

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

FIFTY-EIGHTH PARLIAMENT

FIRST SESSION

ANSWERS TO CONSTITUENCY QUESTIONS

23, 24 and 25 June 2015

(Extract from book 9)

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The Lieutenant-Governor

The Honourable Justice MARILYN WARREN, AC, QC

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Minister for Planning	The Hon. R. W. Wynne, MP
Cabinet Secretary	Ms M. Kairouz, MP

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FIFTY-EIGHTH PARLIAMENT — FIRST SESSION**

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Deputy Speaker:

Mr D. A. NARDELLA

Acting Speakers:

Mr Angus, Mr Blackwood, Ms Blandthorn, Mr Carbines, Mr Crisp, Mr Dixon, Ms Edwards, Ms Halfpenny,
Ms Kilkenny, Mr McCurdy, Mr McGuire, Ms McLeish, Mr Pearson, Ms Ryall, Ms Thomas,
Mr Thompson, Ms Thomson, Ms Ward and Mr Watt.

Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Premier:

The Hon. D. M. ANDREWS

Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Deputy Premier:

The Hon. J. A. MERLINO

Leader of the Parliamentary Liberal Party and Leader of the Opposition:

The Hon. M. J. GUY

Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary Liberal Party and Deputy Leader of the Opposition:

The Hon. D. J. HODGETT

Leader of The Nationals:

The Hon. P. L. WALSH

Deputy Leader of The Nationals:

Ms S. RYAN

Heads of parliamentary departments

Assembly — Clerk of the Parliaments and Clerk of the Legislative Assembly: Mr R. W. Purdey

Council — Acting Clerk of the Legislative Council: Mr A. Young

Parliamentary Services — Secretary: Mr P. Lochert

MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FIFTY-EIGHTH PARLIAMENT — FIRST SESSION

Member	District	Party	Member	District	Party
Allan, Ms Jacinta Marie	Bendigo East	ALP	McLeish, Ms Lucinda Gaye	Eildon	LP
Andrews, Mr Daniel Michael	Mulgrave	ALP	Merlino, Mr James Anthony	Monbulk	ALP
Angus, Mr Neil Andrew Warwick	Forest Hill	LP	Morris, Mr David Charles	Mornington	LP
Asher, Ms Louise	Brighton	LP	Mulder, Mr Terence Wynn	Polwarth	LP
Batin, Mr Bradley William	Gembrook	LP	Naphthine, Dr Denis Vincent	South-West Coast	LP
Blackwood, Mr Gary John	Narracan	LP	Nardella, Mr Donato Antonio	Melton	ALP
Blandthorn, Ms Elizabeth Anne	Pascoe Vale	ALP	Neville, Ms Lisa Mary	Bellarine	ALP
Brooks, Mr Colin William	Bundoora	ALP	Noonan, Mr Wade Matthew	Williamstown	ALP
Bull, Mr Joshua Michael	Sunbury	ALP	Northe, Mr Russell John	Morwell	Nats
Bull, Mr Timothy Owen	Gippsland East	Nats	O'Brien, Mr Daniel David ²	Gippsland South	Nats
Burgess, Mr Neale Ronald	Hastings	LP	O'Brien, Mr Michael Anthony	Malvern	LP
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Clark, Mr Robert William	Box Hill	LP	Paynter, Mr Brian Francis	Bass	LP
Couzens, Ms Christine Anne	Geelong	ALP	Pearson, Mr Daniel James	Essendon	ALP
Crisp, Mr Peter Laurence	Mildura	Nats	Perera, Mr Jude	Cranbourne	ALP
D'Ambrosio, Ms Liliana	Mill Park	ALP	Pesutto, Mr John	Hawthorn	LP
Dimopoulos, Mr Stephen	Oakleigh	ALP	Richardson, Mr Timothy Noel	Mordialloc	ALP
Dixon, Mr Martin Francis	Nepean	LP	Richardson, Ms Fiona Catherine Alison	Northcote	ALP
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Edbrooke, Mr Paul Andrew	Frankston	ALP	Ryan, Mr Peter Julian ¹	Gippsland South	Nats
Edwards, Ms Janice Maree	Bendigo West	ALP	Ryan, Ms Stephanie Maureen	Euroa	Nats
Eren, Mr John Hamdi	Lara	ALP	Sandell, Ms Ellen	Melbourne	Greens
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Graley, Ms Judith Ann	Narre Warren South	ALP	Southwick, Mr David James	Caulfield	LP
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Halfpenny, Ms Bronwyn	Thomastown	ALP	Staley, Ms Louise Eileen	Ripon	LP
Hennessy, Ms Jill	Altona	ALP	Suleyman, Ms Natalie	St Albans	ALP
Hibbins, Mr Samuel Peter	Prahran	Greens	Thomas, Ms Mary-Anne	Macedon	ALP
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Kilkenny, Ms Sonya	Carrum	ALP	Ward, Ms Vicki	Eltham	ALP
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Languiller, Mr Telmo Ramon	Tarneit	ALP	Wells, Mr Kimberley Arthur	Rowville	LP
Lim, Mr Muy Hong	Clarinda	ALP	Williams, Ms Gabrielle	Dandenong	ALP
McCurdy, Mr Timothy Logan	Ovens Valley	Nats	Wynne, Mr Richard William	Richmond	ALP
McGuire, Mr Frank	Broadmeadows	ALP			

