

**PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA**

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES  
(HANSARD)**

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL**

**FIFTY-SIXTH PARLIAMENT**

**FIRST SESSION**

**WRITTEN ADJOURNMENT RESPONSES**

**11, 12 & 13 November 2008**

**(Extract from book 16)**

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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, 11 November 2008**

**Drought: rate subsidy**

**Raised with:** Premier

**Raised by:** Ms Lovell

**Raised on:** 21 August 2008

**REPLY:**

- As you have noted in your questions of 21 August and 7 October 2008, much of regional Victoria continues to endure social and economic hardships as a result of the ongoing drought and consecutive years of low water allocations.
- In response to these conditions, the Victorian Government has consistently implemented drought assistance measures that facilitate farmers to better manage the long term structural adjustment process and adaptation to climate change impacts.
- For instance, on the 13th of October, I announced a \$115 million drought relief package that will deliver \$82 million in direct support to farmers, \$22 million for drought employment initiatives and \$11 million to support drought-affected communities.
- This package, which includes extensions of the municipal rate subsidy, water rate rebates for irrigators and drought mental health services, is in addition to existing drought assistance measures and the \$205 million investment announced in the Future Farming Strategy.
- Together, these government assistance measures will help to enhance the productivity and resilience of farm businesses and assist them manage their business risks and prepare for the inevitable drier conditions.
- The Victorian Government will continue to closely monitor seasonal conditions and the impact of climate change and ensure that appropriate support is provided to Victorian farmers and rural communities.

**Water: Victorian plan**

**Raised with:** Minister for Water

**Raised by:** Mr Drum

**Raised on:** 9 September 2008

**REPLY:**

The Victorian Government is taking the current drought and the impact of climate change very seriously. It is committed to responding to immediate needs and implementing long-term planning using the best available information.

Over the last 20 years, hydrological models have been developed to represent complex water supply systems including for Geelong, Melbourne and northern Victoria.

These models assess the potential impacts and risks to water supply under historical and climate change inflow conditions.

Baseline system behaviour in the models is based on long-term historic water availability. Future scenarios have also been assessed assuming low, medium and high climate change scenarios and also the continuation of the low flow conditions since 1996.

In the case of Melbourne and other urban authorities, a range of more extreme scenarios have also been considered for extreme drought contingency planning.

Baseline system modelling of the northern Victorian river and irrigation systems based on current infrastructure and operating conditions has shown that, on average, 800 to 900 billion litres of water is lost each year through system inefficiencies, leaks and evaporation. Using the inflow pattern of the drought conditions experienced over the past 10 years as a guide, modelling indicates that even with reduced irrigation diversions following climate change, the average annual losses will still exceed 700 billion litres.

The amount of loss varies from year to year depending on seasonal water allocations, weather conditions and system operations. In some years, like last year when system operations were curtailed to make the most of the water available, the losses would be below the average, but in other years they would be higher than the average.

The Government has targeted average savings of 225 billion litres from Stage 1 of the Northern Victoria Irrigation Modernisation Project. The Government is confident this target will be met even if the inflow conditions of the last 10 years become more typical. The Government believes further savings of up to an average 200 billion litres a year are achievable from Stage 2.

### **Ballarat: councillors**

**Raised with: Minister for Local Government**

**Raised by: Mr Vogels**

**Raised on: 9 September 2008**

#### **REPLY:**

Following a four month investigation, the Inspectors of Municipal Administration submitted their report and it was tabled in Parliament on 9 October 2008.

I have accepted in full the findings of this investigation and have referred the report to Local Government Victoria, in the Department of Planning and Community Development, in relation to both potential prosecutions and the apparent flaws in Council's procedures and practices.

With regard to potential prosecutions, Local Government Victoria has advised that there is sufficient admissible evidence to lay charges in relation to the failures to disclose interests in the Registers of Interests against both Councillors Anderson and Vendy.

The report has exposed a culture of inadequate transparency and probity amongst certain Councillors, and that information is now in the public domain.

In prosecuting these two councillors we are taking strong action against those who the report shows have repeatedly failed to meet requirements expected of them and to live up to their duty to the people of Ballarat.

By making the report itself public, we are also sending a powerful message to councils across the state about how important it is to have rigorous governance processes in place to ensure transparency and integrity in decision making processes.

In addition to laying these charges, my Department will consult with the Council to work on ways that they can improve their processes and practices to an appropriate standard.

**West Footscray Football Club: facilities**

**Raised with:** Minister for Local Government

**Raised by:** Mr Finn

**Raised on:** 9 September 2008

**REPLY:**

I understand Maribyrnong City Council has a six month seasonal agreement with the West Footscray Football Club to use the ground and the pavilion between the 1st of April and the 30th of September. From the 1st of October to the 30th of March the ground and the pavilion are used by the Yarraville Cricket Club under a similar agreement.

