are three places within 250 metres to safely U-turn, Station Street, Walkers Road or Whitehorse Road. To turn into Laughlin Avenue when coming from the north, there are two places within 150 metres to safely U-turn, Market Street and Candlebark Lane.

The planned access arrangements for Laughlin Avenue are similar to numerous locations throughout Melbourne. U-turns at each of the locations noted above are considered a safe option.

Pedestrian signals near Market Street will also be linked to vehicles waiting in Laughlin Avenue and performing a U-turn on Springvale Road to create breaks in the traffic.

These changes to the right-turn facility have been well publicised to the local community through project brochures distributed in August 2009. The project team has also met with numerous Laughlin Avenue residents to keep them informed and to explain the reasons the access arrangements need to be changed.

Bushfires: clean-up program

Raised with: Premier

Raised by: Mr Hall

Raised on: 10 November 2009

REPLY:

I refer to the matter raised by Mr Hall regarding the clean-up of Mr Chris Clarke's property in Callignee following the Black Saturday bushfires, and thank him for raising the matter.

The Government is committed to the longer-term recovery of communities devastated by the tragic events of the 2009 bushfire season. The Victorian Bushfire Reconstruction and Recovery Authority (VBRRA) was formed to coordinate the recovery and rebuilding program, which is the largest ever undertaken in Victoria. VBRRA coordinated the government-funded bushfire clean-up, which was officially completed on 21 October 2009. At no cost to property owners, VBRRA's contractor Grocon successfully completed site clean-up for over 3,000 property owners.

Although I am unable to comment on this particular case, inquiries about the support available to individuals, families and communities can be directed to VBRRRA on 1800 240 667. Further information is also available on the VBRRRA website www.wewillrebuild.vic.gov.au.

Country Fire Authority: Peterborough brigade

Raised with: Minister for Police and Emergency Services

Raised by: Mr Vogels

Raised on: 10 November 2009

REPLY:

The Brumby Government has more than doubled funding to the emergency services since coming to government in 1999, up from \$254 million in 1999-00 to \$704 million in 2009-10.

The Government has provided record resources to the Country Fire Authority (CFA) to provide the training, equipment and facilities they need to respond to emergencies to ensure the safety of the Victorian community. Since 1999, the CFA budget has more than trebled from \$113.8 million to \$391.2 million in 2009-10. Funding provided as part of this years State Budget will enable the purchase of an additional 87 appliances such as pumper trucks and operational support vehicles and 42 ultra light fire tankers to enhance the CFA's ability to manage major fires.

CFA brigades have also received 398 grants worth \$12.08 million through the CSESP. The CSESP, which commenced in 2000, has assisted CFA brigades in the purchase of more than \$31.58 million in trucks and other equipment.

The Country Fire Authority (CFA) has advised that the Peterborough Brigade submitted a funding application through the Community Safety Emergency Support Program (CSESP) for an additional tanker. Under the CSESP, funding preference is given to replacement of existing brigade-owned vehicles first, and progressing to additional tankers as a lower priority.

Further, the CSESP grant application and preordination process was complete before the study of the State's highest bushfire towns was conducted and the top "52 identified high risk bushfire locations in Victoria" was announced. It must be noted that this would not have affected the process, given the focus on replacing existing brigade owned appliances.

Part of the Peterborough Brigade's justification for an additional tanker was to obtain 'command capacity' into the group. This need will be addressed as the CFA will be modifying one of their ultra light tankers and providing it to the brigade as a command vehicle.

I trust this information is of assistance and thank you for bringing your concerns to my attention.

Seymour Technical High School: air conditioning

Raised with: Minister for Education

Raised by: Mrs Petrovich

Raised on: 10 November 2009

REPLY:

I am informed as follows:

The Department's air conditioning policy provides air conditioning to identified schools with the highest needs, based on the climatic index of the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation, developed by the National Housing Energy Rating Scheme. In accordance with this index, the identified air conditioning zones are located predominantly in northern Victoria.

It should be noted that all special developmental schools, including the one located in Seymour, are air conditioned.

Furthermore, new school buildings are being constructed using ecologically sustainable development principles to reduce the schools' reliance on energy consumption by incorporating design and construction techniques resulting in reduced indoor temperature ranges throughout the year and more comfortable education environments.

The new buildings proposed as part of the Seymour Regeneration project, incorporating Seymour Technical High School, will embrace these principles and provide improved conditions in the hot weather compared with existing buildings.

HIV: infection rates

Raised with: Minister for Health

Raised by: Mr D. Davis

Raised on: 10 November 2009

REPLY:

I refer to the Adjournment Debate of 10 November 2009 where you raised the issue of HIV infection rates.

As you may be aware, HIV rates have been increasing over most of the developed world since the late 1990s. Australia's rises have been less dramatic than those seen in many European and North American countries.

The Brumby Government fully understands the importance of containing HIV infection rates and is committed to reversing the trend of higher rates of infection.

HIV notifications in Victoria have been at the same level for 2006, 2007 and 2008 and it is pleasing that the year to date data suggest a sustained plateau.

The Brumby Government is investing significantly increased resources to ensure that the prevention message is as widely adopted as possible, which it seems you are unaware of.

In June 2006 the government launched a 5 point action plan to address rising rates of HIV and sexually transmissible infections in the Victorian community. This included an initial investment of \$6.5M in projects to promote condom use and target other sexually transmissible infections. \$3.5M was directed into HIV specific projects and \$3M in youth and sexually transmissible infections (STIs) projects.

The creation of an HIV Prevention Taskforce was a key component of this 5 point action plan and has led to the implementation of a number of significant initiatives to respond to the rise in HIV and STI notifications. This HIV Prevention Taskforce was instrumental in the development of the Action Plan 2008–2010: *Something borrowed, something new: Addressing increased rates of HIV and STI transmission among gay men in Victoria*. This Taskforce was comprised of leading health promotion experts, researchers and community based agency representatives, all expert in HIV prevention.

The 2008-09 Victorian State Budget included a further investment of \$16.6M over four years to reduce rates of HIV transmission and to prevent other chronic communicable diseases. This included \$10.38M over four years to ensure the effective implementation of the Action Plan to address increased rates of HIV and sexually transmissible infections amongst gay men in Victoria.

Officers in the Department of Health have worked closely with community based experts and researchers in order to initiate a suite of projects and programs to reduce HIV transmission. The department has held a priority setting

roundtable for HIV prevention (August 2008), an HIV Prevention Showcase—to share knowledge and expertise on prevention approaches (June 2009) and an update on epidemiology and research—to ensure responses to HIV are based on the best evidence and information (October 2009).

The approaches to HIV prevention currently under way include traditional marketing methods that are evaluated for effectiveness as well as innovative approaches including community development programs, leadership development for young gay men and lesbians, peer education programs and a project related to internet social networking sites and their potential as sexual health promotion environments.

Additionally, an HIV Prevention Evaluation Program has been established to support funded HIV prevention agencies to evaluate their work and maximise effectiveness.

