

**PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA**

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES  
(HANSARD)**

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL**

**FIFTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT**

**FIRST SESSION**

**WRITTEN ADJOURNMENT RESPONSES**

**11, 12 and 13 October 2011**

**(Extract from book 14)**

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**Economy and Infrastructure References Committee** — Mr Barber, Ms Broad, Mrs Coote, #Ms Crozier, Mr Drum, Mr Finn, #Mr Ondarchie, Ms Pulford, Mr Ramsay and Mr Somyurek.

**Environment and Planning Legislation Committee** — Mr Elsbury, #Mr Finn, #Ms Hartland, Mrs Kronberg, Mr Ondarchie, Ms Pennicuik, #Mrs Petrovich, Mrs Peulich, Mr Scheffer, \*Mr Tarlamis, Mr Tee and Ms Tierney.

**Environment and Planning References Committee** — Mr Elsbury, #Mr Finn, #Ms Hartland, Mrs Kronberg, Mr Ondarchie, Ms Pennicuik, #Mrs Petrovich, Mrs Peulich, Mr Scheffer, Mr Tee and Ms Tierney.

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**Legal and Social Issues References Committee** — Ms Crozier, Mr Elasmr, #Mr Elsbury, Ms Hartland, Ms Mikakos, Mr O'Brien, Mr O'Donohue, Mrs Petrovich, #Mr Ramsay and Mr Viney.

\* *Inquiry into Environment Protection Amendment (Beverage Container Deposit and Recovery Scheme) Bill 2011*

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**WRITTEN ADJOURNMENT RESPONSES**

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

**Tuesday, 11 October 2011**

**Victorian Law Reform Commission: report**

**Raised with:** Attorney-General

**Raised by:** Hon. M. P. Pakula

**Raised on:** 16 August 2011

**REPLY:**

The Victorian Law Reform Commission (VLRC) report *Supporting Young People in Police Interviews* was undertaken as a community reference. The report was released by the VLRC on 29 June 2011 and is publicly available on the VLRC's website. The VLRC's report makes 24 recommendations for improving how young people in custody are supported in police interviews.

The report recommends that the Victorian Parliament builds upon the successful Youth Referral and Independent Persons Program (YRIPP) and establish a statewide scheme responsible for providing an independent supporter for young people in police custody when a parent or carer is unavailable.

The YRIPP scheme provides a free 24-hour service to support young people in custody. YRIPP provides trained volunteers to attend police stations to support young people during police questioning when a parent or guardian is unavailable.

The report also makes recommendations for law reform and for the administration and the framework of the scheme. Specifically it recommends reforms to clarify the role and purpose of the independent person.

The government is very supportive of the YRIPP and recognises the important role it plays in Victorian communities by supporting young people at a time when they are most vulnerable.

The government will give careful consideration to the VLRC's recommendations.

**Firewood: collection permits**

**Raised with:** Minister for Innovation, Services and Small Business

**Raised by:** Mr Lenders

**Raised on:** 17 August 2011

**REPLY:**

The Victorian government is implementing its commitment to remove restrictions on firewood collection on public land.

From 1 September 2011, access to firewood for domestic use will be made easier by removing the requirement to obtain a permit to collect firewood from state forests (and parks where collection is allowed).

The government developed this new approach after carefully considering the best options for managing firewood collection on public land, as well as taking into account the feedback from Victorians.

This new approach will make firewood collection from public land more straightforward and affordable for all Victorians, while balancing community safety and the protection of the environment.

Firewood collection will be allowed in designated firewood collection areas during an autumn season (1 March–30 June) and a spring season (1 September–30 November). The spring season may be closed early if required to manage bushfire risk.

The seasons will be consistent across the state and will minimise risks to people, the environment and infrastructure, by avoiding firewood collection during the wettest periods and during the peak bushfire risk period over summer.

Designated firewood collection areas will be located to avoid sites of environmental and cultural significance and be located to make use of the by-products of activities such as commercial timber harvesting and road construction.

The removal of the requirement for permits is not expected to have a significant financial impact on agents that previously sold permits due to the relatively small commission that applied. For the sale of a permit for 1 cubic metre of firewood (equivalent to a standard size trailer), a small business previously earned just \$1.15 in commission.

### **Coal seam gas: exploration licences**

**Raised with:** Minister for Energy and Resources

**Raised by:** Mr Ramsay

**Raised on:** 17 August 2011

#### **REPLY:**

In response to the matter of land use as it applies to minerals exploration activities and agriculture, I make the following comments.

I am satisfied that the current regulatory regime under the *Mineral Resources (Sustainable Development) Act 1990* is robust enough to ensure an appropriate balance is achieved between the sustainable development of the minerals sector in Victoria for the benefit of all Victorians and the legitimate interests of residents and land-holders. The processes in place provide appropriate opportunities for community input and there are statutory obligations on applicants for exploration and mining licences to respect the rights of land-holders and address community concerns.