¹ Resigned 2 February 2015

² Elected 14 March 2015

PARTY ABBREVIATIONS

ALP — Labor Party; Greens — The Greens;
Ind — Independent; LP — Liberal Party; Nats — The Nationals.

Legislative Assembly committees

Privileges Committee — Ms Allan, Ms D’Ambrosio, Mr Morris, Mr Mulder, Ms Neville, Ms Ryan, Ms Sandell, Mr Scott and Mr Wells.

Standing Orders Committee— The Speaker, Ms Allan, Ms Asher, Mr Brooks, Mr Clark, Mr Hibbins, Mr Hodgett, Ms Kairouz, Mr Nardella, Ms Ryan and Ms Sheed.

Joint committees

Accountability and Oversight Committee — (*Assembly*): Mr Angus, Mr Gidley, Mr Staikos and Ms Thomson.
(*Council*): Ms Bath, Mr Purcell and Ms Symes.

Dispute Resolution Committee — (*Assembly*): Ms Allan, Mr Clark, Mr Merlino, Mr M. O’Brien, Mr Pakula, Ms Richardson and Mr Walsh. (*Council*): Mr Bourman, Mr Dalidakis, Ms Dunn, Mr Jennings and Ms Wooldridge.

Economic, Education, Jobs and Skills Committee — (*Assembly*): Mr Crisp, Mrs Fyffe and Ms Ryall.
(*Council*): Mr Elasmr, Mr Melhem and Mr Purcell.

Electoral Matters Committee — (*Assembly*): Ms Asher, Ms Blandthorn, Mr Dixon, Mr Northe and Ms Spence.
(*Council*): Mr Dalidakis and Ms Patten.

Environment, Natural Resources and Regional Development Committee — (*Assembly*): Ms Halfpenny, Mr McCurdy, Mr Richardson, Mr Tilley and Ms Ward. (*Council*): Mr Ramsay and Mr Young.

Family and Community Development Committee — (*Assembly*): Ms Couzens, Mr Edbrooke, Ms Edwards, Ms Kealy, Ms McLeish and Ms Sheed. (*Council*): Mr Finn.

House Committee — (*Assembly*): The Speaker (*ex officio*), Mr J. Bull, Mr Crisp, Mrs Fyffe, Mr Staikos, Ms Suleyman and Mr Thompson. (*Council*): The President (*ex officio*), Mr Eideh, Ms Hartland, Ms Lovell, Mr Mulino and Mr Young.

Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Committee — (*Assembly*): Mr Hibbins, Mr D. O’Brien, Mr Richardson, Ms Thomson, and Mr Wells. (*Council*): Mr Ramsay and Ms Symes.

Law Reform, Road and Community Safety Committee — (*Assembly*): Mr Dixon, Mr Howard, Ms Suleyman, Mr Thompson and Mr Tilley. (*Council*): Mr Eideh and Ms Patten.

Public Accounts and Estimates Committee — (*Assembly*): Mr Dimopoulos, Mr Morris, Mr D. O’Brien, Mr Pearson, Mr T. Smith and Ms Ward. (*Council*): Dr Carling-Jenkins, Ms Pennicuik and Ms Shing.

Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee — (*Assembly*): Mr J. Bull, Ms Blandthorn, Mr Dimopoulos, Ms Kealy, Ms Kilkenny and Mr Pesutto. (*Council*): Mr Dalla-Riva.

CONTENTS

ANSWERS TO CONSTITUENCY QUESTIONS

TUESDAY, 23 JUNE 2015

160.	<i>Geelong electorate</i>	2303
172.	<i>Essendon electorate</i>	2303
175.	<i>Shepparton electorate</i>	2304
181.	<i>Gippsland South electorate</i>	2304
192.	<i>Gembrook electorate</i>	2305
193.	<i>Macedon electorate</i>	2305
254.	<i>Evelyn electorate</i>	2306
256.	<i>Rowville electorate</i>	2306
259.	<i>Bentleigh electorate</i>	2307
261.	<i>Narre Warren South electorate</i>	2307
262.	<i>Melbourne electorate</i>	2308
268.	<i>Lowan electorate</i>	2308
270.	<i>Burwood electorate</i>	2309
272.	<i>Bayswater electorate</i>	2309
273.	<i>Frankston electorate</i>	2310
275.	<i>Niddrie electorate</i>	2310

WEDNESDAY, 24 JUNE 2015

253.	<i>Narre Warren South electorate</i>	2311
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THURSDAY, 25 JUNE 2015

252.	<i>Ringwood electorate</i>	2313
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ANSWERS TO CONSTITUENCY QUESTIONS

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

Tuesday, 23 June 2015

Geelong electorate**Question 160**

Question asked by: Member for Geelong
Directed to: Minister for Public Transport
Asked on: 16 April 2015

REPLY:

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

On 14 June 2015 the Regional Rail Link Project was officially opened by the Premier of Victoria, the Hon. Daniel Andrews and the Deputy Prime Minister, the Hon. Warren Truss.

On 21 June 2015, passenger services will commence between Geelong and Melbourne using the new Regional Rail Link tracks between West Werribee Junction and Southern Cross, via the new Wyndham Vale and Tarnait stations, and then via Sunshine.

Passengers on the Geelong line will benefit from a massive boost in frequency, with the current service of one train an hour in the off-peak, tripling to three trains per hour in the off-peak to a 20 minute frequency from South Geelong, Geelong, and North Geelong stations. The 20 minute off-peak frequency will also apply at Lara station, while every second train will continue beyond South Geelong to Marshall and the new Waurn Ponds station.

Passengers travelling in the peak period will also see additional trains. Trains will depart six times per hour in the peak.

This improvement in frequency wouldn't have been possible without Regional Rail Link providing the track capacity needed to run more trains between Melbourne and Geelong.

On top of the frequency benefits, Geelong line passengers will no longer be stuck behind stopping all stations metropolitan trains, with V/Line Geelong services being fully separated from metropolitan services. This will improve reliability and give certainty to passengers about train departure and arrival times.

Essendon electorate**Question 172**

Question asked by: Member for Essendon
Directed to: Minister for Public Transport
Asked on: 5 May 2015

REPLY:

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

In response to the advocacy of the Member for Essendon, PTV is investigation options to extent bus route 476 to Keilor Cemetery. This included identifying the safest location for the bus to turn around and what infrastructure works are required. Improving the bus route will allow local communities to visit Keilor Cemetery and provide a vital transport connection for family and friends. PTV will also conduct safety trials to consider the best option for extending the 476 bus.

Members of the local community have recently met with PTV to explore the most suitable option for the bus stop location and timetable and frequency of the bus. PTV will continue to work with local residents, Keilor Cemetery and the wider community as it finalises plans to extend the bus route.

The Andrews Labor Government has committed \$100 million to improve Victoria's bus networks, adding more reroutes, expanding others, restoring cut services and providing better bus services.

Shepparton electorate

Question 175

Question asked by: Member for Shepparton
Directed to: Minister for Roads and Road Safety
Asked on: 5 May 2015

REPLY:

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

The Victorian Government has guaranteed funding of at least \$1 billion over eight years for the upgrade and repair of unsafe and congested roads and rail level crossings across regional Victoria. We recently announced funding of \$42.8 million to strengthen 52 bridges primarily on major regional freight corridors and \$50 million to increase safety at 52 rail level crossings in regional Victoria. The bridge strengthening works will commence in 2015-16. The 2015-16 Budget also allocates \$86.7 million to resurface unsafe, deteriorating roads around the state, so families in metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria can travel safely.