A new HIV Taskforce was announced on World AIDS Day 2009 in order for the Department of Health to continue to receive advice on matters relating to HIV from experts in the health and community sector.

As you can see, a great deal of work is continuing in this important area of public health. This work reflects a renewal in Victoria of the partnership between government, the gay and lesbian community and professional organisations, and the health and academic sectors. I'd like to stress the government's ongoing commitment to continuing to address HIV, STI and communicable diseases issues with this cooperative partnership approach. It's a shame you did not seek to make yourself aware of this work prior to making your contribution to the adjournment debate.

Schools: Shepparton

Raised with: Minister for Education

Raised by: Ms Lovell

Raised on: 11 November 2009

REPLY:

I am informed as follows:

Discussions between the four Shepparton Government secondary schools (McGuire College, Shepparton High School, Wanganui Park Secondary College and Mooroopna Secondary College) have been continuing for over 12 months.

Initially each of the four schools was invited to provide their 'vision' of secondary schooling provision in Shepparton.

Combined meetings of the four schools' principals and school council presidents, a project board with broad stakeholder representation including departmental representation from the Hume regional office, were regularly convened to continue discussions.

A range of issues was discussed at the public forum as well as the opportunity for the audience to ask questions.

The four school council presidents and principals had suggested that the end of the 2009 school year may be the right time for a preferred option to be articulated. It was always recognised however that this time line should be flexible and that school communities should not be rushed into a decision. This message was reiterated at the public forum.

To date, no decisions have been made on any future models for secondary provision in the Greater Shepparton area.

Following a combined meeting of the four school council presidents and principals on Monday 23 November 2009, Wanganui Park Secondary College indicated its decision not to continue with discussions around having a more formal alliance with the other three public schools in Shepparton.

Any future decisions regarding secondary provision for students and families in Shepparton will be reached only following extensive community consultation to ensure the needs of all stakeholders can be adequately addressed.

Housing: Northern Victoria Region

Raised with: Minister for Housing

Raised by: Ms Broad

Raised on: 11 November 2009

REPLY:

The Victorian Government is committed to increasing the supply of public and social housing throughout the state. The \$510m investment announced in 2007-8 will deliver approximately 2,500 new dwellings through acquisitions and redevelopments. Additionally, Commonwealth Government funding for Social Housing as a result of the Nation Building & Jobs Plan and the Social Housing National Partnership will increase the supply of social housing in Victoria by an additional 5000 dwellings.

The electorate of Northern Victoria will benefit from significant investment in public and social housing in the Local Government Areas of Campaspe, Mildura, Shepparton, Wangaratta and Wodonga, as seen in the table below. Over the four year period from 2007-08 to 2010-11 it is estimated that over 600 public and social housing acquisitions will be delivered in the aforementioned Local Government Areas. Over half of these are expected to be newly constructed dwellings funded from the Nation Building & Jobs Plan.

Local Government Area	07/08 Actual public and social housing acquisitions	08/09 Actual public and social housing acquisitions	09/10 Draft estimate of public and social housing acquisitions	10/11 Draft estimate of public and social housing acquisitions	07/08 to 10/11 Draft Estimate of Total
Campaspe	2	3	14 (14)*	19 (17)	38
Mildura	17	17	26 (20)	46 (40)	106
Shepparton	67	20	42 (24)	117 (94)	246
Wangaratta	7	13	18 (12)	47 (45)	85
Wodonga	36	11	29 (8)	98 (96)	174
Subtotal	129	64	129 (78)	327 (292)	649 (370)

*Note: Nation Building & Jobs Plan indicative figures are provided in brackets.

Glenelg Highway: maintenance

Raised with: Minister for Roads and Ports

Raised by: Mr Koch

Raised on: 11 November 2009

REPLY:

I am informed that, as at the date, the question was raised:

The Brumby Government has a strong commitment to improving the safety and performance of our roads for all Victorian road users and has undertaken a substantial investment on improving roads in country Victoria.

We have seen Victoria record its six lowest road tolls over the past six years and the Government's arrive alive road safety strategy aims to drive down the road toll by a further 30 per cent by 2017. As part of this strategy, the Government will invest \$650 million over ten years for road safety improvement projects.

Over the past decade, the majority of all of the pavement reconstruction projects in South Western Victoria have been undertaken in the rural areas in the western half of the region. All maintenance projects are considered based on road condition and traffic use.

In relation to the Glenelg Highway, the Government recognises the importance of this road to regional, state and national economies. Over the past five years, \$1.79 million has been invested in pavement rehabilitation and resurfacing sections of the highway between Hamilton and Casterton to address the uneven surface issues and improve the safety and operational performance of the highway. This included a large \$1 million pavement rehabilitation project, completed to the east of Coleraine Racecourse in the 2006/07 financial year.

This financial year the Brumby Government is funding two projects to reconstruct/rehabilitate some of the worst areas of the road on the Muntham Ridge. These projects will deliver a smoother road surface for road users and will increase the strength and carrying capacity of this highway to enable it to more effectively carry the significant freight traffic it is likely to experience into the future.

Further proposals to rehabilitate other sections of the Hamilton Highway will be considered and evaluated against other competing projects on a state wide and region wide basis.

In the meantime, VicRoads will continue to monitor the safety and operational performance of the highway, undertaking further routine maintenance works to ensure the road is maintained until funding for major works becomes available.

Bushfires: Apollo Bay Airport

Raised with: Minister for Police and Emergency Services

Raised by: Mr Vogels

Raised on: 11 November 2009

REPLY:

The Country Fire Authority (CFA) and the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) use Grovedale airfield in Geelong and Colac airfield for the dispatch of aircraft used for fire detection and reconnaissance flights. The CFA and DSE do not have a requirement to use the Apollo Bay airfield for this purpose as it is not included in the CFA/DSE airbase strategy for the use of fixed wing firebombing aircraft.

If a fire suppression operation using fixed wing fire-bombing aircraft was required for a fire in the Otways, it is likely that Grovedale would be selected as the most suitable location to establish a temporary airbase, depending on the location of the fire. For initial attack of fires in the Otway region, a Sikorsky 61N fire-bombing helicopter is based at Colac. This helicopter has the capability to apply water or foam with either a 4,000-litre belly tank or a 3,500-litre long line bucket to a fire.

I have also been advised that there is a potential that the Apollo Bay airfield could be used as a temporary airbase for helicopter fire-bombing operations, depending on the location of the fire. No upgrade of the airfield would be required for this purpose.

Victoria will also be the first Australian state to trial a large waterbombing plane to boost the state's firefighting capacity. Large aircraft can carry up to eight times the water or retardant of smaller firefighting aircraft. The

effectiveness in fighting fires in Victorian conditions over this summer will be tested and evaluated by the National Aerial Firefighting Centre, in conjunction with the Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre.

The Victorian Government has invested one billion dollars on recovery, suppression and to bring about enhanced preparations for this and future fire seasons.

I trust this information is of assistance and thank you for bringing your concerns to my attention.

Rooming houses: standards

Raised with: Minister for Housing

Raised by: Ms Lovell

Raised on: 12 November 2009

REPLY:

The Victorian Government is committed to improving the regulation of rooming houses which will enhance protections for those vulnerable Victorians who live in them.

