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**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES  
(HANSARD)**

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL**

**FIFTY-SIXTH PARLIAMENT**

**FIRST SESSION**

**WRITTEN ADJOURNMENT RESPONSES**

**2, 3 & 4 December 2008**

**(Extract from book 17)**

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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 December 2008**

**Planning: Toorak Village development**

**Raised with: Planning**

**Raised by: Mrs Coote**

**Raised on: 29 May 2008**

**REPLY:**

A 12-month freeze on new late-night liquor licences in the municipalities of Port Phillip, Stonnington, Melbourne and Yarra will prevent the issue of any new liquor licences for premises after 1 am (unless exceptional circumstances can be demonstrated by the venue operator). This 'freeze' came into effect on 2 May 2008 and any application for a liquor licence seeking to trade past 1 am in the municipalities listed will be caught by the statement of policy.

Liquor licences and planning permits are subject to separate processes:

- The application for and issuing of a liquor licence is considered by the Director of Liquor Licensing, Victoria.
- The application for and issuing of a planning permit to use land to sell and consume liquor is considered by the local planning authority.

I have recently approved amendments to the Victorian Planning Provisions as part of Amendment VC47 to introduce new amenity based decision guidelines for assessing planning permit applications to use land to sell and consume liquor. The new decision guidelines ensure that the cumulative impact of both existing and proposed licensed premises is a valid consideration.

In relation to the planning permit application for a live music venue within the municipality of Stonnington, I understand that on 18 February 2008, Stonnington City Council refused to grant a permit for a live music venue within the Trak cinema complex. The applicant has subsequently lodged an application for review of this decision at the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT). The date for the VCAT review is set for 17 November 2008.

VCAT is the appropriate forum for review for considering the objections to, and the merits of, the proposal. VCAT will consider the matter, taking into account the views of all parties concerned, the provisions of the relevant Planning Scheme and the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*.

**Child care: police record checks**

**Raised with: Attorney-General**

**Raised by: Mr Rich-Phillips**

**Raised on: 12 June 2008**

**REPLY:**

The purpose of the WWC Check is to assist in protecting children from sexual or physical harm by checking people who work with, or care for, children. Under the *Working with Children Act 2005* (the Act), people who work in “child related work” as defined in section 9, are legislatively required to apply for a WWC Check.

Accordingly, the WWC Check scheme must maximise the certainty of the identity of applicants, in order that accurate criminal records checks can be obtained. These checks are a crucial part of assessing applicants’ suitability to work with children.

Since commencement in 2006, over 350,000 applications from members of the community have been processed by the WWC Check Unit, including many from people with disabilities or without a driver’s licence. As more than 25 types of documents may be used as proof of identity in applying for the WWC Check, flexibility is built into the scheme. Many successful applicants do not have a driver’s licence or other form of Category A document.

The Keypass Card is not currently accepted as a robust form of identification under the WWC Check Scheme, just as it is not accepted by agencies such as VicRoads and Centrelink. A 3 year review of the Act will commence in April 2009, and I will refer this issue to the Department of Justice for consideration as part of the Review.

If any of your constituents have difficulty meeting the proof of identity requirements in future, they may wish to call the WWC Check Information Line on 1300 652 879 for assistance.

Thank you for raising this matter with me.

**Ambulance services: Beaufort**

**Raised with:** Health

**Raised by:** Mr Koch

**Raised on:** 19 August 2008

**REPLY:**

The Beaufort Ambulance Community Officer Branch has played a valuable role in early response and treatment of patients over the past years. In the coming months, Ambulance Victoria, will be considering the most appropriate future ambulance service delivery models for all Victorians and I understand that the Beaufort ACO Branch will be considered within this context.

As you are aware, Ambulance Victoria is recruiting an additional 100 paramedics to regional and rural centres to provide relief capacity to the existing workforce. The additional positions will allow the service to cover both planned and unplanned absences and meet operational requirements without over-stretching the current workforce. As these positions are designed to provide relief capacity and, due to the flexibility of the project, I am advised that they will be placed in the areas of greatest need, with these paramedics able to work across a region as and when required.

The Government is committed to ensuring health and emergency services are available to meet the needs of Victorians. For communities in the Central Grampians Region, significant investments have been made to improve ambulance services with new and upgraded services in Sebastopol, Ballan, Avoca and Ararat. This year’s budget builds on previous investments and provides a record \$185.7M boost ambulance services which will deliver two new air ambulance helicopters, 258 paramedics and 59 new and upgraded services throughout Victoria.

**Alexandra District Hospital: funding**

**Raised with:** Health

**Raised by:** Mrs Petrovich

**Raised on:** 20 August 2008

**REPLY:**

The \$1.0 million provided by the Brumby Labor Government in the May 2008 Budget will allow for detailed design work to deliver a new integrated hospital and community health service for the people of Alexandra and surrounds.

For the record, the \$158,000 in additional recurrent funding allocated to Alexandra and District Hospital in 2008/9 represents a 3.5% increase on their 2007/8 budget. In total, the Hospital has received a 64.9% recurrent funding boost under our Government.