Following complaints last summer that the pavilion was being used for inappropriate functions by the football club outside its agreement period, the Council advised the club that it needs to vacate the rooms from 1 October to 30 March.

I also understand that a number of meetings have been held between the council and the club. The club has agreed to develop a code of conduct for members, and further discussions are planned over the summer to address the concerns of local residents and the council as to the activities of the club.

I am advised that on the 17th of September, the Mayor of Maribyrnong wrote to the Member for Western Metropolitan to outline the council's position in relation to the issues he raised in the Adjournment debate.

In such circumstances, I do not think it is appropriate for me to seek to intervene.

**Genoa River: weed control**

**Raised with:** Minister for Environment and Climate Change

**Raised by:** Mr P. Davis

**Raised on:** 10 September 2008

**REPLY:**

As you will be aware, the heritage listed Genoa River runs through NSW, into Victoria and incorporates a Wilderness Zone shared between the two states. I share your view that weed control works are of critical importance in maintaining the integrity of this remote but significant stretch of heritage river.

For the past ten years, a cross-border strategy, developed by the Victorian and NSW state governments in consultation with key stakeholders, has addressed threats to natural values in this area, with a specific emphasis on pest plants. Through the development and support of an inter-state co-operative committee with representation from both states, funding applications to federal government programs for major weed programs have also been successful.

Several, well managed projects have been undertaken in recent years to control the key species you have highlighted. In 2000 contractors were engaged by Parks Victoria to undertake willow control down the Genoa from the Victorian border. At the same time, works commenced in the upper catchment in NSW. This project was audited in May 2000 by PricewaterhouseCoopers and Melbourne University and the control work was found to have been effective. Further monitoring as part of the willow control program was undertaken by Parks Victoria staff and volunteers in 2001, 2003 and 2006.

A blackberry control project which began in 2003 also included the monitoring and control of willow. A further three-year program commenced in 2006 under the 'Defeating the Weed Menace' program and included the Wallagarough River to address key weed species in the whole Mallacoota Lake catchment. Further work occurred

in 2007 looking at blackberry and willow infestations where 46 km of river was treated from the NSW-Victorian border to the southern boundary of Coopracambra National Park.

Earlier this year a monitoring protocol was established to record changes in pest plant infestations along the river corridor. Rangers from Parks Victoria and NSW National Parks division hiked down the Genoa River to provide a thorough assessment of weeds. Future control works will be determined based on this monitoring. Detailed mapping of the river, showing density of various weed species, will allow enhanced planning of protection and control strategies.

Further on-ground monitoring will occur in March 2009 and the river corridor will be monitored using the same protocol on a two to three year cycle.

### **Sale Primary School: Japanese program**

**Raised with: Minister for Education**

**Raised by: Mr P. Davis**

**Raised on: 11 September 2008**

#### **REPLY:**

I am informed as follows:

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, in conjunction with representatives of primary, secondary and specialist education, has developed a standard schedule of facilities entitlement for each enrolment band for all schools within Victoria.

The schedules have been established on the basis of equity for all of the 1600 government schools which are managed by the Department.

As part of the primary school schedules, classrooms are provided on a ratio of 1:25 students, and the school also receives art, music and multi purpose facilities.

Each of the newer permanent classrooms is also allocated withdrawal spaces which may be used for a variety of purposes, at the school's discretion, such as LOTE, Reading Recovery or other small group activities.

All schools are provided with flexibility under the current schedules for extracurricular activities.

Please also note that the Department has provided Sale Primary School with a new 5 modular classroom (two classrooms) which will provide the school with two additional classrooms to assist the school in their flexibility even further.

### **Hillview Bunyip Aged Care: hostel expansion**

**Raised with: Minister for Environment and Climate Change**

**Raised by: Mr O'Donohue**

**Raised on: 11 September 2008**

#### **REPLY:**

The Bunyip Hillview Aged Care development is expanding into an area including native vegetation and Southern Brown Bandicoot habitat. Bandicoots are frequently seen in, and around, Bunyip township, and have been known to enter the buildings at Hillview.

Normal planning processes are being followed; Cardinia Shire Council referred the development to the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) for comment on proposed losses of native vegetation and wildlife habitat.

Southern Brown Bandicoot is listed as Endangered under the Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*. It is not currently listed under the Victorian *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988*.

A qualified fauna consultant has assessed the bandicoot population and habitat in the area of the property, and is providing proposed mitigation measures, to be implemented as part of a package offsetting losses of native vegetation and bandicoot habitat.