As we have previously advised this house, in July this year the Government asked Martin Foley MP, Member for Albert Park to Chair a Taskforce to investigate issues emerging in the private rooming house market in Victoria. Mr Foley delivered his report to Government on 18 September 2009. On 30 October 2009 the Government released the Foley Report and announced its response to the Report's 32 recommendations.

Central to the Government's response to the Taskforce is the introduction of new standards for rooming houses in Victoria. The Government has committed to immediately establish additional legislated minimum standards for rooming houses including:

- Locks on toilet and bathroom doors
- Fire safe locks on bedroom doors
- Provision of a working double power outlet in each bedroom
- Window coverings in each bedroom
- Fire evacuation plan
- Power overload protection.

The need for these types of standards was evidenced in the Coroner's findings in relation to the tragic deaths of Leigh Sinclair and Christopher Giorgi in a rooming house fire in Brunswick in 2006.

I am aware that when considering the introduction of additional minimum standards, Taskforce members were concerned about finding an appropriate balance between raising standards to ensure that levels of safety and amenity meet community expectations and maximising the amount of accessible and affordable rental accommodation available in Victoria. In this context a number of additional standards will be carefully considered. These include:

- Periodic gas and electrical safety checks
- Appliance upgrades to higher levels of water and energy efficiency
- Installation of hard wired smoke detectors in each habitable room
- Minimum common areas-living area and kitchen/meals areas.

The Department of Human Services has commissioned a project which will undertake a preliminary cost-benefit analysis on the possible new standards identified in the Taskforce recommendation as well as identifying other potential standards and their likely impact on rooming house supply. Any new standards which emerge from the results of that project will be phased in after consultation with representatives of rooming house operators with sufficient lead time to allow legitimate operators to respond.

Like Ms Lovell, the Government is keen to ensure that reputable rooming house operators are able to make changes necessary to comply with any new minimum standards and continue to provide housing.

Disability services: respite care policy

Raised with: Minister for Community Services

Raised by: Mr Drum

Raised on: 12 November 2009

REPLY:

Disability Services in the Loddon Mallee is not aware of the matter raised by Mr Drum. Regional staff continue to make enquiries and will make every effort to address the issue raised.

The Department of Human Services Disability Services continues to work with families and service providers to improve respite supports for families with children with an emphasis on making available a range of respite support options that are flexible and offer real choice.

As a result of the Victorian Government's commitment to shifting the control of people's supports away from service providers and into the hands of families and people with a disability themselves through the continual increase in person-directed approaches, more creative and personalised approaches are able to be developed. This includes being able to share supports between more than one person, where that is appropriate.

Autism: schools funding

Raised with: Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development

Raised by: Mr Finn

Raised on: 12 November 2009

REPLY:

I am informed as follows:

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development is committed to improving the learning outcomes of all students, by acknowledging their diverse needs and catering for different learning styles. A key element of this commitment is an emphasis on improving the learning outcomes for students with disabilities and additional learning needs, including strategies that ensure inclusive practices are in place in schools.

In 2009, the Government is investing \$417 million in the Program for Students with Disabilities, including \$31 million in the Language Support Program. Funding for these Programs has grown for each of the past five years. Since 1999, expenditure for students with additional learning needs has increased by 112 per cent.

The Department has established and resources five schools that specialise in the support of students with Autism Spectrum Disorder. These are Bulleen Heights Special School, Wantirna Heights School, Northern Autistic School, Western Autistic School and Southern Autistic School. These schools also provide outreach services and support to other schools to ensure that students with Autism Spectrum Disorder benefit from the expertise of these specialised settings.

Victoria is the first jurisdiction in Australia to develop an Autism State Plan. The aim of the Autism State Plan, which was launched in May 2009 during Autism Awareness Month, is to build new and better approaches across government to meet the growing and complex needs of people of all ages with Autism. Funding of \$8.3 million over four years in the 2009-10 State Budget has been dedicated to commence the implementation of the Autism State Plan. This includes:

- \$4.2 million for mental health service enhancement to improve service quality, support staff training and provide greater access to mental health services particularly ASD diagnostic services for young children and adolescents; and
- \$4.1 million to improve support to pre-school children and young people of school age with an ASD, and to provide staff development opportunities including secondary consultation and mentoring.

The Plan has a vision for the next 10 years to improve outcomes for people of all ages with Autism. The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development will implement system-wide reform which builds capacity and skills at a state-wide, regional, network and school level. Further information is available on the Autism State Plan website: <http://autismstateplan.dhs.vic.gov.au>.

A key element of the Department's implementation of the Autism State Plan is the development of strategic 5-year regional ASD plans. These plans will respond to local need to enhance educational opportunities for students with an ASD. I suggest that Ms La Greca contact Ms Anne Cupples, the Disability Coordinator, Northern Metropolitan Region and Ms Judy Baker, Disability Coordinator, Western Metropolitan Region, to arrange a time to meet so that her perspective as a parent can inform the regional strategic autism plans.

I am aware that Ms La Greca's sons are both currently supported with additional funding through the Program for Students with Disabilities. Where there is a change in a student's condition that affects their educational needs, the school has the option of initiating a reappraisal of the funding level received. Under the reappraisal process, the Student Support Group will submit a new Educational Needs Questionnaire that more accurately represents the student's current needs, and the funding that the student receives will reflect this new Educational Needs Questionnaire. I am aware that at this stage no reappraisal has been submitted by either of the boys' schools. I would recommend that Ms La Greca discuss this option further with the schools and with the respective Regional Disabilities Coordinator.

Wild dogs: control

Raised with: Minister for Agriculture

Raised by: Mr P. Davis

Raised on: 12 November 2009

REPLY:

I refer to the matter you raised during the Adjournment Debate on 12 November 2009 in the Legislative Council in relation to Wild Dog control in East Gippsland.

The Victorian Government is committed to controlling Wild Dogs in Victoria. There are now 26 staff working on Wild Dog control within Victoria, compared to 13 staff when this Government came to office. Wild Dog Controller positions continue to be filled where they become vacant, with a recruitment process currently under way to fill a vacancy following a recent staff retirement at Orbost. When staff take annual leave the area they cover is supported by staff in adjacent work areas who maintain trap lines.

The Victorian Government appointed, and continue to support two community-based Wild Dog Management Groups (WDMG) to provide guidance to the current program. The WDMG conducted community meetings in the Bendoc and Tubbut areas in September 2009. The need to coordinate baiting and other control programs was discussed and the land-holders and agencies developed collaborative approaches to ensure all efforts would be coordinated as effectively as possible.

The WDMGs have recently been funded through the Federal Government as part of the Caring For Our Country program, providing small groups of neighbours the opportunity to work together to improve Wild Dog management in their district. This innovative program will also involve field days and other communication activities to assist land-holders to identify and access the latest control techniques.