The Federal Government also provides direct funding to local councils for the maintenance of local roads and bridges, under the Roads to Recovery Program and Bridges Renewal Program. The Federal Government recently announced funding of \$4.892 million for VicRoads to strengthen bridges on arterial roads and \$7.939 million for Victorian Councils to strengthen bridges on local roads under the Bridges Renewal Program. Local Councils can continue to seek funding for local roads and bridges through the next round of the Federal Government's Bridges Renewal Program or through the Roads to Recovery Program.

The Federal Government also provides funding under the Black Spot Program, aimed at improving road safety across the nation. The allocation for Victoria is \$36.4 million each year for 2015-16 and also 2016-17, which is \$22.8 million higher than the 2014-15 allocation of \$13.6 million. The current recommendation, pending approval by the Federal Minister, is that all of the 2015-16 Black Spot Program funding should be allocated to projects on local roads.

Gippsland South electorate

Question 181

Question asked by: Member for Gippsland South
Directed to: Minister for Roads and Road Safety
Asked on: 6 May 2015

REPLY:

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

\$86.7 million has been allocated under the Road Surface Replacement Program to resurface unsafe, deteriorating road surfaces around the state. Regular maintenance work is carried out in South Gippsland and planning is underway on a number of projects that will improve the highway in the long term.

VicRoads is currently finalising its road-sealing program. However, surfacing of the South Gippsland Highway, Strzelecki Highway and Hyland Highway will be given priority in 2015/16 under the Road Surface Replacement Program.

\$6.02 million will be also be invested in reconstructing the worst sections of the South Gippsland Highway at Tooradin, Koo Wee Rup, Ruby, South of Leongatha near little Ruby Creek, Alberton and Yarram.

Construction of the South Gippsland Highway - Leongatha Heavy Vehicle Alternative Route will also commence late 2015, and be completed late 2016. This \$5.12 million jointly funded Federal and State Government project will see 600 trucks diverted away from Bair Street at the centre of Leongatha making it a more attractive place to visit.

Construction of an overtaking lane on the Strzelecki Highway near Driffield, which commenced late 2014, will be completed late 2015 and will make it easier for trucks to share the road with other road users. This \$4.27 million overtaking lane is also jointly funded by the Federal and State Governments.

VicRoads will also be undertaking vital safety works funded under the TAC Safe System Road Infrastructure Program including:

- Removal of roadside hazards, installation of safety barrier and improvements to signing and linemarking on the Strzelecki Highway, near Leongatha (\$3.8 million). These works commenced in late 2014 and will be completed mid 2016.
- Removal of roadside hazards, installation of safety barrier and improvements to signing and linemarking on the Inverloch Venus Bay Road, from Inverloch to Venus Bay, (\$2.39 million). These works will commence late 2015 and will be completed late 2016.
- Improvements to the intersections of the Strzelecki Highway and Mardan Road for \$360,000 and the intersection of Inverloch Venus Bay Road with Tarwin Lower Road for \$416,000. These works will be completed in 2016.

Gembrook electorate

Question 192

Question asked by: Member for Gembrook
Directed to: Minister for Local Government
Asked on: 7 May 2015

REPLY:

I thank the Member for Gembrook for his question. As the member would be aware, the Essential Services Commission (ESC) has been commissioned by the Government to inquire and make recommendations for an implementation framework for this policy. Details of the policy will be released once they have finished working with councils and the community.

The Andrews Labor Government understands the needs of interface councils. This is why we have committed \$50 million to assist councils like Cardinia Shire Council to help address infrastructure needs.

Macedon electorate

Question 193

Question asked by: Member for Macedon
Directed to: Minister for Agriculture
Asked on: 7 May 2015

REPLY:

European wasps are widely established over large areas of Victoria and mainly impact on social amenity, including tourism. European wasp density can increase when seasonal conditions are favourable and this can cause concern for community members given the ability of the wasp to sting.

Currently, at a landscape scale, there is no practical means to reduce the impact of this pest. Previous research on biological control to bridge this gap has only been marginally successful. The most effective means of managing the impacts of European wasps is through local action by individuals and land managers in managing local wasp nests. Of course, private pest controllers are available to provide local control services. Often local councils can

provide the name of a local contractor that is specialised in treating European wasps. If people decide to destroy nests themselves, they should remember to take precautions as European wasps will aggressively defend their nest.

