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WRITTEN ADJOURNMENT RESPONSES

7 and 9 October 2008

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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, 7 October 2008

Fruit fly: control

Raised with: Agriculture

Raised by: Mr Vogels

Raised on: 5 February 2008

REPLY:

The Department of Primary Industries (DPI) maintains comprehensive state prevention, detection and management activities for fruit flies. These activities are enabled under powers outlined in the Plant Health and Plant Products Act 1994, as well as supporting regulations and orders.

DPI prevention programs for Queensland fruit fly (QFF) include the operation of temporary roadblocks at the border with New South Wales (NSW) in the Sunraysia area, where there is a high concentration of horticultural production. Victoria also funds NSW to undertake fruit fly preventative programs in Southern Riverina towns to reduce fruit fly incursions to Northern Victorian production areas. To enable early detection and eradication, DPI staff monitor over 6000 fruit fly traps weekly in horticultural production areas and adjacent towns across Victoria, with the majority being in the Fruit Fly Exclusion Zone (FFEZ).

Victoria has implemented a limited sterile insect technology (SIT) program in Northern Victoria to help prevent and eradicate outbreaks of fruit fly. This involves the release of up to 2 million sterile fruit flies weekly across a specific area. DPI is increasing its SIT capacity to 4 million per week by building a new rearing and distribution facility at DPI Tatura, which will be operational this year.

Fruit fly activities across Victoria are supported by extensive communication and community awareness programs aimed at prevention and managing the impacts of the pest. These programs include a Tristate community awareness program in Sunraysia, which is funded by the local industry and a nationally funded quarantine awareness program that focuses on interstate travellers.

The current outbreak in Melbourne raises questions as to whether it is a one-off incident or whether climatic change is influencing the ability of fruit flies to survive in the Metropolitan area. Concurrently, DPI is increasing fruit fly monitoring and community awareness around the outbreak sites to delimit the geographic spread of the pest.

Casey: councillors

Raised with: Local Government

Raised by: Mrs Peulich

Raised on: 28 February 2008

REPLY:

The Local Government Act 1989 provides that councils must adopt and review codes of conduct governing councillor behaviour.

The Government recognised that arrangements to deal with councillor behaviour needed to be improved and released a consultation paper, entitled "Better Local Governance" for public comment in November 2007.

The consultation paper proposed the establishment of local Councillor Conduct panels to assist councils to enforce their codes of conduct. It also proposed that VCAT be given disciplinary powers to deal with serious misconduct. The proposals in the Paper were strongly supported.

A Bill to give effect to these proposals will be introduced to Parliament.

In addition at my request Local Government Victoria officers met with the Mayor and Chief Executive Officer of the Casey City Council to discuss ongoing governance concerns. On 11 June 2008, they met with the full Council to make clear my expectations that the Council will work to improve its governance going forward.

The Council passed a resolution to investigate fortnightly facilitated issues meetings and a number of these have been held. My Department is closely monitoring the Council's progress in addressing its governance issues.

Equine influenza: federal levy

Raised with: Agriculture

Raised by: Mrs Petrovich

Raised on: 15 April 2008

REPLY:

For many years, the national horse industry has been keen to sign up to the national Emergency Animal Disease Response Agreement (EADRA). The EADRA imposes obligations and gives responsibilities to particular parties with respect to responses to emergency animal disease. Being signatory to the EADRA has many benefits, not least setting out funding agreements in the event of an emergency animal disease occurring. Part of the requirements of being a signatory to the EADRA is for an industry to have a mechanism in place to collect funds (levies) to meet its funding obligations. Such moves were made by the Howard Liberal Government to introduce a levy system in 2006 for the horse industry.

The Federal Government has underwritten the industry contribution (80% of the shared response costs) to the recent response to Equine Influenza (EI). However, the Rudd Labor Federal Government has agreed that it will not seek reimbursement of this underwriting from the industry; it has therefore effectively funded most of the response.

The draft levy legislation will give the Federal Agriculture Minister power to impose a levy collection process on the horse industry. It is quite appropriate that a levy is in place to ensure that the beneficiaries of a possible future emergency response (i.e. owners of horses) can contribute to the cost of the response in proportion to the benefit received.

I am advised that in April 2008 an Emergency Animal Disease Categorisation Panel reviewed the categorisation of equine influenza under the EADRA and affirmed that Category 4 (i.e. industry meets 80% of response costs) remains appropriate.

Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission: chief executive officer

Raised with: Attorney-General

Raised by: Mr Guy

Raised on: 16 April 2008

REPLY:

I refer to the matter you raised in the Adjournment Debate of 16 April where you called for the sacking of Dr Szoke from her position as Chief Conciliator and Chief Executive Officer of the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (“the Commission”) for her letter to the Editor of the “The Warrnambool Standard”.

This letter, published in “The Warrnambool Standard” on 16 April 2008, responds to Mr David Koch’s earlier letter opposing the Relationships Bill for recognising same sex relationships.

In her letter, Dr Szoke defends the right of same-sex couples to have similar access to property entitlements as heterosexual couples. In writing this letter Dr Szoke was carrying out an important function under the Victorian Equal Opportunity Act (“the Act”) of educating the public in order to promote recognition and acceptance of everyone’s right to equal opportunity.

This Government values having a robust Commission that promotes human rights and equal opportunity for all Victorians. This stands in stark contrast to the contemptuous treatment afforded to the Commission under the Kennett Government. In particular, I remind you that under the Kennett Government the Equal Opportunity Commissioner paid the price for being outspoken on issues by having her position abolished. That is not the type of Commission that Victorians deserve.

I am proud that, under this Government, we have a CEO of the Commission who is able to speak up and do her job properly. By speaking up on issues, Dr Szoke is carrying out an important function under the Act and, in any democracy, this is something that should be encouraged rather than discouraged.

Thank-you for raising this issue.

Robinvale network house: education funding

Raised with: Treasurer

Raised by: Mr Drum

Raised on: 16 April 2008

REPLY:

I refer to concerns raised by you regarding adult community education funding.

As you may be aware the Labor Government recently announced the ‘Securing Jobs for Your Future — Skills for Victoria’ Statement. The Statement commits \$316 million over four years for major reforms to Victoria’s skills system.

The Labor Government recognises the important role that Adult and Community Education (ACE) plays in improving the skills of people who have often had limited access to education. As part of ‘Securing Jobs for Your Future — Skills for Victoria’ the Government will increase funding to and strengthen the capabilities of ACE providers.

ACE providers such as Robinvale Network House will have the flexibility to deliver government subsidised training in response to demand rather than by fixed allocation. To meet an expected increase in demand for accredited training places the Government will invest \$139 million in additional training places. In addition, a further \$4 million is being provided to the Adult, Community and Further Education (ACFE) budget for providers such as Robinvale Network House to meet demand from those people that wish to undertake pre-accredited training.

The Government is also providing \$10.8 million for an integrated set of strategies to build the capabilities of ACFE including –

– Providing access to current technology and education software through the ACFE Microsoft Agreement;

- expanding the use of the A-Frame curriculum framework to strengthen delivery of unaccredited training; and
- piloting shared service centres to assist providers in competing for funding and increasing demand.

As you will appreciate, funding will be phased over a number of years due to the significance of these reforms.

I believe the investment outlined above recognises the importance this Government places on ACE and will greatly support this sector in continuing to deliver its valuable service to the community well into the future. To further build on these measures the Minister for Skills and Workforce development will deliver a new Ministerial Statement for Adult Community and Further Education in 2009.

I trust this information is of assistance.

Drought: government assistance

Raised with: Agriculture

Raised by: Ms Lovell

Raised on: 8 May 2008

REPLY:

The Victorian Government is well aware of the challenges that the ongoing drought is imposing on rural and regional Victoria.

The government has responded to these challenges with a range of specific measures to assist those most in need, as well as contributing to Commonwealth Exceptional Circumstances (EC) programs under state cost-sharing arrangements.

We are continuing to provide assistance through initiatives in the Future Farming Strategy, including Sustainable Farm Families, the Rural Futures Initiative, and Rural Financial Counselling Services, which are now funded for the next four years.

DPI continues to cooperate fully with the NRAC. Principally this involves providing the Federal Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) with required information to facilitate the EC review assessment.

I can assure you that DPI has provided its full support to NRAC during past reviews of Victoria's EC declared regions, and will continue this support for ongoing considerations by NRAC, as well as future reviews.

Disability services: respite care

Raised with: Community Services

Raised by: Mrs Petrovich

Raised on: 10 June 2008

REPLY:

In May 2008, the Federal Government and State Governments signed a landmark joint funding agreement for disability services which will see an extra \$1.9 billion spent on disability services across Australia, with \$478 million to be spent in Victoria over the next four years.