The Government also supports land-holders in the management of Wild Dogs by providing baiting, trapping, fencing, field days and livestock management advice. In supporting land-holders affected by Wild Dogs, the Government coordinates a Wild Dog exclusion fencing program in Gippsland and North East Victoria, with incentive grants available to land-holders to construct approved fences. The Future Farming Statement, which was announced in 2008, included a \$1.1 million program to review the effectiveness of current Wild Dog control techniques against best practice in other States and investigate policy options for the improved management of Wild Dogs. The results of an aerial baiting trial in Gippsland in 2007, which covered over 400 square kilometres, will be considered during the review.

Recording information collected by Wild Dog Controllers in the field is a critical component of the program, providing accurate information regarding the Wild Dog situation. The number of stock reported to DPI as lost to Wild Dogs has declined since 2000/01. During the 2008/09 financial year, 923 Wild Dogs were trapped by DPI staff in the program and DPI Wild Dog Controllers responded to 248 Requests for Assistance (RFA). An RFA may include multiple reports from a single property. The issues giving rise to an RFA can range from reports of wild dog activity in an area to an actual attack on stock.

In the Bendoc, Tubbut and Bonang areas stock losses due to Wild Dog activity, based on data provided by the public through RFA, have ranged approximately from 528 in 2004-2005 to 126 in 2008-2009. There were four RFA in this area in 2005-2006 and thirteen in 2008-2009. The record management system used by DPI is currently undergoing review to permit more detailed data capture.

A research project to determine the effectiveness of current ground baiting techniques in Victoria was conducted in 2008, and further research to identify the optimum density of control devices for the management of Wild Dogs commenced in July 2009. Research of this nature will allow DPI and associated public land managers to better deliver Wild Dog control across Gippsland and the North East.

The long-term management of Wild Dogs requires a coordinated approach utilising all of the available tools, including exclusion fencing, baiting, shooting and trapping. In addition, structured community engagement activities assist land-holders to improve their capacity to deal with Wild Dogs through responsible stock management.

DPI and the Gippsland WDMG applaud the efforts of land-holders collectively managing Wild Dogs through the Local Area Control Plan process. Effective management of Wild Dogs is only possible where land-holders in affected areas act together in coordinated management programs.

Thank you for your interest in this important issue.

Yarra River: contamination

Raised with: Minister for Environment and Climate Change

Raised by: Ms Pennicuik

Raised on: 24 November 2009

REPLY:

Between the mid-1940s and the mid-1960s pilot plant and laboratory scale projects to extract cerium, uranium and thorium from ores occurred at Lorimer Street, Fishermans Bend. The projects involved crushing, grinding and sieving of the ore and chemical separation of its components.

Some time after 1965 the plant was decommissioned and material contaminated with radionuclides was removed. The area was then comprehensively decontaminated in 1990.

The implications from the potential presence of radionuclides in the Yarra River were raised and addressed in 2007, before the Public Inquiry into the Supplementary Environment Effects Statement for the Channel Deepening Project.

Reports from 1989 and 1990 about the decontamination process are publicly available. Similarly, study reports from the early 1990s that show radionuclide levels in the Bay are low and typical of background concentrations are also publicly available.

These reports provide no new information to support the proposed testing of the Yarra River or Port Phillip Bay for radionuclides.

Roads: Footscray tunnel

Raised with: Minister for Roads and Ports

Raised by: Ms Hartland

Raised on: 24 November 2009

REPLY:

The Government recently announced a \$10 million planning and consultation study to determine the best route for WestLink and to work with the community on the best way to build the road while reducing impacts on houses and delivering improvements to the local area.

The study will be managed by Linking Melbourne Authority whose senior staff attended the rally in Footscray on 21 November 2009 to hear the views expressed on the day. In addition, these staff members have had lengthy meetings with both groups involved in the rally and are aware of their concerns.

While the general study area for the project was identified in the *Victorian Transport Plan*, a detailed planning and consultation program is needed to determine the exact location of the road and tunnel. The community would expect, and legislation requires, the Government to undertake a thorough assessment of the social, environmental and economic impacts and benefits of the project. This must happen before the project route is finalised and any suggestion the Government develop and release a project route earlier is inconsistent with the established planning processes for large infrastructure projects like WestLink.

It should also be noted that it is incorrect to suggest that formal acquisition notices have been issued for WestLink. Further, there is no suggestion the entrance to the tunnel (which would include the ventilation system) will be located in Seddon. The project route will be determined during the two year planning and consultation study that has just commenced, with potential route options to be released to the community for comment by the middle of next year.

Melbourne's west will be home to an additional 375,000 people by 2026—that's more than one and a half times the size of Geelong. The expansion of the Port will double the number of freight movements on both road and rail. The Government's *Victorian Transport Plan* responds to these challenges by investing in our public transport system, our roads and bike paths.

Western Highway: Bulmans Road interchange

Raised with: Minister for Roads and Ports

Raised by: Mr Vogels

Raised on: 24 November 2009

REPLY:

I am informed that as at the date the question was raised:

The Western Highway realignment involves building a new 5km freeway, between Harkness Road, Melton West and Bacchus Marsh Road, Bacchus Marsh. Once completed, motorists will enjoy improved safety and reduced travel times, with the new freeway allowing drivers to travel at speeds of up to 110 km/h. It is unfortunate that the Liberal Party wants to talk down a project like this that will deliver significant benefits to the local community.

The project will also help improve access between Melbourne, Ballarat, Western Victoria and Adelaide on a vital interstate freight route.

The scope of works approved in 1995 for the realignment of the Western Highway at Anthony's Cutting included provision in the future for a full diamond interchange at Harkness Road and provision in the future for an overpass only at Bulmans Road.

VicRoads held community information days in Melton and Bacchus Marsh to hear the local community's views about the project and I announced on 15 October 2009 that Melbourne oriented ramps will be included in the final project scope. These ramps will restore existing direct freeway access at Hopetoun Road and are not being provided at the expense of an interchange at Bulmans Road as you have tried to incorrectly suggest.

As Bulmans Road and Clarkes Road are local roads, an interchange at this location could result in negative effects for nearby residents as traffic is attracted to these municipal roads. An interchange here may also restrict the future opportunity for an interchange at Harkness Road if required to meet the future needs of the Melton community. As I announced in October, VicRoads will protect the options of ramps at Bulmans Road or an interchange at Harkness Road for potential future use.

The \$200 million project is jointly funded by the Federal and Victorian Governments as part of the Nation Building Program and the *Victorian Transport Plan*. Under both the Rudd and Howard Governments, federal funds are provided for improvements in the efficient and safe operation of the National Land Transport Network (in this case between Melbourne and Adelaide) and is not intended to address local access issues.

Western suburbs: gang violence

Raised with: Minister for Police and Emergency Services

Raised by: Mr Finn

Raised on: 24 November 2009

REPLY:

The Brumby Government is committed to providing safe streets and homes for Victorians by ensuring Victoria Police is highly professional and well resourced. Since coming to office, the State Government has increased the number of police by over 1,400. Further, we have increased funding to Victoria Police to a record budget of more than \$1.89 billion in 2009-10. The Government has also committed nearly \$450 million to fund the construction or refurbishment of over 160 police stations and residences across the state, in Victoria's largest ever police station building program.