Given the widespread nature of this pest and the lack of broad scale control means, imposing a legal obligation on landholders to manage European wasps would be impractical.

Evelyn electorate

Question 254

Question asked by: Member for Evelyn
Directed to: Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water
Asked on: 26 May 2015

REPLY:

In February 2015, the Minister for Emergency Services and the Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water asked the Inspector-General for Emergency Management, Mr Tony Pearce, to provide recommendations on the best performance targets for bushfire fuel management on public land. This review reflects the government's commitment to getting the best outcomes for people, communities and the environment in fuel management. It also aligns with previous advice from the former Bushfire Royal Commission Implementation Monitor, Mr Neil Comrie, that consideration of fuel management targets is essential to deliver the overriding intent of the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission, of giving priority to protecting human life.

The Inspector-General undertook an independent review and came back with four recommendations, including that a risk-based target is the most effective form for a target to take. This reflects the developments in bushfire modelling and science since the time of the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission, and increased sophistication in the way the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) and Parks Victoria now deliver fuel management.

Peri-urban areas, such as those found in the Evelyn electorate, provide an illustration of the argument in favour of a risk-based target. These areas represent a high proportion of the state's bushfire risk, and a risk target sharpens the incentive to deliver fuel management in these high risk areas.

Having said this, the government has released the Inspector-General's report for a targeted consultation process with stakeholders and communities. No decisions will be made on recommendations until later this year. This decision will be based on getting the best possible results from a continued and significant fuel management program. The overarching importance of protecting human life will not change.

In the 2015-16 Budget, the government allocated an additional \$50 million over two years to maintain an expanded fuel management program. The government has continued the previous year's hectare target of 275,000 hectares for 2015-16, as the government considers the Inspector-General's report.

Rowville electorate

Question 256

Question asked by: Member for Rowville
Directed to: Minister for Public Transport
Asked on: 27 May 2015

REPLY:

Thank you for raising the matter. I have requested that Public Transport Victoria investigate the number of students travelling to Wheelers Hill Secondary College from Rowville and Lysterfield further.

PTV regularly reviews bus routes and services and will consider what improvements can be made to local bus networks to assist with improving public transport in the area for students and the wider community.

In the interim, I am advised that there are alternative bus services available to students attending Wheelers Hill Secondary College Rowville. I understand that these options may not provide a direct bus service at this stage.

The Andrews Labor Government has invested \$100 million in the 2015-16 Victorian Budget to improve Victoria's bus networks, adding more routes, expanding others, restoring cut services and fixing the missing links in Melbourne's growth areas.

Bentleigh electorate

Question 259

Question asked by: Member for Bentleigh
Directed to: Minister for Planning
Asked on: 27 May 2015

REPLY:

I will be happy to meet with Mr Staikos and his constituents to discuss planning issues affecting Bentleigh.

My office will arrange a meeting shortly.

Narre Warren South electorate

Question 261

Question asked by: Member for Narre Warren South
Directed to: Minister for Health
Asked on: 27 May 2015

REPLY:

The Commonwealth Government's cut of \$17.7 billion for Victorian hospitals over the next decade, and for other measures such as preventive health initiatives, will disadvantage all Victorians.

In recognition of Healthy Together Victoria as an important preventive health initiative, I am looking at what more I can do to save parts of Healthy Together Victoria, given the Commonwealth Government's withdrawal of funding.

The Victorian Government has a strong commitment to prevention. It has made, does make and will continue to make significant investments in prevention.

The Victorian Government is forging ahead with the development of the next Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan. This plan will set the future direction for health and wellbeing for all Victorians, including those most in need, over the next four years.

In the coming weeks we are embarking on consultations to ensure that this plan delivers long-term health and wellbeing benefits for our families and communities.

Melbourne electorate

Question 262

Question asked by: Member for Melbourne
Directed to: Minister for Education
Asked on: 27 May 2015

REPLY:

The Victorian Government was elected with a plan that puts people first and creates a smarter, fairer and more prosperous Victoria.

Through our first Education State Budget, \$730 million has been invested in school infrastructure to ensure that our students are educated in high quality and fit-for-purpose learning environments.