I am pleased to advise that the State Government will provide \$565,000 to Golden City Support Services who will contribute \$570,000 towards a six bed respite facility for residents of Macedon Ranges Shire. This clearly demonstrates a new spirit of co-operation between State and Federal Governments to deliver better services for people with disabilities, their families and carers.

I wish to acknowledge the dedication and commitment of local families and Golden City Support Services, who have worked hard to make this project happen.

Until the facility is opened, alternate disability respite services are currently available to families residing in the Macedon Ranges. Families in need of additional assistance are encouraged to contact Disability Services, Loddon Mallee Region.

The Department will continue to work closely with families requesting respite services in the Macedon Ranges area, supporting families to provide a caring environment for their children.

Newstead Primary School: funding

Raised with: Education

Raised by: Mr Drum

Raised on: 10 June 2008

REPLY:

All government schools are funded through the Student Resource Package (SRP). The SRP ensures a consistent and equitable approach to funding with a base allocation to recognise school size, plus student per capita funding linked to each student's stage of learning.

The SRP provides funding for curriculum programs including literacy. Each school is responsible for deciding how these funds should be used to support delivery of curriculum programs. Extra support is available to some schools through drought relief funding and the Student Family Occupation (SFO) index.

Liquor: Toorak licences

Raised with: Consumer Affairs

Raised by: Mrs Coote

Raised on: 11 June 2008

REPLY:

I am advised that three infringement notices (on-the-spot fines) have been issued to Mr Nasser during the past year for various offences committed at the Toorak Lion in the Trak Centre complex on 21 December 2007 and 24 April 2008, including supplying liquor to underage persons. Whereas the maximum penalty for each offence is \$6607, the 'on-the-spot' fine is \$661.

Mr Nasser has elected to have these matters dealt with in the Magistrates' Court rather than by paying the on-the-spot fine. If he is found guilty, he may be fined up to the maximum penalty for each offence.

You referred to a proposal to extend the existing licence in the Trak Centre. I am advised that the Director of Liquor Licensing has received an application to increase the trading hours and patron numbers at the Trak Showroom, in the basement of the Trak Centre. The liquor licence application will not be determined until a planning permit is provided.

I understand that an application for a new planning permit at the Trak Showroom was refused by City of Stonnington and the matter is being contested at the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT).

The application process for a new licence or a variation to an existing licence provides an opportunity for Council, Police and any person affected by the grant of the licence to object on the grounds of amenity. If an application for

a new licence is made, Victoria Police may object on the grounds that the applicant is not a suitable person to hold a liquor licence.

Where an existing licensee has contravened liquor laws, the Victoria Police, relevant municipal Council or Director of Liquor Licensing may apply to VCAT for an inquiry into the licensee.

I can assure you that the Government is committed to addressing alcohol-related issues in the community and ensuring that there is a fair and adequate licensing system in place.

Water: desalination plant

Raised with: Environment and Climate Change

Raised by: Mr O'Donohue

Raised on: 12 June 2008

REPLY:

Connection of the plant to the main electricity grid is just one of three power options under investigation, which also include on-site gas generation and hybrid options.

A 500 metre wide northern investigation corridor, approximately 75 kilometres long, has been identified as one of the options for the power supply to the Victorian Desalination Plant. This would involve connecting to the existing electricity supply network near Garfield/Nar Nar Goon and establishing a new transmission line running north from Wonthaggi. The corridor being investigated is 500 metres wide, but, if grid connection becomes the preferred power supply option, the final easement will be around 40 metres wide.

A dedicated Landowner Liaison Team, with powers under the Electricity Industry Act 2000, has been liaising with all landowners, occupiers or their representatives in the corridor, for the purpose of accessing their properties to conduct field survey work.

Detailed studies are being undertaken before any decision is made on a preferred power option. Studies will include assessments of environmental, visual, social, land use, planning and economic impacts associated with each of the three options under consideration — power from the electricity grid, gas generation and hybrid options.

In determining the exact route and nature of the power supply, the Government must balance environmental considerations consistent with the requirements of an Environment Effects Statement, the concerns of individual landowners and the practical design and operation of the power supply.

Youth Parliament: government response

Raised with: Sport, Recreation and Youth Affairs

Raised by: Ms Lovell

Raised on: 24 June 2008

REPLY:

The Victorian Government is committed to the participation of young people in their communities. Youth Parliament is an educative program that informs young people about the Victorian Parliament and provides a practical platform for them to develop skills in formulating and publicly debating ideas and opinions on issues of concern to them.