The Government's additional support to Victoria Police is showing good results. Victoria's crime rate has fallen 25.5 per cent since 2000-01, with Victoria being the safest state in Australia.

However, the fight against crime is ongoing. That is why at the last election the Government committed to a further increase of 350 sworn police by 2010, as well as an additional 50 forensic and specialist investigators. On 9 August 2009 the Premier announced new funding of \$50 million for the recruitment of an additional 120 police to boost police capacity to target street crime hot spots and alcohol related violence.

This record resourcing of police is in stark contrast with the previous Liberal Government which saw police numbers slashed by 800 and crime rise by 10 per cent.

In addition to the extra funding for more police, the government has legislated to give police greater powers to combat street violence and antisocial behaviour. As well as a new offence of disorderly conduct, the existing offences of drunk, and drunk and disorderly behaviour are now subject to an on-the-spot penalty of \$234. Police have also been given stronger powers to search for weapons within a designated area, and are now empowered to direct individuals to move on from an area when there is a risk of a breach of the peace.

The Government has been proactive in its efforts to tackle the problem of violence involving knives and similarly categorised weapons. Tougher laws were introduced in 2007 to increase most penalties under the *Control of Weapons Act 1990*. Penalties for the unlawful possession, carriage and use of prohibited and controlled weapons were doubled in July 2007 and carrying dangerous articles for self defence was outlawed. The Government has also doubled the penalties for unlawfully carrying or using weapons in or immediately outside licensed venues designed to deter the carriage of weapons such as knives in and around hotels and clubs where alcohol-fuelled violence is more likely to erupt. The maximum penalty for unlawfully carrying a prohibited weapon is now four years imprisonment or a fine of \$56,073.60. These changes to our laws reflect the Government's commitment to a zero tolerance approach to weapons offences.

Decisions on the placement of police throughout the state are operational matters and are made by police command on the basis of assessed need. It is important that this process is not subject to political interference. I am assured by the Chief Commissioner of Police that the level of policing across Victoria is continuously monitored by the respective Regional Command Officers, with a view to maintaining optimum policing effectiveness.

Victoria Police deploys first response police across its 56 Police Service Areas using a sophisticated resource allocation model incorporating 12 characteristics of the local community that are used to predict levels of crime and road trauma; the population of an area is just one of these. Victoria Police uses this model to ensure that police resources are distributed equitably and according to demonstrated operational need. It should be noted that, since 1999, the number of first response officers has increased in all police regions across Victoria.

I trust this information is of assistance and thank you for bringing your concerns to my attention.

City of Monash: multicultural policy

Raised with: Premier

Raised by: Mrs Peulich

Raised on: 24 November 2009

REPLY:

The City of Monash is one of Melbourne's most culturally, linguistically and religiously diverse communities and the local Council has long supported and promoted multiculturalism in Monash.

This December, the City of Monash launched a new Multicultural Framework and Action Plan for 2009-2013. The Framework and Action Plan identify the Council's key priority strategies on how it will respond to the diversity in Monash, and builds on work developed under the previous Framework and Action Plan 2006-2008.

Importantly, the Framework and Action Plan was developed in partnership with the Monash Multicultural Advisory Committee, which comprises broad representation from diverse stakeholders and service providers in Monash. This Committee advises the Council on multicultural issues and represents diverse views from Monash residents with an interest in and understanding of multicultural affairs.

The Committee will advise the Council on the implementation of the new Framework and Action Plan, and includes representation from local community organisations, social support services, migrant resource centres, the

Victorian Multicultural Business Council, Monash University, MonashLink, the Metropolitan Fire Brigade and Centrelink.

The City of Monash's commitment to multiculturalism is reflected in both the new Framework and Action Plan and its ongoing initiatives including:

- supporting the Monash Interfaith Gathering, which was launched in 2009; and
- continuing the Council's Community Grants Program, which aims to strengthen partnerships with culturally and linguistically diverse communities and provided support to 66 multicultural groups in 2009 to undertake activities and provide services to their members.

These efforts, combined with the newly launched strategic policy for supporting Monash's multicultural community, complement the Victorian Government's commitment to multicultural affairs. In particular, they align with the Victorian Government's Multicultural policy, *All of Us*, and its priority strategy to support local councils to implement strategic projects to advance multiculturalism locally. They also build on the principles established in the *Multicultural Victoria Act 2004* and the overall intention of the Act, which recognises and values the cultural, religious and linguistic diversity of the people of Victoria.

Water: Thomson River supply

Raised with: Minister for Water

Raised by: Mr P. Davis

Raised on: 24 November 2009

REPLY:

As you are aware, in June 2007, the Victorian Government released *Our Water Our Future: The Next Stage of the Government's Water Plan*. This plan aims to secure Melbourne's long-term water supplies in the face of drought and the challenge of climate change. Melbourne's reliance on rainfall will be reduced through actions such as the desalination plant, upgrading irrigation infrastructure to save 425 billion litres of water, expanding Victoria's water grid and upgrading Melbourne's Eastern Treatment Plant.

In the meantime, the Government has been forced to introduce temporary measures to further reduce demand and supplement supplies in Melbourne's water system. The measures include the continuation of Stage 3a water restrictions, the Target 155 campaign and a reduction in environmental flows in the Yarra and Thomson rivers. Stage 3a and the Target 155 campaign are saving the equivalent amount of water to Stage 4 restrictions. These are necessary steps to secure Melbourne's water storages.

Melbourne Water and the West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority respectively have undertaken thorough assessments of the environmental risks associated with further reductions in environmental flows in the Yarra and Thomson rivers.

In the Yarra River, further reduction would threaten nationally endangered species, including the Macquarie Perch and Australian Grayling. These risks are difficult to mitigate in this river system.

There are also potential risks to water quality in the Yarra arising in the future, if ash and debris from the February 2009 bushfires are washed into the river.

However, the environmental risks associated with a further reduction in Thomson River flows are considered to be manageable through the use of a drought reserve and an emergency contingency plan.

I have established a drought reserve to manage any potential long-term risks to the Australian Grayling in the Thomson River, which will be used to deliver critical spawning flows and allow fish passage if natural high flow events do not occur. Additional protection is provided to manage short-term environmental risks such as poor water

quality, with comprehensive monitoring and emergency contingency plans that provide specific triggers for scientifically designed emergency releases to manage risks to significant species.

Given your stated outrage at the Government's actions, I can only imagine your fury at your leader's refusal to rule out a permanent dam on any of the rivers that flow into the Gippsland Lakes. I note your public opposition to such a dam and I trust that you will be able to prevail in your Party Room. According to the Coalition, all potential dam locations are on the table.

The Gippsland Region Sustainable Water Strategy, which is being developed by the Government and the people of Gippsland, provides the opportunity to plan the best way forward to sustainably manage the region's water resources over the next 50 years. The reduction in environmental flows is a temporary measure to assist in securing Melbourne's supplies in light of the continuing drought. The Government remains committed to improving the long-term health of the Thomson River. Environmental flows will be returned to the Thomson River once Melbourne's water supplies are secure.