The redevelopment of the Alexandra District Hospital is a priority for the Brumby Labor Government and I look forward to making further announcements in relation to the redevelopment of the Hospital.

**Rail: station safety**

**Raised with:** Police and Emergency Services

**Raised by:** Mrs Coote

**Raised on:** 20 August 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.

The Brumby Government has implemented a series of initiatives to improve public safety on trams and trains, as well as at railway stations. Measures include, installing duress buttons and Closed Circuit Televisions on all new and refurbished trains and fitting Combino trams with internal cameras to help drivers monitor passenger behaviour. At railway stations, security has been improved at entrances to underground City Loop stations, as well as upgrading Closed Circuit Television coverage both in and around various stations. Since 2000-01 the number of offences committed on public transport has been reduced by 20.1 per cent.

In addition to this, public transport operators and the Transit Safety Division of Victoria Police have staff located through the public transport system to assist passengers and enhance safety. A Crime Stoppers Public Transport program operates on rail lines in Melbourne and increases the opportunity for commuters to report crimes and

suspicious behaviour to police. If a person wishes to provide information to Crime Stoppers, they can be contacted on 1800 333 000 or via the internet at [www.vic.crimestoppers.com.au](http://www.vic.crimestoppers.com.au).

I thank you for bringing this matter to my attention.

### **Police: Bayside station**

**Raised with:** Police and Emergency Services

**Raised by:** Mr Thornley

**Raised on:** 21 August 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. The reduction achieved in the Bayside Local Government Area's crime rate is even greater, falling by 30.3 per cent since 2000-01.

The Government is fulfilling its election promise to construct a new 24 hour police station in Sandringham, enabling the consolidation of police services within the area as well as a significant improvement in the standard of police facilities.

Positive feedback from the local community was received in regard to the design of the new facility following a community information session conducted in April 2008. The Bayside City Council has granted a town planning permit and a contract for the construction of the new building has been awarded.

The new Bayside Police Station will accommodate 155 staff including the Uniform Branch, the Criminal Investigation Unit, the Traffic Management Unit as well as management and administrative staff. They will be housed in a building which incorporates a number of environmentally friendly features including rain water tanks for flushing toilets and landscape watering, thermo reflective glass and movement sensitive lighting and air conditioning.

I thank you for your interest in the progress of this important asset to the Bayside community.

### **Ambulance services: Stawell**

**Raised with:** Health

**Raised by:** Mr Vogels

**Raised on:** 21 August 2008

#### **REPLY:**

I am advised that the planning processes to construct the garage at the Stawell ambulance station has commenced. I am informed that this has included extensive consultation with paramedic staff to ensure the best layout and work-flow for day to day ambulance operations. A number of floor plan iterations were developed, with the final floor plan approved in August 2008.

Ambulance Victoria estimates that the project will go to public tender in the coming weeks, with construction to commence at the earliest opportunity of the builder.

The garage will provide state of the art garaging and storage facilities for the Stawell Branch that will assist paramedics to serve the Stawell community for many years to come.

Ambulance Victoria has to date appointed three of the additional 11 paramedics announced for the Grampians Region earlier this year. A second round of advertising is under way and I understand that Ambulance Victoria will make further appointments through to 2009 as initially planned.

### **Metropolitan Ambulance Service: staffing**

**Raised with:** Health

**Raised by:** Ms Hartland

**Raised on:** 10 September 2008

#### **REPLY:**

The Brumby Government values Victoria's paramedics and the work they perform. This year's Budget provided a record \$185.6M boost to ambulance services and represents the single biggest investment in services in the state's history. It will also provide 258 additional paramedics across the State to deliver 59 new and upgraded services. These service improvements will address ambulance service demand, assist in decreasing the utilisation of crews responding to patients and will introduce new roster lines to reduce the number of night shifts worked by paramedics.

In addition, a further 100 paramedics are being recruited in rural and regional Victoria, on a relief roster to cover staff absences. The new paramedics will take pressure off the existing workforce by ensuring cover for both planned and unplanned absences, enabling more balanced rostering and allowing more rest and recuperation periods. There are also procedures in place for an employee to discuss their energy levels while on shift with supervisors and for appropriate action to be taken as a result.

### **Clearways: Stonnington and Port Phillip**

**Raised with:** Small Business

**Raised by:** Mrs Coote

**Raised on:** 10 September 2008

#### **REPLY:**

It is important to maintain traffic flow and access to significant community and retail centres. Less congestion will make it easier for people to move around the city and cut costs for our community and businesses. Standardising clearway times will also increase public knowledge and understanding of these times.

The Government's comprehensive \$112.7 million *Keeping Melbourne Moving* plan to reduce congestion during peak times incorporates a \$12.6 million investment to standardise clearway times on state arterial roads in the peak direction within 10 kilometres of the CBD.

The Government is committed to fully consulting and working with all stakeholders to get the right balance for all and ensure the needs of businesses are taken into account. I am working with Minister Pallas on this important matter.

Consultation has occurred with 10 inner city councils and representatives from trader associations.

The figures provided by the High Street Armadale Business Association and Toorak Road South Yarra Business Association provide a different picture to research conducted by the Department of Transport which indicates 70 per cent of people visiting strip shopping centres are locals. Only 3 per cent of people interviewed on the footpath arrived by car and parked on the street affected by a clearway and did not feel they could find alternative parking nearby.