At the completion of Youth Parliament the ideas debated are formulated into a bill and presented to government for their information.

I have been monitoring the status of the bill relating to the Provision of Appropriate Respite Facilities in Victoria presented by Mr Martin Ireland as a member of the team sponsored by the Bendigo YMCA. I understand that Martin has been advised that the ideas and content of the bill have been received by the Hon Lisa Neville Minister for Community Services and Minister for Mental Health. I also understand that a member of Minister Neville's staff has spoken with Martin about his ideas for carer respite services in Victoria.

The bills which are debated and presented to government through Youth Parliament are just one of the ways this government encourages active citizenship. We are keen to encourage young people to speak up and get involved and we are always looking at new ways to help them get their voices heard.

We are currently implementing a new strategy, Young People Direct, where groups of young people will meet directly with me as Minister for Youth Affairs to share their ideas. We have already held a very successful Young People Direct Forum, and continue to provide opportunities for young people to participate in online feedback on a range of issues.

Thank you for bringing this matter to my attention. I look forward to continuing to work with young people to increase their understanding of parliamentary processes and providing opportunity for them to debate issues of community concern.

Water: desalination plant

Raised with: Agriculture

Raised by: Mr O'Donohue

Raised on: 25 June 2008

REPLY:

An Environment Effects Statement process is currently underway for the proposed desalination plant to be built near Kilcunda. This covers a range of matters including power source. Whilst there are minimal potential impacts from power options on agriculture output, until all due process is completed it is inappropriate to comment on any impacts.

VicForests: firewood contracts

Raised with: Treasurer

Raised by: Mr P. Davis

Raised on: 25 June 2008

REPLY:

I refer to concerns raised by you regarding VicForests and its current resource allocation and auction system.

The Brumby government is most concerned with maintaining a sustainable timber industry in Victoria and particularly in Gippsland where communities rely on the employment opportunities that the industry provides. For this reason, as I am sure you will be aware the government undertook through the Minister for Agriculture to commission a Timber Industry Strategy (TIS) to provide greater certainty to those affected by the Industry, as the press release of the 19th March describes.

VicForests is responsible for the commercial harvest and sale of timber products from State forests in eastern Victoria.

VicForests is cognisant of the importance of managing the production, sale and supply of timber resources in a manner which provides the optimal market environment to support the continued development of a viable and sustainable timber industry.

In this regard, VicForests in conjunction with Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE), has recently developed a robust process for determining the long term resource availability. The Joint Sustainable Harvest Level (JoSHL) project announced to the industry in May 2008 provides confidence that an average harvest of up to 500,000m³ of D+ sawlog per annum, proposed for the next 15 years, will reduce the likelihood of sudden changes in the quality, quantity and location of timber resources in Eastern Victoria.

Since 2005, VicForests has conducted approximately nine competitive open market sales of timber using the price allocation model. This equates to timber sales contracts awarded of approximately \$169M in value. The decision was taken to suspend the auction system, pending finalisation of the TIS and post bushfire resource modelling, until mid 2008.

It is important to recognise that the mix of species and grade which customers have historically received reflected that description of the forest estate before the Alpine (2002) and Great Divide (2006) fires which burnt significant areas of high quality, mature forest.

This auction, which commenced in July, will be of approximately 1.025 M cubic meters based on projected woodflows from 2010/11 to 2016/17 and will reflect new resource information and estimates of grade output. I am advised that this auction is anticipated to provide industry with greater certainty of wood allocations in the wake of the 2007 fires.

On new arrangements, price determination for native forest sawlog supply contracts sold by VicForests is undertaken through an open market, competitive on-line auction system rather than an arbitrary or negotiated price determination method. On residual arrangements, price escalation mechanisms have been developed for both Timber Supply Agreements and continuing administered licences. VicForests' supply contracts detail the mechanisms in place and the method by which price movements for sawlogs will be determined.

I understand that VicForests continues to work with customers to address issues of supply in relation to species and grade mix.

The Brumby government will continue to work towards greater certainty for the timber communities through the release of the TIS.

Police: Macarthur residence

Raised with: Police & Emergency Services

Raised by: Mr Koch

Raised on: 30 July 2008

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 \$1.75 billion in 2008-09, and funded the construction and refurbishment of over 150 police stations across the state.