Global Atheist Convention: funding

Raised with: Minister Assisting the Premier on Multicultural Affairs

Raised by: Ms Hartland

Raised on: 25 November 2009

REPLY:

The Victorian Government is proud of its reputation as the major events capital of Australia and provides extensive assistance to organisations that are keen to host conferences, expos and other business events in Melbourne through the Melbourne Convention and Visitors Bureau.

In addition, the Government can provide funding to events if they are an international event, have over 1,000 delegates, utilise the new Convention Centre and if the event is not yet secured. The funds are used as part of the bidding process for these events as an added incentive to come to Melbourne.

My understanding is that the 2010 Global Atheist Convention was secured prior to a request for funding being submitted to Government. As such, it did not meet the requirements for Government funding.

I thank the organisers of the 2010 Global Atheist Convention for choosing Melbourne to host their event, and hope that the convention will be a success. Furthermore, the Government and the Melbourne Convention and Visitors Bureau welcome future discussions with the Atheist Foundation of Australia in regards to future event bids that they may wish to put forward.

Desalination plant: land acquisition

Raised with: Minister for Water

Raised by: Mr O'Donohue

Raised on: 25 November 2009

REPLY:

For two years, landowners have been consulted about the route for the pipeline easement with many changes made to meet landowner requests during the planning and environmental research stage of the project. Wherever possible, the project has avoided and minimised removal of native vegetation and impacts on farm infrastructure through careful placement of the pipeline route. The project will continue to reduce impacts where possible within the existing easement and adjoining construction land when conducting works.

Mr Hobson's property has been subject to investigations including flora, fauna, and cultural heritage studies before and during the Environment Effects Statement (EES) as well as part of subsequent planning and design.

The Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) considered Mr Hobson's request for alignment changes and was previously able to adjust the easement at Mr Hobson's request so that it did not cross a dam on his property.

I understand that the current requested change is not only technically challenging, but it would also require the use of more of the Hobson's property and a longer construction time on their land. In addition, the change failed to comply with the guidelines for requested alignment changes in that it would adversely impact other landowners' properties.

Before fencing and construction starts, a member of the AquaSure Landowner Liaison Team will meet with Mr Hobson to create a mitigation plan. This plan will allow Mr Hobson to bring up and discuss any issues before construction begins. AquaSure will work with Mr Hobson to relocate irrigation and other infrastructure and to minimise impacts to his farming enterprise, but AquaSure is at a stage where it will now move forward with final design and construction. As such, further alterations to the route cannot be considered.

Mr Hobson has received an offer of compensation. The offer includes an amount to cover the impacts of the easement on his farming production.

DSE will continue to work with landowners to ensure that they are appropriately compensated for the acquisition of the land and potential construction impacts. Should Mr Hobson have any further questions, he can contact Property Acquisition Manager Ms Penny Lamble on 9948 2806.

Police: Frankston

Raised with: Minister for Police and Emergency Services

Raised by: Mrs Peulich

Raised on: 25 November 2009

REPLY:

The Brumby Government is committed to providing safe streets and homes for Victorians by ensuring Victoria Police is highly professional and well resourced. Since coming to office, the State Government has increased the number of police by over 1,400. Further, we have increased funding to Victoria Police to a record budget of more than \$1.89 billion in 2009-10. The Government has also committed nearly \$450 million to fund the construction or refurbishment of over 160 police stations and residences across the state, in Victoria's largest ever police station building program.

The Government's additional support to Victoria Police is showing good results. Victoria's crime rate has fallen 25.5 per cent since 2000-01, with Victoria being the safest state in Australia.

However, the fight against crime is ongoing. That is why at the last election the Government committed to a further increase of 350 sworn police by 2010, as well as an additional 50 forensic and specialist investigators. On 9 August 2009 the Premier announced new funding of \$50 million for the recruitment of an additional 120 police to boost police capacity to target street crime hot spots and alcohol related violence.

In addition to the extra funding for more police, the government has introduced legislation to give police greater powers to combat street violence and antisocial behaviour. Further to this, the existing offences of drunk, and drunk and disorderly behaviour, as well as the proposed disorderly conduct offence will be subject to an on-the-spot penalty of \$234. Police will also be given stronger search powers for weapons in a designated area, and be empowered to direct individuals to move on from an area, where a risk of a breach of the peace exists.

Decisions on the placement of police throughout the state are operational matters and are made by police command on the basis of assessed need. It is important that this process is not subject to political interference. I am assured by the Chief Commissioner of Police that the level of policing across Victoria is continuously monitored by the respective Regional Command Officers, with a view to maintaining optimum policing effectiveness.

Victoria Police deploys first response police across its 56 Police Service Areas using a sophisticated resource allocation model incorporating 12 characteristics of the local community that are used to predict levels of crime and road trauma; the population of an area is just one of these. Victoria Police uses this model to ensure that police resources are distributed equitably and according to demonstrated operational need. It should be noted that, since 1999, the number of first response officers has increased in all police regions across Victoria. The Frankston police service area has experienced a 10.6 per cent reduction in the total crime rate since 2000/2001.

I trust this information is of assistance and thank you for bringing your concerns to my attention.

Torquay: Fishermans Beach redevelopment

Raised with: Minister for Environment and Climate Change

Raised by: Mr Koch

Raised on: 26 November 2009

REPLY:

The Victorian Government has delegated responsibility for the management of Fishermans Beach to the Great Ocean Road Coast Committee Inc. (GORCC). There is strong interest in management of the area by both user groups and the Torquay community.

There is significant community support for the redevelopment project that will deliver many benefits including new accommodation for the Torquay Marine Rescue Service and Torquay Angling Club. The replacement ramp will improve safety for boat users and will reflect the current use whereby most boaters launch off the sand.

I support both projects. Since the designs have been approved, the tender process has found that construction costs were more than originally budgeted.

I do not propose to intervene while GORCC experiences this short-term delay. While it could reduce the scope of works proposed based on existing funding, this will compromise the integrity of both designs.

It is anticipated that both projects will begin shortly and we are working with GORCC on further funding options. I believe that the demonstrated commitment to both projects by GORCC will re-affirm its role in the delivery of coastal projects on behalf of the Victorian community.

Wallan Secondary College: pedestrian crossing

Raised with: Minister for Roads and Ports

Raised by: Mrs Petrovich

Raised on: 26 November 2009

REPLY:

I am informed that as at the date the question was raised:

The Brumby Government is taking action to improve the safety of our roads for all Victorian road users. Victoria has recorded its six lowest road tolls over the past six years and recorded our lowest ever road toll in 2008. The Government's *arrive alive 2008–2017* road safety strategy aims to drive down the road toll by a further 30 per cent

by 2017. As part of this strategy, the Government will invest \$650 million over 10 years for road safety improvement projects.

A number of measures to ensure the safety of students have already been provided, including the installation of traffic signals at the intersection of Watson Street and High Street (located on the north western corner of the school), school speed zone and supervised school crossing on High Street and co-ordination with the school for the construction of a school bus interchange.