Importantly, measures are being considered to benefit businesses, shoppers and commuters and ensure parking and safety issues are dealt with.

The Clearways Implementation Reference Group has considered submissions received from the public. This group includes four business representatives, one of whom is nominated by the local trader associations.

All feedback is being fully considered. We will continue to work with the Reference Group, local retailers and local government to get the right answers.

### **Moorabbin Airport: future**

**Raised with:** Planning

**Raised by:** Mrs Peulich

**Raised on:** 10 September 2008

#### **REPLY:**

The future of Moorabbin Airport is a matter for the Federal Government, which has responsibility for *Airports Act 1996*.

I can advise that the Moorabbin Airport Master Plan is due for review in 2009 in accordance with the requirements of the *Airports Act 1996*. In accordance with that Act, the Airport must undertake a public consultation process, inviting written comments from any interested parties.

The Premier has previously stated that the State Government will be making a submission to any such review of the Master Plan, ensuring that our position on Moorabbin Airport is taken into account by the Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government in his decision making.

In relation to your concerns about any increase in aviation traffic at Moorabbin Airport due to the foreshadowed closure of Essendon Airport, I note the Minister recently announced that the Federal Government has no current plans to close Essendon Airport or relax its curfew.

### **Bayside: planning scheme amendment**

**Raised with:** Planning

**Raised by:** Ms Pennicuik

**Raised on:** 10 September 2008

#### **REPLY:**

Bayside City Council's active efforts to improve sustainability, especially in the area of improving stormwater quality, are to be commended.

This amendment, Amendment C44, proposes to include a new local policy about water sensitive urban design for stormwater management into the Bayside Planning Scheme.

I am informed that in its original form the amendment proposed a policy that was not workable in the way that it was proposed to be implemented.

To resolve this, my Department has worked closely with relevant Government agencies and the Council to revise the amendment and create a local policy which is practical in its implementation and will achieve the desired stormwater quality improvements.

As a result of this work I am now in a position to approve a modified local planning policy. I have recently written to Council asking for its agreement to a revised policy that I believe is suitable for approval. I expect to hear from Council shortly.

Related to Bayside Council's work in this area, the Government is consulting with a wide range of stakeholders around the scope of potential improvements to the existing 5 Star Standard under the Building Regulations. The improvements being considered include stormwater impact management.

### **Werribee Mercy Hospital: funding**

**Raised with: Health**

**Raised by: Mr Finn**

**Raised on: 11 September 2008**

#### **REPLY:**

Victoria has three tertiary maternity services and four Neonatal Intensive Care Units (NICUs) to respond to the needs of women and babies who require access to specialised treatment and associated resources: The Royal Women's Hospital, Mercy Hospital for Women and Monash Medical Centre. The fourth NICU is at The Royal Children's Hospital. In the case of complex or high risk pregnancies, Victorian women and babies are appropriately transferred to these tertiary level facilities, so they can receive the right care, at the right time and by the right team.

The State Budget 2008-09 allocated \$14 million to the Werribee Mercy Hospital (WMH) to address the service demand for maternity services.

The funding will deliver eight additional obstetric beds and four additional special care nursery (SCN) cots. This will increase obstetric beds from 24 to 32 and SCN cots from 12 to 16.

This will enable significant expansion of maternity services at WMH, and provide improved access for the rapidly growing community in the outer south-western suburbs. It is anticipated that the number of births per annum at WMH will more than double over the next five years.

The capital planning phase commenced in September 2008.

The expanded maternity service will allow local women with uncomplicated pregnancies to give birth locally. The expansion of the SCN will reduce the need to transfer newborn babies requiring extra care to other sites. It will also allow babies with extra needs born at the tertiary maternity facilities to move closer to home with their mothers.

More generally, growth funding for maternity services has been allocated in the last two consecutive budgets to reflect continued demand for maternity services across Victoria; \$35.3 million over four years in the 2007-08 budget and an additional \$46.5 million over four years allocated in 2008-09 budget.

### **Mitchell: councillor**

**Raised with: Local Government**

**Raised by: Mrs Petrovich**

**Raised on: 7 October 2008**

**REPLY:**

- As part of my responsibility for the administration of the Local Government Act 1989 (the Act), my department may formally investigate possible breaches to the Act where evidence is supplied that prima facie a breach has occurred. The comments purportedly recently made by the Mitchell Shire councillor, although they may be considered inappropriate, do not amount to a breach of the Act.
- Councillors are democratically elected by their local communities. As part of our democratic system, if members of the local community are dissatisfied with the performance of the council or the behaviour of individual councillors, they have the opportunity to have their say on the council's future electoral representation at the next general council election.
- The Act currently provides that councils must adopt and review codes of conduct governing councillor behaviour. The council concerned may otherwise wish to deal with the councillor's actions under its own councillors' code of conduct if applicable.
- Proposed changes to the Act currently before the Parliament, will establish Principles of Councillor Conduct which councils must include in their codes of conduct, so that councillors will know exactly what standards of behaviour are expected of them in public life. The new legislation will also introduce Councillor Conduct Panels with the power to discipline councillors found to have breached their council's code of conduct.