The Government's additional support to Victoria Police is showing good results. Victoria's crime rate has fallen 24.5 per cent since 2000-01, with Victoria now having the lowest crime rate 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. In addition to this, the Government committed to providing additional resources and equipment to assist police in their work, including an extra 100 police cars.

While Government determines the overall level of police resources, the allocation of these resources is a matter for police command. The replacement and refurbishment of police stations and police residences forms part of the wider Victoria Police Strategic Facilities Development Plan and is assessed by police command against operational needs and weighed against other statewide priorities. This is then considered in the budget process.

I thank you for bringing this matter to my attention.

Ambulance services: south-eastern suburbs

Raised with: Health

Raised by: Mr Rich-Phillips

Raised on: 30 July 2008

REPLY:

As you maybe aware, the Brumby Government's recent State Budget delivered a \$185.7 million boost to ambulance services which represents the single biggest investment in the state's history. This package will deliver 59 new and upgraded services throughout Victoria. A mix of new services including 24 hour units, peak period units and Mobile Intensive Care Ambulance (MICA) single responder units have been planned in order to maximise the effectiveness of the new resources and ensure that communities continue to receive high quality care. All upgrades and service improvements included in this record package have been based on advice from the state's ambulance service, Ambulance Victoria.

MICA single responder units have operated successfully in metropolitan Melbourne for over ten years. MICA single responder units are sedans staffed by a specialist MICA paramedic, and are designed to quickly deliver care to those most in need. They are supported by two advanced life support paramedics who are simultaneously dispatched to assist with treatment and transport when needed. MICA services are being reorganised and streamlined at a number of metropolitan stations, with the rollout of more MICA single responder units to strengthen clinical care. Currently, in the metropolitan region MICA services operate from twenty locations. The reorganisation of MICA services will see MICA services operating from twenty six locations. This will ensure that more Victorians benefit from a better spread of MICA care.

These service improvements are also supported by the following emergency and intensive care specialists who are "very confident that the proposed restructure will increase the availability of MICA to those patients who required the MICA skill set."

*Associate Professor Mark Fitzgerald ASM, MBBS, FACEM, MRACMA
Director, Emergency and Trauma Centre, Alfred Hospital, Medical Adviser, Ambulance Victoria*

*Associate Professor Stephen Bernard MD FACEM FJFICM,
Intensive Care Physician, Alfred Hospital, Medical Adviser, Ambulance Victoria*

*Dr Marcus Kennedy MBBS, FACEM, FRACGP, DA(UK), DipIMC(RCSEd)
Medical Director, Adult Retrieval Victoria*

In relation to service delivery specifically in Frankston and Dandenong there will be continuing MICA coverage in both areas. For Frankston, the existing MICA Unit will be converted to a 24 hour MICA single responder unit with an additional 24 hour ambulance crew and 12 hour Peak Period Unit also commencing in the area. This expansion in ambulance services in Frankston represents almost a \$10M investment in services. More generally along the Peninsula, the Dromana MICA Unit will remain in its current configuration, with a new 24 hr MICA single

responder unit being introduced in Chelsea and a new peak period unit in Patterson Lakes. For Dandenong, the MICA Unit will be converted to a 24 hour MICA single responder unit with an additional 24 hour ambulance crew to commence in Dandenong.

Ambulance Victoria advise that the reorganisation of MICA services is based on a more contemporary approach to MICA service delivery, with the increase of MICA single responder units aligning with national and international trends. In situations where two MICA paramedics are required, I am informed that dispatch processes are in place to meet this requirement. I am advised that Ambulance Victoria is undertaking a comprehensive consultation process with staff about the reorganisation of these resources.

Water: irrigators

Raised with: Water

Raised by: Ms Lovell

Raised on: 19 August 2008

REPLY:

I refer to the matter you raised during the Adjournment debate of 19 August 2008 regarding fixed charges for water entitlement holders in the 2008-09 season.

Over the past three years the Victorian Government has provided approximately \$278 million in assistance to help rural communities battling the worst drought on record. The broad range of initiatives has provided financial assistance to communities, businesses, farmers and employees, and included \$101 million for rebates on fixed water charges.

To assist farmers to manage their payments in 2006-07, the drought relief package allowed eligible customers to defer the payment of the balance of fixed charges greater than the \$5000 Government rebate amount, to four annual instalments over the following four years. The majority of farmers, however, chose not to take up this payment arrangement.