The 2015-16 State Budget provides \$325 million to renovate, refurbish or rebuild 67 schools – 25 of them in our fast-growing outer suburbs and 21 throughout regional Victoria.

\$1 million was provided to Carlton Primary School in the Budget to enable planning for its \$10 million capital works project to commence, and the Government is committed to funding its election commitment.

The funding provided through the State Budget represents a crucial first step in creating the Education State, and the Government will continue to invest in education infrastructure throughout this term of government.

Lowan electorate

Question 268

Question asked by: Member for Lowan
Directed to: Minister for Training and Skills
Asked on: 28 May 2015

REPLY:

Thank you for your question.

Please note that the Hamilton District Skills Centre falls under the responsibility of the Minister for Education.

I'm pleased to provide you with the following response.

The Government is working to make Victoria's education system the best in the country. Creating opportunities for young people to develop their vocational skills is critical to the future of our economy.

I am aware of Hamilton District Skills Centre's work in regional Victoria and its provision of vocational education programs to local schools, and commend the Centre on receiving the Powercor Southern Grampians Business Achievement Award in the Community Engagement category last year.

In relation to funding, I am informed that Commonwealth Government funding for the Hamilton District Skills Centre ceased at the end of 2009. Since that time, the Centre has received significant transitional Victorian Government funding to support the development and implementation of a sustainable financial and operational business model.

I am advised that funding will be provided to the Centre in order to ensure continuation of program delivery to students in 2016, and the Department will continue to work with the Centre to identify a long term sustainable solution.

Burwood electorate

Question 270

Question asked by: Member for Burwood
Directed to: Minister for Education
Asked on: 28 May 2015

REPLY:

The Victorian Government is committed to investment in education and school infrastructure. That is why we have allocated \$730 million to school facilities in the 2015-16 State Budget.

In 2014, we made a commitment to provide Parkhill Primary School with \$500,000 to help rebuild the school. Parkhill Primary School was allocated \$449,000 in this year's budget, with a further \$51,000 to be provided in a future budget.

The school has undertaken two sessions of asset management training with the Department of Education and Training and is currently developing its asset management plan. This process will allow them to identify priority projects to be achieved, through consultation with staff, students and the community, and consideration of the educational direction of the school.

The funding provided through the State Budget represents a crucial first step in creating the Education State and we will continue to focus investment in education infrastructure throughout this term of government.

Bayswater electorate

Question 272

Question asked by: Member for Bayswater
Directed to: Minister for Education
Asked on: 28 May 2015

REPLY:

I have recently approved the closure and disposal of the Mount View Campus of Boronia K-12 College located in Mount View Road, Boronia.

The site has been included in the Department of Education and Training's disposal program. It will be disposed of in accordance with the Victorian Government Land Transactions Policy and Guidelines. The property will be offered concurrently to Government agencies, local council and the Commonwealth. If neither government departments or local council have an interest in the site, it will be rezoned and offered for sale through a public tender or auction.

I am advised that a project manager has been appointed to oversee the demolition of the buildings and these works are expected to commence in mid July 2015. Accordingly, and in the interest of safety, the basketball court is unavailable for use by the Basin Wildcats Basketball Club.

I encourage the club to contact Knox City Council to seek its assistance in obtaining the use of alternative basketball courts.

Frankston electorate

Question 273

Question asked by: Member for Frankston
Directed to: Minister for Public Transport
Asked on: 28 May 2015

REPLY:

The 2015-16 State Budget confirmed that the Frankston Station Precinct redevelopment has been allocated \$1 million for work being carried out to 30 June 2015 and a further \$12.13 million for financial year 2015-16.

This \$13.13 million is being made available to develop the Master Plan and deliver early works. This Master Plan will be delivered in August 2015 and will set out an action agenda for the delivery of projects and initiatives by 2019. Importantly, this funding provides for early works, such as the improvements to Young Street and other initiatives to revitalise the station precinct, to be commenced in the 2015-16 financial year.

The Government's commitment of \$50 million, which is in addition to the \$13.13 million above, is expected to be allocated in the May 2016 Budget, following preparation of a business case.

This funding, totalling \$63 million, will revitalise the station precinct and transform the precinct into a safe, modern, thriving place of business and activity and grow investment towards the long term vision of a revitalised Frankston City Centre.