**Police: Ballarat**

**Raised with: Police and Emergency Services**

**Raised by: Mr Vogels**

**Raised on: 7 October 2008**

**REPLY:**

I refer to the issue raised during the Adjournment Debate in the Legislative Council on 7 October 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 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.

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.

Thank you for raising this matter with me.

### **Wannon Water: fire services charge**

**Raised with:** Water

**Raised by:** Mr Koch

**Raised on:** 7 October 2008

#### **REPLY:**

Water prices are regulated by the Essential Services Commission (ESC) as the State's independent price regulator. The ESC is required to assess proposed revenues and prices against the principles set out in the *Water Industry Regulatory Order 2003*.

In October 2007, 16 Regional Water Corporations (RWCs) submitted Water Plans to the ESC. These Water Plans set out the revenue (and thereby prices) that each water corporation requires to deliver water, sewerage and other related services for the five-year regulatory period commencing in July 2008.

The ESC released its Draft Price Determination on the RWCs' pricing and tariff proposals on 28 March 2008. The ESC then conducted public forums throughout regional Victoria and sought public submissions on the draft determination by 9 May 2008. Its Final Price Determination was released in June 2008, with price changes taking effect from 1 July 2008.

The Government supports the process that the ESC has recently undertaken to review the RWCs' pricing and tariff proposals.

In its final price determination, the ESC granted Wannon Water (WW) a 6.61 per cent real per annum price increase for the period 2008-13. This price increase takes into account the State Government's \$10 million contribution to the \$30 million Hamilton-Grampians Pipeline, to mitigate the impact of this project on WW's customer prices.

The ESC also approved WW's proposed fire service charges for the 2008-13 regulatory period. Consequently, effective from 1 July 2008, all customers with a fire service connection had their fire services charge increased in line with WW's new price and tariff structure.

The ESC-approved fire service charges are the maximum that WW can charge. Subsequently, WW reviewed the charge for its Group 4 and 5 customers and reduced these charges by 45 per cent to align with charges levied on its Group 3 customers. The reduced charges will apply from 1 July 2008.

### **Graffiti: Maribyrnong**

**Raised with:** Police and Emergency Services

**Raised by:** Mr Pakula

**Raised on:** 8 October 2008

#### **REPLY:**

I refer to the issue you raised during the Adjournment Debate on 8 October 2008 regarding graffiti in the City of Maribyrnong.

The Victorian Government's November 2006 policy 'Community Safety: Labor's Plan for Keeping Crime Rates low' committed to investing \$4.5 million to a two-year graffiti management strategy that included the introduction of graffiti-specific legislation through the *Graffiti Prevention Act 2007*, as well as the expansion of existing and development of new graffiti clean-up initiatives.

One of the initiatives that the Victorian Government established was the Graffiti Clean-Up Community Grants Program. The program provides non-recurrent grants to councils of between \$5,000 and \$25,000 to support the development of local graffiti clean-up responses by encouraging councils to work with their local communities to remove graffiti. The Graffiti Clean-Up Community Grants Program builds on the success of the 2006-07 Preventing Graffiti Community Grants Fund, whereby 25 local councils and many community groups undertook 36 graffiti clean-up projects.

The program aims to: help councils and local communities improve the visual amenity of their neighbourhoods through graffiti clean-up initiatives; encourage and support local communities to take responsibility for graffiti clean-up, provide sustainable local graffiti clean-up solutions in Victorian communities; improve the use of public spaces by reclaiming areas that have been graffitied; and, increase community perceptions of safety and security in public places.

In the 2007-08 grants program, 19 local councils were funded to deliver 23 projects, receiving a total grant amount of \$296,189.44. Councils worked in partnership with community and support groups, schools, local business and traders to deliver the projects.

The 2008-09 grants program officially opened on 13 October 2008; applications will close on 21 November 2008. To date, there have been a significant number of enquiries made in relation to this round of grant funding, and it is anticipated that this grant process will generate a number of partnerships between councils and their local communities to undertake graffiti removal projects. Councils are encouraged to work with their local communities and take advantage of this opportunity to make further applications for a graffiti removal grant.

A further graffiti removal initiative, the Community Correctional Services (CCS) Graffiti Removal Program was established in November 2005 to address graffiti in the lead up to the Melbourne Commonwealth Games. The program places offenders on community-based orders to work to remove graffiti from council and public assets. Supervised offenders remove graffiti from areas including rail and travel corridors, local council property and property under the Department of Transport and Crown land.

The expansion of the program in 2007 brought the number of program partners up to 26 including 19 local councils. The addition of six new purpose-built graffiti clean-up trailers means there are now 14 trailers in operation across Victoria.

The clean-up of graffiti improves feelings of safety in the community and reduces fear of crime, supporting the building of friendly, confident and safe communities highlighted in the State Government's strategy document 'Growing Victoria Together: A Vision for Victoria to 2010 and Beyond'.

Thank you for raising this matter with me.