The Government is continuing to provide significant community support through the Rural Futures Initiative, the Sustaining Farm Families Program and rural financial counselling services as part of the recently released Future Farming Statement. It also has an ongoing commitment to the Commonwealth Government's Exceptional Circumstances (EC) Interest Rate Subsidy program, which will continue for as long as the Victorian regions remain EC-declared. The Government focuses on delivering support programs that complement the Commonwealth Government's initiatives.

Modelling suggests that low inflows may be with us for some time and the Government is continuing to monitor seasonal conditions and consider the most effective means of assistance to support the needs of rural and regional Victoria in 2008-09.

Thank you for raising this matter with me.

National parks: prospecting

Raised with: Environment and Climate Change

Raised by: Mr Hall

Raised on: 19 August 2008

REPLY:

The issue raised by Mr Hall is longstanding. The Prospectors and Miners Association of Victoria (PMAV) has written to my predecessor and myself at least three times over the past 12 months, seeking access to additional national parks (including Grampians, Alpine and Yarra Ranges National Parks and Lerderberg State Park) for prospecting for minerals.

The major portion of the State's public land is available for prospecting. Prospecting under miners right can occur on State forest, most reserves and some national and State parks. Prospecting is not permitted in the majority of national and State parks or in a number of specified rivers, streams and other Crown land reserves.

Prospecting is not necessarily a benign activity. It can involve digging of soils and interference with vegetation and the beds and banks of streams.

Whether or not prospecting may occur on specific Crown lands is usually determined via the processes of the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council (or its predecessors), with the acceptance of the Government. Particular details in relation to prospecting are usually determined via the management planning process. Both of these processes involve considerable stakeholder consultation, including consultation with the PMAV.

The PMAV has persistently argued for greater access to national parks over a number of years and spanning a number of Governments (including the former Kennett Liberal Government). Most recently, I indicated in a letter to the PMAV on 10 July 2008 that '*there are no plans to amend the National Parks Act to permit prospecting in those parks identified in your [PMAV's] original request... (namely, Grampians, Alpine and Yarra Ranges National Parks and Lerderberg State Park).*' This response was entirely consistent with previous responses.

As there are no plans to change Victoria's land use determination process and there is no policy to amend the National Parks Act to accommodate the PMAV request, I do not consider there is significant value in meeting with the PMAV at this stage.

Woori Yallock Creek: stream flow management

Raised with: Environment and Climate Change

Raised by: Mr O'Donohue

Raised on: 19 August 2008

REPLY:

I refer to the matter you raised during the Adjournment on the 19 August 2008 regarding the streamflow management plan for Woori Yallock Creek.

The appointment of a consultative committee to develop a stream flow management plan is a legislative process under Section 29 of the *Water Act 1989*. The committee is appointed by the Minister for Water.

The appointment of the committee must follow the process provided by the Water Act. This process was established to ensure that appropriate people are appointed. This is a thorough, and sometimes time consuming process, which involves:

- each of the nominees for the consultative committee undergoing police checks;
- the Minister consulting with the Victorian Farmers Federation on the approved nominees; and
- the appointment of the Chair for the committee being approved by Cabinet.

Melbourne Water, on behalf of the Minister for Water, advertised for expressions of interest for the consultative committee from the local community on 18 March 2008. The Minister also wrote to affected statutory bodies seeking nominations. Nominations were received by 18 April 2008 and are now with the Minister of Water for

consideration. At the completion of this process there will be a ministerially appointed committee to develop a draft management plan. The committee will have 18 months to prepare the draft management plan.

Werribee research station: future

Raised with: Agriculture

Raised by: Mr Finn

Raised on: 19 August 2008

REPLY:

The Department of Primary Industries (DPI) wants to ensure that it has the right people in the right places to meet the growing and changing needs of primary industries.

At a time when the farm sector and regional Victoria are being reshaped by climate change, global commodity markets and demographic trends, DPI must also change to maximise the value of its services.

As announced on 5 August 2008, DPI is proposing to cease piggery operations at Werribee. The national agricultural research, development and extension agenda will see states and agencies other than Victoria provide pork research & development. Other farm activities will continue with regular review to ensure alignment with DPI strategic directions.

DPI is providing support and will endeavour to find alternative work for affected staff during the redeployment period.