Concerns recently expressed regarding coal seam gas exploration appear to be largely informed by events in other jurisdictions. However, unlike other jurisdictions Victoria has appropriate regulations in place to ensure that the Victorian minerals sector works together with local communities and land-holders, particularly farmers. Both mining and agriculture are important industries for Victoria's economy and our laws recognise that each sector warrants appropriate protection.

The agreement on mining negotiated by the Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) and the Minerals Council of Australia is a valuable resource to help landowners and mining proponents to understand each other's rights and obligations. It demonstrates the cooperative approach taken between the industries to achieve mutually acceptable outcomes.

The applications and licences of Mecrus Resources and ECI International (and Mantle Mining before its application was withdrawn) are for exploration, not mining. Exploration licences are typically broad in scale, however, they confer very limited rights on the licensee. Exploration licences allow the holder to explore for minerals, but not to extract or produce minerals for commercial purposes. Should exploration activities establish the existence of a resource and should the licensee wish to commercially produce such minerals, the licensee is required to make a separate application for a mining licence. Communities (including affected land-holders) have the opportunity to object to a mining licence application. Further, prior to any mining activities commencing, the

licensee would be required to obtain planning consent (in the form of either a planning permit from the local council, or a completed environment effects statement under the *Environmental Effects Act 1978*) which provides further opportunity for public input.

In addition, private land owner/occupier consent, a compensation agreement or a determination by the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal is required prior to work commencing under either an exploration licence or mining licence.

Victoria's regulatory regime for the earth resources sector provides many opportunities for community input, and appropriately balances the legitimate interests of land-holders, local communities, miners and the people of Victoria. By enshrining a legislative duty upon licensees to consult with communities Victoria ensures that the legitimate interests of the broader community are considered. Additionally, in the case of a mining licence, before a work plan on a mining licence is approved, a licensee must produce a community engagement plan that identifies who the affected communities are, how they might be impacted, what their concerns may be and how the licensee will address them.

My department ensures compliance with these important legislative protections.

### **Child care: indemnity insurance**

**Raised with: Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development**

**Raised by: Ms Mikakos**

**Raised on: 18 August 2011**

#### **REPLY:**

I am informed as follows:

All Take a Break-funded organisations are currently covered by the community service organisation (CSO) insurance program provided through the Victorian Managed Insurance Authority (VMIA).

Unfortunately, Watsonia Occasional Child Care Centre was incorrectly advised by the VMIA that its insurance had ceased on 30 June 2011.

All Take a Break-funded organisations that receive other program and service funding through one or more of the state departments that offer the CSO insurance program have ongoing insurance cover.

Those Take a Break organisations that do not receive funding from other relevant state departments will receive insurance cover through the CSO insurance program until 31 December 2011.

In total, the number of services that are not due to be covered through the CSO insurance program beyond this date is 7, not 89 as indicated in the adjournment, and all services have been notified of their eligibility, or otherwise, to this program.

**Dangerous dogs: control**

**Raised with:** Minister for Agriculture and Food Security

**Raised by:** Mr Elsbury

**Raised on:** 18 August 2011

**REPLY:**

The government has taken swift action to address public concerns and protect the community following the tragic event that led to the death of a four-year-old child from a dog attack.

Changes to the *Domestic Animals Act 1994* were passed in the Victorian Parliament on 30 August 2011 by the *Domestic Animals Amendment (Restricted Breeds) Act 2011* and are to commence on 30 September 2011.

The new legislation removed the current registration amnesty for restricted breed dogs and their keeping in Victoria. From 30 September 2011 the possession and keeping of a restricted breed dog will be illegal unless the dog was in Victoria before the start of the amnesty period on 1 September 2010 and the dog is registered before 30 September 2011. A council will only be able to register or renew the registration of a restricted breed dog if it was registered before 30 September 2011.

On 1 September 2011, I published in the Victorian Government Gazette an approved Standard for Restricted Breed Dogs in Victoria. This approved standard is to be used by the community, local government officers and the courts as a basis for declaring dogs as of a restricted breed.

I launched a dangerous dogs hotline on Monday 28 August 2011, providing the community with additional means of reporting restricted breed dogs and other dangerous dogs. The hotline number is 1300 101 080 and operates between 8.00 a.m. and 6.00 p.m. seven days a week and will forward reports of dangerous dogs to councils for appropriate action.

A bill to increase penalties for dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dog offences including the amendment of the *Crimes Act 1958* to include a prison sentence for situations where such dogs kill a person was introduced into Parliament on 13 September 2011.

A major media campaign informing owners of restricted breed dogs that they must comply with the law and have their dogs registered before 30 September 2011 is also to be implemented.

**Hendra virus: government action**

**Raised with:** Premier

**Raised by:** Mr Lenders

**Raised on:** 18 August 2011

**REPLY:**

The Victorian government takes the potential implications of the Hendra virus very seriously. As such, we have taken appropriate and coordinated action to monitor the Hendra risk in Victoria and mitigate the risk of an outbreak occurring.