### **Housing: affordability**

**Raised with:** Housing

**Raised by:** Mr Finn

**Raised on:** 8 October 2008

#### **REPLY:**

Please note that information cannot be provided on specific cases due to privacy issues. However, I can advise that the family Mr Finn is advocating for has been supported to access housing.

As Mr Finn acknowledges, the Melbourne rental market is currently experiencing significant increases in the cost of renting and the rental vacancy rate for Melbourne is low. The adjournment debate raises the issue of 'auctions

for rent'. It should be noted that it is illegal for a landlord to ask for a rent that is higher than the advertised price, however tenants may offer more rent to secure a property. If renters have a specific concern about the conduct of a particular landlord or agent, it is advised that they contact Consumer Affairs Victoria to lodge a complaint.

Alternatives to the private rental market include public housing. Public housing assistance is targeted to clients with the highest level of housing need via a segmented waiting list. The highest priority is given to households who are experiencing or at risk of recurring homelessness, the second priority are people with significant personal support needs living in unsuitable housing or people requiring major disability modifications, followed by those with special housing needs. These households are only eligible for Early Housing (priority) access where the private rental market is not an option.

In addition, transitional housing services are funded by Government to provide Housing Information and Referral services, assistance to access private rental and access to transitional accommodation. Government also provides private rental assistance through a Bond Loan Scheme.

Further, the Government has invested considerable resources to expanding the supply of affordable housing in Victoria, including the development of registered Housing Associations, which compliment the public housing system.

The 2007-08 State Budget delivered a record \$510 million to improve and grow social housing and invest in homelessness assistance in Victoria. Building on this announcement, the 2008-09 Budget allocated \$201.3 million to buy and build 1,030 new homes which will be a mix of public and Aboriginal housing, as well as properties acquired in partnership with the not-for-profit sector. This significant funding commitment provides a total budget of \$1.4 billion combined with existing funding sources for investment in social and public housing over the four years commencing 2007-08, and will deliver almost 4,000 new homes. The 2008-09 State Budget also committed an additional \$14 million over four years to increase homelessness services.

The Victorian Government is also working closely with the Commonwealth Government on the development of the National Affordable Housing Agreement and a range of new initiatives to secure the viability of the social housing sector, and improve housing supply and affordability. In regard to the private rental sector, the Commonwealth Government recently announced the *National Rental Affordability Scheme* which aims to create 50,000 new rental properties by stimulating investment from the private sector. These properties would be rented at 20 per cent below market rental. The Victorian Government is working with the Commonwealth to secure a fair share of these properties for the Victorian market.

### **Police: numbers**

**Raised with:** Police and Emergency Services

**Raised by:** Mr Finn

**Raised on:** 9 October 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.

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 Brumby Government is aware of the human and economic impact of alcohol abuse in Victoria. The Ministerial Task force on Alcohol and Public Safety established in late 2007 has led the development of a whole of Government approach to preventing and reducing harm associated with alcohol misuse in Victoria. The Government recently introduced a \$37 million Alcohol Action Plan that will, over the next five years, aim to encourage safe and sensible alcohol use by focusing on alcohol related health issues and alcohol advertising, through the conduct of a community awareness and educational campaign, and enhanced law enforcement in and around licensed venues.

The new Alcohol Action Plan supports the initiatives that the Government and Victoria Police have already implemented. Victoria Police recently announced the establishment of a State Licensing Task force to tackle issues at venues in the metropolitan area including the CBD, Prahran and St Kilda and in regional centres such as Geelong, Ballarat, Bendigo and Warrnambool. Police are also conducting specific operations on Friday and Saturday nights to target inappropriate licensee and crowd behaviour.

The Premier recently announced that the government would also provide Victoria Police with an extra \$11 million in funding as part of a comprehensive package to address safety in central Melbourne. This funding will be focused towards a more visible police presence, a greater onus on patrons and licensees to act responsibly, stronger enforcement and addressing the culture of alcohol and violence. The funding will be targeted to fast track the recruitment of 50 extra permanent police in addition to support of the Safer Streets Task force with up to an additional 150 members being available for deployment on Friday and Saturday nights.

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

### **Satellite technology: privacy**

**Raised with:** Local Government

**Raised by:** Mr Tee

**Raised on:** 15 October 2008

#### **REPLY:**

I am advised that local councils employ a range of methods to help identify illegal activity including breaches of local laws, including satellite mapping tools such as *Google Earth* and *Google Street View* amongst others.

I am advised that this system has helped to identify such breaches as illegal building work, unregistered domestic animals, and even tree vandalism. If a concern is identified in this way, I understand that Council officers would normally make follow up site visits and deal directly with the individuals involved, in line with their normal compliance procedures.

I appreciate that such technology, while it is a free publicly available service, may raise a range of privacy concerns. Councils are subject to Victorian privacy laws, including the *Information Privacy Act 2000*, which are administered by the Victorian Privacy Commissioner.

My Department has consulted with the Privacy Commissioner on this matter, with a view to the Privacy Commissioner issuing guidelines for Local Government as to the collection and use of such information.

### **Police: Geelong**

**Raised with:** Police and Emergency Services

**Raised by:** Mr Koch

**Raised on:** 15 October 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.

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.