These measures are part of the broader traffic management facilities in the area.

I have asked VicRoads to continue to work with the Shire and school to monitor the safety of students, including examining any potential needs for further improvements.

Omeo Highway: sealing

Raised with: Minister for Roads and Ports

Raised by: Mr O'Donohue

Raised on: 26 November 2009

REPLY:

I am informed that, as at the date the question was raised:

The State Government is committed to improving roads in country Victoria, having invested more than \$7.3 billion into building better and safer roads across the state.

Proposals for improvement projects must be considered and evaluated on a state wide and region wide basis. Any improvements to seal the gravel sections of the Omeo Highway will be considered in this context.

The Omeo Highway is regularly inspected and maintained in accordance with VicRoads' Road Management Plan. Regular grading and gravel resheeting works are programmed throughout the year to keep the road in a trafficable condition.

Children: protection

Raised with: Minister for Community Services

Raised by: Ms Lovell

Raised on: 27 November 2009

REPLY:

I thank the member for Northern Victoria for her concern for the parent of the 13 year old girl.

The Brumby government recognises how important it is for parents of vulnerable children to be able to access appropriate supports to ensure their safety.

I can report that there is no protocol that stipulates that all conversations about child protection cases must be directed via my office.

Personal information about an individual *may* be disclosed to a third party if the individual has consented to the disclosure. This is outlined in *Information Privacy Act 2000* (IPA).

All departmental employees should take a cautious approach when providing information to MPs and are guided by the IPA, the *Health Records Act 2001* and the requirements of the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005*.

Departmental employees should not assume that a constituent has provided consent to the MP to *disclose all the matters* that they raise with the MP. Departmental employees do not assume that the information presented by an MP when raising constituents' concerns with the department has only come from the constituent.

Clearways: extension

Raised with: Minister for Roads and Ports

Raised by: Mrs Coote

Raised on: 8 December 2009

REPLY:

I am informed that as at the date the question was raised:

VicRoads is currently evaluating the impact of clearway implementation across the 10km area identified in the *Keeping Melbourne Moving (KMM)* initiative.

The Government has established a Clearways Panel to review and assess a range of evaluation measures including vehicle travel times (including public transport vehicles), parking occupancy, pedestrian and bicycle patterns.

It should be noted that at this stage analysis has commenced only on those sites where AM and PM clearway changes have been implemented. Further, ongoing evaluation will occur.

All clearways within a 10km radius of the CBD need to be implemented to show the full benefits to all road users and travel times.

The article on the PTUA website looked at a specific section on Sydney Road in Brunswick, rather than from a network-wide perspective.

It is also pertinent to note that clearway changes are just one of the initiatives being introduced to alleviate or ease on-road congestion as part of the *Keeping Melbourne Moving*. Other initiatives identified as part of the \$112.7 million plan, include:

- tougher enforcement of clearways through the expanded use of tow-away zones;
- a targeted tram and bus priority program;
- aggressive tram priority on Route 6 on High Street, Malvern and on Route 96 from East Brunswick to St Kilda;
- the expansion of VicRoads' Incident Response Service;
- resources to assist with reducing the impact of road works and other events;
- improvements to cycling and pedestrian networks; and
- improved communications to commuters.

The overall evaluation of the clearways initiative will also need to consider the impact of the broader *KMM* initiatives outlined above.

Bushfires: warning signs

Raised with: Minister for Police and Emergency Services

Raised by: Mrs Petrovich

Raised on: 8 December 2009

REPLY:

As you are aware, Victoria has implemented a new six-tiered national framework for fire warnings prior to the next bushfire season following an agreement by all Australian States and Territories. The new national Fire Danger Rating (FDR) system will provide the community with a better understanding of the level of bushfire threat on any given day based on the forecast weather conditions, including temperature, relative humidity, wind speed and dryness of vegetation.

A new category of 'Code Red' (Catastrophic) has been developed to warn communities of the risk of fires that are unpredictable, uncontrollable and fast moving. Advice provided to communities in fire prone areas on a Code Red (Catastrophic) day is that the safest option is to leave the night before or early in the morning. A 'Code Red' (Catastrophic) day will also carry the warning that; people may die or be injured, thousands of homes or businesses may be destroyed, and well prepared, well constructed homes may not be safe during a fire.

A review of the location and management of the existing signs by the Office of the Emergency Services Commissioner (OESC), the Country Fire Authority (CFA) and the Municipal Association of Victoria in September 2009 revealed an inconsistency in the management and maintenance of the signs. Some signs had been installed and were managed by CFA, some by local municipalities, others by private enterprise or service clubs. Of the 79 Victorian municipalities, only 26 councils (or 32 per cent) reported having existing fire danger signs.

The new FDRs are established each day by fire agencies in consultation with the Bureau of Meteorology, and are based on the daily Forest Fire Danger Index together with other factors. FDRs are calculated daily and monitored throughout the day, requiring any indicator signs in the landscape to be adjusted at least daily. The increased frequency in changes to the rating increases the possibility that sign(s) that are required to be adjusted manually could display incorrect or inconsistent information.

In addition to indicating the level of fire risk, the new FDRs come with specific instructions and advice about what actions should be taken at each fire danger level. The new signage is intended to direct the community to sources of this additional information including the CFA website and the Victorian Bushfire Information Line (VBIL) for the most up-to-date information and advice that accompanies those ratings. It is a way of transitioning from the old signs, which are now redundant as they do not indicate the new, nationally-agreed ratings, and to encourage the community to access the most up-to-date fire danger ratings from a range of sources.

It is important for the community to access information about fire danger ratings in advance, particularly if their fire plan is to leave the area the night before. Manually adjusted signs would only indicate the FDR for that day, which would not assist the community with the degree of forward-planning being encouraged by fire agencies.

It is imperative that tourists and visitors to fire-prone areas know the predicted FDR for an area before they travel there, rather than waiting to read a sign once they are in the area. For daily FDRs, you can listen to the ABC Radio or other local radio stations, refer to local newspapers, visit the CFA website at www.cfa.vic.gov.au or call the VBIL on 1800 240 667 which will assist the travelling public to plan their travel to high fire risk areas in advance, and to avoid travelling to areas anticipating severe, extreme or code red conditions.

Following the fire season, the OESC will be reviewing the effectiveness of the signs and will seek community feedback as part of this process. The Royal Commission has indicated it will be reviewing the effectiveness of all new policy implementations. The government would expect this to include the new fire danger ratings and will then make longer-term decisions relating to the new signage.

Schools: mergers

Raised with: Minister for Education

Raised by: Mrs Peulich

Raised on: 9 December 2009

REPLY:

I am informed as follows:

The Victorian Government believes that local school communities are best placed to make decisions about the future of their schools. Consequently, any decision to merge government schools will only be made on the recommendation of the school councils involved after consultation with the school community.

The role of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development is to assist schools to explore options for the future with the shared goal of providing the best possible educational opportunities and outcomes for the students.