Niddrie electorate**Question 275**

Question asked by: Member for Niddrie
Directed to: Attorney-General
Asked on: 28 May 2015

REPLY:

I am advised that:

The Commonwealth, States and Territories are currently negotiating a new five-year National Partnership Agreement on Legal Assistance Services due to commence on 1 July 2015 that will include the Commonwealth Government's financial contribution to Victoria Legal Aid for the delivery of Commonwealth legal aid services, as well as integrate existing Commonwealth funding for Community Legal Centres.

Prior to the release of the Federal Budget 2015-16, I, along with my equivalent Attorneys-General, wrote to the Commonwealth Attorney-General expressing our concerns on proposed legal assistance funding cuts to Legal Aid Commissions, Community Legal Centres, and the Aboriginal Legal Service and pursued a commitment from the Commonwealth that there would be no further cuts. On 26 March 2015, the Commonwealth responded by retracting some funding cuts and restoring \$25.5 million nationally over two years to the legal assistance sector. However, under the proposed new National Partnership Agreement (provided to Victoria on 13 May 2015) there will be a reduction in Commonwealth funding of \$2.9 million for Victorian Community Legal Centres from 2017-18.

Again, I, along with five other colleague Attorneys-General, wrote to the Commonwealth Attorney-General on 19 May 2015 expressing our concern with the Commonwealth's proposed funding cuts to Community Legal Centres. This forecast cut represents a repeal of the Commonwealth Government's responsibilities to this important area of service delivery to some of the most vulnerable in our community.

Negotiations on the draft National Partnership Agreement are continuing. The Commonwealth are seeking parties to sign the agreement by 25 June 2015 in order to receive the first six-monthly payment in July. Committing to the National Partnership Agreement does not preclude Victoria from continuing to lobby for additional funding for Community Legal Centres to address the significant gaps in the Commonwealth's funding from 2017-18.

ANSWERS TO CONSTITUENCY QUESTIONS

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

Wednesday, 24 June 2015

Narre Warren South electorate

Question 253

Question asked by: Member for Narre Warren South
Directed to: Minister for Education
Asked on: 26 May 2015

REPLY:

The Andrews Labor Government is committed to creating the Education State and this has been demonstrated by the allocation of \$730 million to school infrastructure in the 2015-16 State Budget. This funding will ensure that students across the state are educated in high quality learning environments.

The Budget included the delivery of our \$120 million election commitment for Catholic and Independent schools. This funding is designed for projects such as St. Kevin's Primary School, where funding is required to address growing demand and to upgrade existing buildings. This funding will match dollar-for-dollar the contribution of the sector, allowing all students across the state to benefit from 21st century learning facilities.

The Department of Education and Training is currently developing the grants program, and is consulting closely with the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria and Independent Schools Victoria to ensure that we create the best possible program with robust, objective and transparent processes. The two sector bodies will play an important part in helping the Department to roll out this program and promote the program to its members. At this stage I anticipate that applications will be open in the spring and I will ensure that Ms Graley is updated once this has happened.

ANSWERS TO CONSTITUENCY QUESTIONS

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

Thursday, 25 June 2015

Ringwood electorate**Question 252**

Question asked by: Member for Ringwood
Directed to: Premier
Asked on: 26 May 2015

REPLY:

The Government is committed to addressing traffic congestion through significant investment in both our road network and our public transport system.

The 2015-16 Victorian Budget funds projects that will transform our public transport system, reduce congestion on our roads and improve safety and services for everyone. For example, the removal of 50 level crossings, such as Heatherdale Road in Ringwood, will get traffic moving and allow for hundreds of extra trains on our rail lines.

Our unprecedented investment in public transport will take cars off our roads and pressure off our road network. Buying more trains and trams, building the Melbourne Metro and funding improvements to our bus services will make public transport a more attractive travel option. We are also investing in road maintenance, spending \$574 million on a range of initiatives to fix congested roads across Victoria.

As outlined in Project 10,000, \$60 million will be allocated to the Streamlining Hoddle Street initiative, which will investigate innovative approaches to increasing 'people movement' along and across Hoddle Street. This initiative should improve peak hour traffic flow on the Eastern Freeway.

The Government is investing in the transport projects that Victorians need and voted for.