Thank you for raising this matter with me.

### **Port Campbell National Park: penguin tour**

**Raised with:** Environment and Climate Change

**Raised by:** Mr Vogels

**Raised on:** 15 October 2008

#### **REPLY:**

London Bridge beach is within the Port Campbell National Park and, as such, all aspects of management of the park are directed by the Port Campbell National Park Plan of Management. The Plan of Management delineates

London Bridge beach and surrounding heathlands as a Special Protection Area; the beach is managed as a closed beach, with access being restricted for research and management purposes only.

The purpose of the Special Protection Area is to provide additional protection for particularly significant and sensitive values; specifically the little penguins and small mammal diversity (including the white-footed dunnart). The higher level of protection ensures that the penguins are left to inhabit a wild environment away from human interaction.

A program of researching the undisturbed penguin population at the site has been undertaken by Deakin University, in collaboration with DSE, for a number of years. A recent survey identified 100-200 penguins in the colony at London Bridge and also evidence of hooded plover nests and breeding pairs.

Parks Victoria has outlined for me the steps involved in considering the application submitted by Mr Austin. The steps include:

- a) Conducting investigations to confirm that the scientific rationale behind the Special Protection Area status is still valid and determine the environmental impact of limited-number guided tours on the penguin colony and other fauna habitats at London Bridge. Formal advice will be sought from the Department of Sustainability and Environment regarding this proposal.
- b) Undertaking an asset and visitor risk assessment to assess the feasibility of supervised public access to the London Bridge beach.
- c) Seeking policy advice to determine if the Special Protection Area management overlay must be removed in order for a limited tour operator licence to be issued.
- d) Conducting a review of the management plan (if required)

Subject to the outcomes of these steps, Parks Victoria has informed me that if a penguin tour trial was to proceed a trial license could be offered via a public expression of interest process and would be subject to special restrictions and conditions.

Parks Victoria is committed to effective implementation of the nature based tourism strategy and has assured me that it will work through these steps as quickly as possible.

I am sure that you would agree that the protection of the values of the site including the penguins is our first priority and that the investigation must be thorough to ensure their ongoing survival at this location.

### **Wind energy: Stockyard Hill**

**Raised with: Planning**

**Raised by: Mr D. Davis**

**Raised on: 16 October 2008**

#### **REPLY:**

I refer to the adjournment debate matter raised by Mr Davis, MP, Member for Southern Metropolitan, regarding the process for considering environment effects relating to wind energy facilities, and thank him for his question.

Mr Davis incorrectly states that approval has been given for the proposed Stockyard Hill Wind Farm. Approval has not been granted for the proposed Stockyard Hill Wind Farm to date, however on the 29 September 2008 I determined that an Environmental Effects Statement (EES) is not required for the proposed Stockyard Hill Wind Farm.

The existing planning and environment framework, including the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*, the *Environment Effects Act 1978* and the planning schemes, provide a range of mechanisms for considering potential environmental impacts of a wind energy facility.

Under the Environment Effects Act, proposals that could have a significant effect on the environment are referred for my determination as to whether an EES is required or not. The *Ministerial guidelines for assessment of environmental effects under the Environment Effects Act 1978 (2006)* set out the criteria to be considered by proponents and decision-makers in deciding whether projects (including wind farms) should be referred under the Act. These criteria indicate whether a project's effects may be of regional or State significance.

Each referral is assessed against the Ministerial guidelines prior to my determination on whether an EES is required. An EES is not automatically required for each proposal.

If an EES is not required for a wind energy facility, a proposed wind energy facility can be considered under the process provided by the Planning and Environment Act, the relevant planning schemes and the *Policy and planning guidelines for development of wind energy facilities in Victoria 2003*. Under this process, the full range of environmental issues raised by a project are considered in detail prior to a decision being made.

### **Bushfires: preparedness**

**Raised with:** Police and Emergency Services

**Raised by:** Mr Koch

**Raised on:** 16 October 2008

#### **REPLY:**

Matters relating to fire prevention works in the Crown reserves are the responsibility of the Minister for Environment and Climate Change.

Thank you for raising this matter with me.

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

**Raised with:** Environment and Climate Change

**Raised by:** Mr P. Davis

**Raised on:** 16 October 2008

#### **REPLY:**

I refer to the issue you raised during the Adjournment in the Legislative Council on 16 October 2008 regarding government assistance for the Licola Wilderness Village.

Since June 2007 floods this Government has provided \$60,000,000 for 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.

**WRITTEN ADJOURNMENT RESPONSES**

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COUNCIL

Tuesday, 2 December 2008

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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.

**WRITTEN ADJOURNMENT RESPONSES**

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

**Wednesday, 3 December 2008**

**Consumer affairs: retail refund policies**

**Raised with:** Consumer Affairs

**Raised by:** Ms Darveniza

**Raised on:** 19 August 2008

**REPLY:**

The Brumby Government is committed to protecting and empowering consumers and informing traders of their rights and obligations in relation to refunds.

The establishment of Consumer Affairs Victoria's Regional Offices is a clear indication of our commitment to rural and regional Victoria. Regional staff focus on working with their communities including in the vital area of refunds.