Merrilands College, Lakeside Secondary College and Ruthven Primary School began discussions around merging over two years ago, with a common aim to improve programs available to students, especially senior students.

Numerous public meetings and information sessions were also held in this period to provide the broader school communities with opportunities to discuss the proposed merger.

The three school communities were provided with a range of models of school operation in March 2009. In April 2009, each school council voted in favour of the preferred model for the merger—a new primary and secondary college located on the current Merrilands College site.

The project will receive \$1.97 million for a Science/Language Centre through the Commonwealth Government's *Building the Education Revolution* and \$7.5 million for the first stage of the construction of new primary school facilities through the Victorian Schools Plan.

Water: flood warnings

Raised with: Minister for Water

Raised by: Mr P. Davis

Raised on: 9 December 2009

REPLY:

Flood warning stations in Victoria are owned and managed by a range of agencies. The monitoring network is managed by Victoria's Regional Water Monitoring Partnerships, which include water corporations, the Bureau of Meteorology, catchment management authorities, local shires and councils and State Government agencies such as the Environment Protection Authority and the Department of Sustainability and Environment.

The agencies use the monitoring information to provide flood warning services to the community and to manage water allocations.

All data collected for flood warning purposes (rainfall and river heights) is available on the Bureau of Meteorology's website at <http://www.bom.gov.au/hydro/flood/vic/>. This information is updated daily at around 9am and up to every three hours during floods.

A number of water monitoring sites are being upgraded to provide more secure and reliable flood warning information.

During the upgrade it has become apparent that some members of the public, including local land-holders, have had unauthorised telephone access to river monitoring stations for flow information.

Direct public telephone access to monitoring equipment is not part of Victoria's flood warning procedure, as additional loads may cause equipment failure and lost data during a flood crisis.

Southern Rural Water (SRW) contacts the Macalister Irrigation District flood wardens when pre-agreed flow levels in the Thomson and Macalister rivers have been reached. SRW is continuing to investigate options to improve information sharing and will do so in consultation with the flood wardens.

In this specific case, the concerns expressed by Mr Henry have been resolved to his satisfaction, and SRW has provided him with access to an alternative gauge used only for operational management purposes.

Flood wardens can directly contact the SRW duty officer at any time if they require additional information.

Gardiners Creek: contamination

Raised with: Minister for Environment and Climate Change

Raised by: Mr D. Davis

Raised on: 9 December 2009

REPLY:

This adjournment debate matter was raised with the Minister for Environment and Climate Change, however, because the issue falls under my responsibilities as the Minister for Water, I will respond on his behalf.

Melbourne Water's water quality monitoring data for 2008, including the *E.coli* data, are in fact available on its website at www.melbournewater.com.au. The median figure for samples taken in Gardiners Creek at the footbridge off Barrington Drive, in Ashwood, is 1,450 organisms per 100ml. The median figure for samples taken in Gardiners Creek at Glenferrie Road, in Hawthorn, is 930 organisms per 100ml.

It should also be noted that *E.coli* levels in Melbourne are often attributable to a range of sources not related to Melbourne's sewerage system, for example stormwater and animals (e.g. birds and possums).

Melbourne Water is currently implementing two major capital projects relating to Gardiners Creek. These projects involve bank stabilisation, weed control and revegetation. Both projects will indirectly assist to improve water quality in the creek by controlling bank erosion and reducing sedimentation of the waterway.

More generally, Melbourne Water is undertaking a range of projects to address the negative impacts of stormwater, including working closely with councils across Melbourne to improve their capacity to better manage stormwater. Melbourne Water advises that it is also partnering with councils to construct a range of Water Sensitive Urban Design projects, such as 'rain gardens', which remove pollutants from stormwater. Through the 'Living Rivers and Lower Yarra' programs, Melbourne Water has spent over \$20 million since 2005 on stormwater management capacity building activities, including strategic projects to support local Government.

Finally, Melbourne Water has developed the \$10 million 'Threatened Catchments Program'. This program aims to address the impacts of water quantity (in addition to quality) on the health of high-value streams and provide research findings to inform future stormwater management approaches.

Twelve Apostles: tourist facilities

Raised with: Minister for Environment and Climate Change

Raised by: Mr Vogels

Raised on: 10 December 2009

REPLY:

– The kiosk construction contract was let on 4 September 2009 to local contractors RD & KE Huf of Cavendish.

- The builder commenced internal site preparation works and started ordering materials on 22 September 2009.
- Construction works commenced on 7 October 2009 following the conclusion of the September school holidays.
- The kiosk opened on 17 December 2009.

Energy: biomass generator

Raised with: Minister for Environment and Climate Change

Raised by: Mr P. Davis

Raised on: 10 December 2009

REPLY:

The Victorian Government supports renewable energy recognising that it can reduce greenhouse gas emissions, create thousands of skilled jobs and provide a sustainable supply of energy. Victoria was the first state to set a renewable energy target. The Victorian Renewable Energy Target Scheme (VRET) commenced on 1 January 2007 with the aim of achieving 10 per cent of Victoria's electricity supply from renewable sources by 2016. VRET is expected to transition into the national Renewable Energy Target (RET) scheme in 2010. RET will guarantee electricity supply from renewable sources increases to 20 per cent by 2020.

The RET scheme is currently the key driver for investment in renewable energy, including bioenergy. The relative attractiveness of one renewable energy source over another is a matter for careful analysis by the project developers and investors. The government is actively playing a role in promoting bioenergy through the Victorian Bioenergy Network supported collaboratively by the Department of Primary Industries and Sustainability Victoria. Regional Development Victoria is also a key partner with an interest in encouraging bioenergy projects in rural and regional areas.

The Victorian Government has recently released its Timber Industry Strategy, to provide a framework and long-term direction for the Victorian timber industry. From the strategy, and in line with the expanded RET scheme, Victorian native forest wood waste will be able to be used for renewable energy generation, subject to appropriate carbon accounting and environmental safeguards.

Native forest wood waste will only be eligible to receive financial benefits through the sale of Renewable Energy Certificates if generation is in accordance with the expanded RET scheme regulations. These specify that native forest biomass eligible for energy generation must be harvested primarily for a purpose other than energy generation, such as being a by-product of a sawlog harvesting operation.

VicRoads: roadworks signage

Raised with: Minister for Roads and Ports

Raised by: Mr Finn

Raised on: 10 December 2009

REPLY:

I am informed that, as at the date, the question was raised:

The guidelines for setting appropriate speed limits at roadworks emphasise the importance of only lowering speed limits when works are under way.

In early December 2009 investigations activities were undertaken near the Calder Freeway interchange on the M80 Ring Road which required temporary traffic management measures to be established to ensure the safety of workers and drivers at the time.

There are several reasons why the speed limit may have been reduced on the Ring Road without any obvious works being undertaken including:

- Traffic Management may have just been set up or being packed up and therefore works had either not commenced or had just finished.
- Works may have been occurring on the other carriageway which required a reduced speed limit to protect workers on the other carriageway.

As the works being undertaken were investigations activities, it may not have been as apparent that work was under way as is more obvious during construction or maintenance activities.