The Department of Sustainability and Environment is waiting to receive the consultant's advice. Upon receiving this advice, DSE will immediately review it and provide a formal response.

### **Southern Recycling: operations**

**Raised with:** Minister for Planning

**Raised by:** Mr Atkinson

**Raised on:** 11 September 2008

#### **REPLY:**

- There are currently a number of actions and initiatives to address amenity impacts in the Heatherdale Road area and to improve the viability of the area. These include:
  - A planning scheme amendment to the Maroondah Planning Scheme (C70) to rezone a key site on the Maroondah Highway EastLink junction and to facilitate urban improvements in the Heatherdale Road industrial area. The amendment will help activate the precinct and improve its visual and pedestrian amenity.
  - A Pollution Abatement Notice issued by the Environmental Protection Authority to CMA Recycling, the owners of Southern Recycling, requiring them to adhere to specified noise limits or face fines of up to \$250,000.
  - Fines of over \$13,000 and compliance orders issued to CMA Recycling by the Maroondah City Council.
- Rezoning of industrial land is unlikely to restrict the existing use rights of current industrial operators in the area. Additionally, rezoning of this land may greatly undermine future industrial activity in Melbourne's east.
- Maroondah City Council continues to monitor operators in the Heatherdale Road industrial area and to take action when appropriate. Additionally, it is presently planning for the future of the area both to capitalise on EastLink and to facilitate significant urban improvements. As such, at this stage, additional action is not warranted.

### **Port Phillip: parkland fitness programs**

**Raised with:** Minister for Environment and Climate Change

**Raised by:** Mrs Coote

**Raised on:** 8 October 2008

#### **REPLY:**

Personal fitness training is a strongly growing area of the fitness industry. As a result, there have been an increasing number of commercial fitness trainers using public reserves.

The Port Phillip City Council issues permits for such use of Council owned and Crown land reserves for which it is the appointed manager. The Council's 'Guidelines on the Use of Council Reserves by Commercial Fitness Groups and Personal Trainers' have assisted to regulate this activity. The permit system and guidelines are being trialled over a 6 month period, between 1 October 2008 and 31 March 2009, following which the system will be reviewed.

The permit system applies to any public reserve within the City of Port Phillip, with the exception of exclusion zones listed within the guidelines.

General permit condition j) on Council's 'Application for permit for use of public open space—fitness groups and personal trainers' states that each commercial fitness trainer approved by the City of Port Phillip 'must not create any noise from training activities that unreasonably disturb other users and adjacent residents'. The guidelines and permit system provide a means by which members of the community may complain about a particular group/trainer or site. The guidelines state that 'should Council receive a high level of complaints about a particular group/trainer or site; Council reserves the right to restrict or cancel permit.'

The Council can be contacted on 9209 6777 regarding noise levels from fitness activities on public land.

### **Mount Hotham: leases**

**Raised with:** Minister for Environment and Climate Change

**Raised by:** Mr P. Davis

**Raised on:** 8 October 2008

#### **REPLY:**

Thank you for your Adjournment Debate Question concerning Mount Hotham Alpine Resort Management Board's inclusion of a new lease provisions relating to the assignment of Alpine Resort Leases.

I am aware of the issues that have been raised surrounding the Mount Hotham Alpine Resort Management Board application of the approved Alpine Resorts Leasing Policy.

The assignment clause you refer to had been included in a proposed lease submitted for approval in principle. The Department of Sustainability and Environment advised the Board at the time that the non-assignment clause was unacceptable.

The Board subsequently submitted an amended assignment clause that did not prohibit assignment. To date no leases containing the revised clause have been submitted for my approval.

However, given the Board's concerns with Clubs assigning their leases and having regard to recent correspondence on this matter from a number of stakeholders, departmental officers together with the Chief Executive of the Board and the Board's legal advisers are meeting to discuss and resolve these issues before any further leases are submitted for my approval.

### **Licola Wilderness Village: government assistance**

**Raised with:** Minister for Environment and Climate Change

**Raised by:** Mrs Petrovich

**Raised on:** 15 October 2008

#### **REPLY:**

I refer to the issue you raised during the Adjournment in the Legislative Council on 15 October 2008 regarding government assistance for the Licola Wilderness Village.

Since the June 2007 floods this Government has provided \$60,000,000 of assistance to help communities recover from the disaster through its various departments and agencies. Catchment Management Authorities who have responsibility for river health received \$10,000,000 to undertake clean-up works to replace and repair assets and maintain the physical stability of rivers.