In rural and regional Victoria, the range of services delivered by the Regional Offices of Hume, Gippsland, Grampians, Loddon Mallee and Barwon South West demonstrates this commitment. These services include educational visits to traders to provide verbal and written information on refund and lay by laws. 519 of these educational trader visits were conducted in 2007/2008.

In addition, Consumer Affairs Victoria (CAV) inspectors regularly conduct compliance operations in the regions. 1043 regional traders were visited by compliance officers during this period with 273 being found to be non-compliant with legislative responsibilities. Presentations by CAV staff are provided to community groups on a range of consumer issues, including refunds.

Talks are also provided to businesses and trader representative groups on the Fair Trading Act 1999, which clearly address the issue of refunds. Also, in the Hume Region, information stands containing CAV pamphlets and documents are located in key localities such as libraries.

CAV will continue to seek opportunities to work in partnership with relevant organisations to provide targeted information to all Victorians, including to rural and regional consumers and businesses.

Thank you for raising this matter with me.

**Consumer affairs: lottery scams**

**Raised with:** Consumer Affairs

**Raised by:** Mr Pakula

**Raised on:** 20 August 2008

**REPLY:**

Consumer Affairs Victoria (CAV) placed a warning on its website advising consumers about a Spanish lottery Scam on 20 August 2008.

On 22 August 2008, a survey conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) was released in which it was revealed that more than 220,000 Victorian had responded to scams. The survey also found that Victoria had one of the highest rates in Australia for responding to such scams and that the four main scams were lotteries, chain letters, pyramid schemes and phishing scams. An interesting aspect of the survey indicated that anyone, regardless of gender, income, education and employment status could be deceived by one of these scams.

As well as issuing warnings to consumers from time to time, CAV is also a member of the Australasian Consumer Fraud Task force which works with other consumer regulatory agencies around the world. The task force participates in campaigns to warn consumers against global scams and fraud. The Task force, which was formed in 2005, comprises 18 government regulatory agencies and departments.

Previous experience in the investigation of these matters indicates that the perpetrators of these types of scams and frauds are difficult to locate and identify as they are extremely adept at operating through complex global networks and manipulating internet technology. I am advised that warnings, similar to those issued by CAV, are also issued by the Australian Securities and Investment Commission and the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission on their respective websites.

CAV will continue to monitor the marketplace and provide consumers with up to date warnings about these scams and frauds. It is hoped that through consumer education we can reduce the impact of these types of scams on vulnerable and unsuspecting consumers. If consumers wish to report a scam they should contact CAV on 1300 55 81 81 or visit [www.consumer.vic.gov.au](http://www.consumer.vic.gov.au).

Thank you for raising this matter with me.

### **Stawell Secondary College: facilities**

**Raised with: Education**

**Raised by: Mr Koch**

**Raised on: 9 September 2008**

#### **REPLY:**

I am informed as follows:

These relocatable buildings are being used to support school programs. Relocatable classrooms are state-wide resources which are moved to meet the accommodation needs of schools emerging as a result of enrolment growth, the implementation of building projects, or replacement buildings for buildings lost to fires or other disasters.

Relocatable buildings are provided to schools according to accommodation needs identified under the facilities schedule specific to the type of school and the number of students. These buildings are generally sourced from schools where there have been decreases in student enrolments. For all schools, enrolment numbers are monitored to ensure that facilities are provided where the greatest need exists. It is not Department of Education and Early Childhood Development policy to provide additional facilities for international fee paying students.

A number of visits to Stawell Secondary College have been conducted by representatives of the Department this year. Discussions involved future student enrolment trends and also included a detailed assessment of existing facilities at the school. The review confirmed that student numbers have decreased from 648 in 2001 to a projected enrolment of 520 for the 2009 school year and that the College currently has 32 teaching spaces. Based on the projected enrolment of 520 students, the College has an entitlement to 24 teaching spaces and is currently eight teaching spaces in excess of entitlement. The school also has two additional teaching spaces and a recently constructed Skills Centre that have not been included in this count.

Following an opportunity to meet a delegation from Stawell Secondary College and Departmental representatives concerning the proposed removal of relocatable buildings and proposed works, Stawell Secondary College has

agreed to the release of relocatable buildings 6 mod Art building ID No. 5401 and 4 mod Home Economics building ID No. 3992.

The school's Principal will advise the Department in the near future of an early release date for these buildings.

The Department has agreed to the request from Stawell Secondary College that the 5 mod GPC building ID No. 4591 will remain on the school site until the completion of VCE Exams in November 2009. This will enable the school to undertake the necessary planning and construction works for a new school funded community building.

### **Buses: Lake Bolac**

**Raised with:** Community Development

**Raised by:** Ms Tierney

**Raised on:** 29 October 2008

#### **REPLY:**

I am pleased to announce a new 18 month trial bus service running from Lake Bolac to Ararat, via Wickliffe, Willaura, Maroona. Negotiations with a local bus operator are under way and the service is scheduled to begin shortly.

The new service will operate each Wednesday and make use of an existing local school bus during school hours.