It is also proposed that Chemistry laboratory staff relocation options be considered as part of the DPI future accommodation needs review. This is because the Chemistry laboratory is in poor structural condition and requires major capital improvement.

Toolangi research station: future

Raised with: Agriculture

Raised by: Mrs Petrovich

Raised on: 19 August 2008

REPLY:

The Department of Primary Industries (DPI) aims to have the right people in the right places to meet the growing and changing needs of farming.

At a time when the farm sector and regional Victoria are being reshaped by climate change, global commodity markets and demographic trends, DPI must also change to maximise the value of its services.

Land is underutilised at the 136 hectare DPI site at Toolangi, north east of Melbourne.

Historically, Toolangi has been a very useful site due to its high altitude above aphid flights providing geographical protection from some pests and diseases. However, the impact of climate change on insect spread and distribution means that relying on geographical isolation is increasingly a high risk strategy compared to strict hygiene and management.

Knoxfield is a major Australian centre for disease diagnostics, it also manages high health nuclear stock and breeding programs for the horticultural industry and has done so very successfully since 1993 with no cross-contamination issues, due to strict hygiene and management protocols.

All research programs currently conducted at the Toolangi site will be continued at Knoxfield. Therefore, since the site closure decision has been made, DPI has been, and is, actively consulting with industry bodies over the relocation of the programs and associated facilities, including:

- Victorian Certified Seed Potato Authority;
- Potato Growers Council;
- Victorian Strawberry Industry Certification Authority;
- Toolangi Strawberry Runners Growers Co-operative; and
- Victorian Farmer's Federation.

Water: small towns water quality fund

Raised with: Water

Raised by: Ms Tierney

Raised on: 20 August 2008

REPLY:

The \$20 million Small Town Water Quality Fund was launched on 5 September 2008 in Avoca.

Regional urban water corporations and regional councils are eligible to apply for funding on a township basis for:

- water supply security improvements;
- water supply quality improvements;
- new water services;
- septic tank upgrades; and
- small town wastewater solutions.

Proposals will be assessed against the following criteria:

- service improvement;
- value for money; and
- public health and environmental protection.

The fund will provide 1:1 matching funding of up to \$1 million per project.

World War I: Cobbers memorial statue

Raised with: Veterans Affairs

Raised by: Mrs Coote

Raised on: 21 August 2008

REPLY:

I agree that the unveiling of the statue commemorating the people who served at the Battle of Fromelles was indeed memorable and moving.

In relation to your proposal to rename the corner where this statue sits 'Cobbers Corner', I have been advised that such matters are for the Shrine of Remembrance's Trustees to determine.

I have asked that officers in the Department of Planning and Community Development contact the Shrine of Remembrance to pass this suggestion on for their consideration.

Housing: Williamstown

Raised with: Housing

Raised by: Mr Finn

Raised on: 21 August 2008

REPLY:

The two high rise towers in Williamstown currently provide public housing for 108 households. Within the last 10 years, all of these units have been upgraded to improve the level of amenity of tenants.

Like other residents of Williamstown, the 108 households residing in the Williamstown high rise towers have established connections and friendships in the local community and benefit from the services available in the area.

The Government has no plans to sell these buildings and the gentrification of Melbourne's inner suburbs should not occur at the expense of those Victorians least able to afford to relocate. There is a need for these communities to be enriched through having a diversity of people from different backgrounds and socio-economic circumstances. The Williamstown high rise towers will be retained for public housing and works will be undertaken to maintain the standards of amenity that all Victorians deserve.

Wind energy: Mount Pollock

Raised with: Planning

Raised by: Mr Guy

Raised on: 21 August 2008

REPLY:

International Power (Australia) Pty Ltd has sought approval for the use and development of land for a 14 turbine wind energy facility at Mt Pollock, on farmland approximately 10 km north-east of Winchelsea and 5 km south-west of Inverleigh.

Under the provisions of the Surf Coast Planning Scheme, I am responsible for assessing wind energy facility proposals that are in excess of 30MW. As the total capacity of the proposed Mt Pollock wind farm at 29.4 MW is less than the specified capacity threshold, Surf Coast Shire Council is the responsible authority for assessing this planning permit application.

The government is committed to supporting renewable energy development in appropriate locations to achieve a more sustainable future for Victoria.

Regardless of whether or not I am the responsible authority, all planning permit applications must be assessed against the *Policy and Planning Guidelines for Development of Wind Energy Facilities in Victoria (2003)*. This document clearly sets out application requirements and provides criteria for determining whether projects deliver sustainable outcomes for the natural environment, landscapes and rural communities.