The West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority (WGCMA) has identified \$1,100,000 of additional rehabilitation and recovery projects at Licola that will be delivered over the next two to three years. This includes \$200,000 to move and deepen the river channel to help reclaim land lost in the floods and to protect the Lions Licola Wilderness Village from future flood events. The WGCMA has, in cooperation with Village Management, already undertaken some works to stabilise the channel and banks.

I encourage the Lions Licola Wilderness Village to continue to work closely with the WGCMA and the Licola community to ensure that the best possible outcome for reducing the impact of future natural disasters is achieved.

### **Asbestos-related diseases: apology**

**Raised with: Premier**

**Raised by: Ms Pennicuik**

**Raised on: 16 October 2008**

#### **REPLY:**

I thank the Member for Southern Metropolitan for raising the adjournment debate matter.

The Victorian Government recognises the impact of asbestos-related diseases in our community. We acknowledge the immense pain and suffering that is caused by asbestos exposure. That is why the Government issued an apology to former workers of the State Electricity Commission of Victoria and recently introduced the Asbestos Diseases Compensation Bill.

The Member for Southern Metropolitan proposed a cross-Government task force to administer the whole issue of domestic asbestos. I thank the Member for raising this issue. It is a proposal that is worth considering and I will ask my Department to look into this further.



## WRITTEN ADJOURNMENT RESPONSES

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

**Wednesday, 12 November 2008**

**Cycling: footpath safety**

**Raised with:** Minister for Police and Emergency Services

**Raised by:** Mrs Coote

**Raised on:** 27 May 2008

**REPLY:**

I refer to the issue you raised during the Adjournment Debate in the Legislative Council on 27 May 2008.

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 positive results. Victoria's crime rate has fallen 23.5 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.

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.

The Government, together with Victoria Police, VicRoads and the Transport Accident Commission (TAC), is striving to develop policies, procedures and practices that will further reduce Victoria's road toll, as well as reduce dangerous driving behaviour and road trauma. The *arrive alive* road safety campaign, that commenced in 2002, has achieved a 20 per cent reduction in the road toll. It focuses on a range of factors that contribute to road incidents including, speed, road design, drink driving, drug driving, fatigue, older driver safety and young/novice driver safety.

The new 2008-2017 *arrive alive* campaign takes a 'safe systems' approach to tackling road safety issues by focusing on safer roads, safer vehicles, and safer drivers. The Government aims to achieve a 30 per cent reduction in deaths and injuries by the end of the ten-year strategy. That is 100 fewer lives lost per year and 2000 serious injuries less per year.

Improving road safety requires a community effort and all Victorian road users share a responsibility to help make our roads safer.

Thank you for raising this matter with me.

**Sewerage: Lindenow and Lindenow South**

**Raised with:** Minister for Water

**Raised by:** Mr P. Davis

**Raised on:** 9 October 2008

**REPLY:**

In 2004, the Victorian Government announced the \$42 million Country Towns Water Supply and Sewerage Program (CTWSSP) as part of the State Government's White Paper 'Our Water Our Future'.

The CTWSSP provides funding to 52 schemes to implement water supply and sewerage solutions. The CTWSSP is now fully committed.

The Victorian Government committed \$20 million to the Small Town Water Quality Fund (STWQF) in the State Budget announced on 1 May 2007. This fund aims to assist small country towns to improve their water and sewerage services.

The STWQF was launched on 5 September 2008 at Avoca. DSE staff have conducted 11 information sessions across the State, including at Bairnsdale, to inform all urban water corporations and rural councils of the availability of the new fund and how to submit applications on behalf of their communities.

The STWQF will target projects that provide effective and efficient services by water corporations and local councils.

Projects will be assessed according to the following selection criteria:

- Service improvement;
- Value for money; and
- Public and environmental health protection.

The East Gippsland Shire Council has identified, in its domestic wastewater management plan, that Lindenow and Lindenow South can be serviced through the upgrade and better management of onsite domestic wastewater management systems.

The East Gippsland Shire Council and East Gippsland Water are eligible to apply for funding under the STWQF for Lindenow and Lindenow South to improve their wastewater management systems.

**WRITTEN ADJOURNMENT RESPONSES**

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

**Thursday, 13 November 2008**

**Mallacoota: aged-care facility**

**Raised with:** Minister for Environment and Climate Change

**Raised by:** Mr P. Davis

**Raised on:** 10 June 2008

**REPLY:**

The Mallacoota Aged Care Inc. has approached the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) with the view to expanding its existing facilities onto an area of adjoining unreserved Crown land within the Township of Mallacoota.

Officers from DSE are working very closely with representatives from the Aged Care Group in an endeavour to identify and provide a suitable location for the Aged-Care facility.