The service will make it easier for people in Lake Bolac and small neighbouring communities to travel into Ararat for shopping, medical appointments and social activities. It will also provide direct access to the Melbourne and Ballarat V-Line coach services and the Ararat town bus service.

The Lake Bolac to Ararat trial is an initiative of the *Grampians Pyrenees Flexible Transport Project*, one of 32 Transport Connections projects working with communities to improve local transport throughout Victoria.

### **Drought: government assistance**

**Raised with:** Premier

**Raised by:** Mr Koch

**Raised on:** 12 November 2008

#### **REPLY:**

Funding of \$6.422 million has been committed from the Small Towns Development Fund (STDF) against the allocations of \$10 million (\$5 million for each of 2006 and 2007) for drought support projects.

The two \$5 million allocations for 2006 and 2007 drought assistance from the STDF represent funds allocated from the RIDF budget. The figures provided for PAEC reflect the amount of expenditure as at 31 March 2008, not the value of projects approved and being implemented.

A total of \$5 million was provided for STDF projects as part of the September 2006 drought package to invest in community infrastructure in small towns.

This initiative is aimed at enabling small towns to fund drought-related projects, including those that reduce the use of town water on community and sporting facilities.

A total of \$3.905 million has been committed against 30 projects for this initiative to date.

As part of the October 2007 drought package, a further \$5 million was allocated to the STDF.

This 2007 funding allocation has given particular preference to projects that have water saving and efficiency outcomes, clearly demonstrate that they will engage local workers and enhance or develop the local skills base.

A total of \$2.517 million has been committed against 15 projects for this initiative to date.

It should be noted that the nature of infrastructure projects is such that full expenditure of funds committed to a project is often not achieved until at least two years after the approval of funding.

In acknowledgement of the impact of the drought on regional and rural councils, the local contribution towards STDF projects was changed from dollar for dollar to two dollars (STDF contribution) for one dollar in November 2005, and three dollars for one dollar in June 2008 (for exceptional projects in the 38 smaller regional councils).

During 2006 and 2007, the Government also delivered an additional \$16.8 million to 56 exceptional circumstances-declared regional and interface councils under the local infrastructure works program. The program supported a total of 364 local infrastructure projects in regional Victoria during 2006-07 and 2007-08.

This means that the Government, through Regional Development Victoria has supported in excess of 400 local community infrastructure drought-related projects, demonstrating our commitment to supporting drought-affected communities.

Regional Development Victoria staff continue to meet with councils and community groups to identify eligible projects that meet the program criteria.

**WRITTEN ADJOURNMENT RESPONSES**

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

**Thursday, 4 December 2008**

**VicForests: performance**

**Raised with:** Treasurer

**Raised by:** Mr P. Davis

**Raised on:** 20 August 2008

**REPLY:**

The Brumby Labor Government is fully committed to a viable and sustainable timber industry and continues to work towards providing the industry which faces many challenges.

As part of this commitment to the industry the government created VicForests as a separate entity with the remit of ensuring open and accountable forest operations with a commercial return on Victoria's forestry assets.

The resolution of the harvest and haul tender process in September 2008 has delivered increased certainty to industry with 60% of contractors on 5 year contracts. All 182 contracts on offer have been awarded through the tender process with 78 companies successfully securing some \$300M of harvest and haul work. This has secured at least 460 jobs and \$30M of new investment in regional Victoria.

In March this year, the Minister for Agriculture announced that in 2008 the Victorian Government would develop a new Timber Industry Strategy (TIS) in order to provide a framework and long-term direction for the Victorian timber industry for the next 20 years. The Department of Primary Industries (DPI) is leading the TIS project.

Work on the TIS is well progressed with DPI having received input from industry in the form of round table meetings and written submissions from key stakeholders. The document is currently being prepared and a draft is likely to be released shortly for public comment.

Thank you for drawing this issue to my attention.

**Plastic bags: supermarket trial**

**Raised with:** Environment and Climate Change

**Raised by:** Ms Broad

**Raised on:** 20 August 2008

**REPLY:**

Thank you for your Adjournment debate matter relating to the recent trial of a ten cent charge on plastic bags at 3 locations across Victoria, including Wangaratta.

The \$35,000 in revenue collected across the three trial area is being directly reinvested in local environmental projects. The trial team, which included ANRA, Coles, Woolworths, Metcash, EPA Victoria and an independent trial manager, designed and implemented the trial. The trial team also developed evaluation criteria for allocation of the trial revenue to identify a suitable partner with specialist skills in managing and delivering local environmental projects.

In late September 2008 it was announced that the Government would partner with Conservation Volunteers Australia (CVA). CVA will manage the funds and ensure investment in environmental projects directly benefit the participating communities. In the Wangaratta areas \$5,200 raised during the trial is funding rehabilitation near the Ovens River at Garth Park Reserve in Wangaratta, including removing woody weeds from the Ovens River.

Victoria's trial achieved a 79 per cent reduction in plastic bag use, showing that shoppers are ready and able to say no to plastic bags. I presented the results at a meeting of Australia's Environment Ministers on 7 November, and Ministers agreed the success and lessons from the trial be used to develop a national approach on plastic bags. A proposal will be developed for Ministers' consideration at our next meeting.