Surf Coast Shire Council referred the planning permit application to the Department of Sustainability and Environment. The department did not object to the proposed wind farm, subject to conditions relating to the micro-siting of some of the proposed turbines and the preparation of a native vegetation offset management plan.

The applicant has documented why the site is suitable for the wind energy facility and also the environmental impacts of the proposal including, landscape, noise and flora and fauna impacts. Council has assessed this information and the merits of this proposal and decided to issue a notice of decision to grant a permit. Objectors have the right to apply to have this decision independently reviewed by the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT).

I understand that the objectors have lodged applications for review with VCAT.

Whilst I appreciate that this is a locally controversial application, I am confident that it is best resolved through the VCAT hearing process which will enable the planning merits of the proposal and Council's decision to be independently reviewed and determined.

YOUthinc: alcohol diversion program

Raised with: Community Services

Raised by: Mrs Petrovich

Raised on: 9 September 2008

REPLY:

I am advised that the issue raised sits within the portfolio responsibility of the Minister for Police and Emergency Services.

Smoking: sporting facilities

Raised with: Health

Raised by: Mrs Coote

Raised on: 11 September 2008

REPLY:

The Brumby Government is committed to tackling cancer and the epidemic of chronic disease. In recognition of this, the Premier and I released the Victorian Tobacco Control Strategy 2008-2013: Consultation Submission Guide 2008 in August this year. This Strategy sets ambitious targets to reduce smoking prevalence over the next five years through a combination of legislative and other actions.

Smoking bans have incrementally been introduced in Victoria over a number of years, including bans on smoking in enclosed workplaces on 1 March 2006 and in enclosed licensed premises on 1 July 2007. These laws have been instituted on the basis of strong scientific evidence that long term exposure to second hand tobacco smoke in enclosed areas increases the risk of cardiovascular disease, lung cancer and other diseases.

Current legislation does not apply to outdoor areas at sporting facilities such as the Albert Park Golf Driving Range. Some sporting facilities have gone further by developing and implementing an individualised policy which is appropriate for their facilities and the patrons who use them.

The Victorian Tobacco Control Strategy 2008-2013 contains a number of initiatives aimed at helping smokers to quit and stay quit, as well as denormalising smoking for young people. This includes smoking bans in cars carrying children and on government school grounds. The inclusion of outdoor areas in school grounds is an important step in providing a smoke-free environment for children and young people, as well as sending a clear message that a healthy lifestyle does not include smoking.

In addition to these two initiatives, the Strategy proposes to:

- Reform point of sale displays
- Review penalties and tougher enforcement of the *Tobacco Act 1987*
- Help pregnant women to quit
- Ban temporary sales and youth-orientated tobacco products and packaging
- Improve access to cessation services for Aboriginal and other high-prevalence groups

These initiatives, in combination with the \$150 million extra funding to tackle cancer announced in this year's budget, and an emphasis upon the prevention of avoidable risk factors for cancer, will build upon Victoria's existing successes in reducing the burden of smoking in the community.

WRITTEN ADJOURNMENT RESPONSE

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

Thursday, 9 October 2008

Sustainability and Environment: water register database

Raised with: Water

Raised by: Ms Lovell

Raised on: 10 September 2008

REPLY:

The allocation bank account statements from the Victorian Water Register are a new service provided to irrigators in northern Victoria. These formal statements provide a complete and accurate record of their water allocations, usage and trade throughout the year.

This important information was not previously supplied. It is now available thanks to the implementation of the Victorian Water Register, which provides security and transparency about the ownership and management of water entitlements. This new service has been widely appreciated. This has been expressed by many irrigators.

More than 21,000 statements were mailed out in late July. Due to the complex nature of some farming enterprises, in some cases there are 10 or more holders of a single allocation bank account. While all the account holders are shown in the body of the statement, some people have expressed concern that not all holders are shown in the address pane of the envelope.

The Department of Sustainability and Environment has heard these concerns and altered the statements to ensure that, to the extent possible, all future mail-outs will be addressed to all allocation bank account holders. In the example you raised, future statements would be addressed to both John and June Citizen.

The Victorian Government recognises the importance and value of water to communities in northern Victoria. New initiatives such as the annual allocation bank account statements are indicative of the improved services the Government is providing to our irrigators to help them better manage their businesses.