The Department of Primary Industries (DPI) and the Department of Health are working collaboratively on a risk assessment and are developing a whole-of-government approach to manage suspected cases or any actual outbreaks. In addition, DPI and Department of Sustainability and Environment officers, as well as private veterinary practitioners, are already aware of and well-equipped to deal with the Hendra virus.

Surveillance of both the flying fox and horse populations in Victoria shows that while a proportion of flying foxes have been exposed to the Hendra virus, the horse population remains free of the disease. DPI research indicates that the chance of a Hendra virus outbreak in horses or humans in Victoria is low, given that Victorian flying fox populations are small and occur where there is little chance of sufficient contact with horses to pass on the disease.

The government will nonetheless continue to be vigilant to ensure that horses and humans are protected from this disease in Victoria.

### **Dulhunty Poles: ministerial visit**

**Raised with:** Minister for Energy and Resources

**Raised by:** Mr Koch

**Raised on:** 18 August 2011

#### **REPLY:**

I refer to the adjournment debate matter you raised in the Legislative Council on 18 August 2011 relating to the manufacture of fire-resistant electricity poles in Geelong.

Thank you for bringing to my attention the details of Dulhunty Poles's new manufacturing plant. I note that the development of this technology may reduce fire risk and increase supply reliability.

I would be pleased to take the opportunity to inspect the plant when I am next in Geelong.

### **Schools: Kyneton**

**Raised with:** Minister for Education

**Raised by:** Mrs Petrovich

**Raised on:** 31 August 2011

#### **REPLY:**

I am informed as follows:

The Victorian government is committed to upgrading government primary and secondary schools across the state. Priority projects to be included in the building program for the first term of government were identified in the *Victorian Liberal Nationals Coalition Plan for Education*, released in November 2010. Further schools were identified for capital funding in the Victorian state budget 2011–12 released on 3 May 2011.

The government is aware that other schools were involved in planning for building projects under the previous administration's capital program. Unfortunately, state budget constraints do not allow for all school capital projects to be funded and the needs of schools across the state must be balanced and prioritised accordingly. The capital needs of all schools will be given due consideration during future state budget processes and in determining future priorities for the building program.

I look forward to visiting Kyneton on 22 September 2011 and meeting with various community members including representatives of the Macedon Ranges Shire Council, Kyneton Secondary College, Kyneton Primary School and Lady Brooks Kindergarten. This visit will allow me to be acquainted first hand with the issues concerning the recommendations of the Kyneton education plan.

**Overdose Awareness Day****Raised with: Minister for Mental Health****Raised by: Mrs Coote****Raised on: 31 August 2011****REPLY:**

Thank you for highlighting the important issue of prisoner health. You are right to highlight that there are issues for prisoners both during their time in prison and post release. In particular on release from prison, many people experience a reduced tolerance to drugs which increases their risk of overdose.

Currently there are no programs in prisons to educate prisoners around the risk of overdose after release. However there are other programs in place which assist people newly released from prison to reduce their risk of overdose. The Victorian Department of Health funds 12 specialist alcohol and other drugs primary health services. Part of their remit is to respond to overdose as well as provide information on overdose prevention. These services have recently been evaluated and have shown to play a crucial role in the prevention and reduction of fatal as well as non-fatal overdoses. In most cases these services have mobile overdose response workers attached to them and these workers provide overdose education and front-line response to overdose.

Currently when people exit prison on pharmacotherapy, Justice Health pays for their pharmacotherapy dispensing fees for four weeks. Pharmacotherapy reduces the likelihood of overdose. Justice Health also fund dispensing fees for Justice clients who are under 19 years of age. The Department of Justice is part of the interdepartmental advisory committee that is informing and advising the development of a whole-of-government Victorian drug and alcohol strategy. The participation of the Department of Justice on this committee will provide an opportunity for alcohol and drug issues relating to prisoner health, including the risk of overdose, to be addressed as part of the strategy.

**Schools: Bannockburn****Raised with: Minister for Education****Raised by: Mr O'Brien****Raised on: 1 September 2011****REPLY:**

I am informed as follows:

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development settled the purchase of land at Bannockburn on 18 August 2011, for the development of a new P-9 school in a new housing subdivision area adjacent to the proposed sport and recreation facilities of the Golden Plains shire.

The current school site is not suitable for sustainable primary education facilities into the future as it is below the department's recommended site area for the current number of students on the site. The department has undertaken negotiations with the developers in the new residential growth area of Bannockburn to acquire more land for increased primary and secondary school enrolments. The development of secondary facilities for students in the area will remove the need for them to travel by bus for long periods into Geelong.

I recently visited the school (along with the Hon. Terry Mulder MP, member for Polwarth) to discuss the next stages of the planning process with the school council president and principal. It was agreed at this meeting that the school is now in a position to apply to the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development to proceed to full planning of the new facilities at the school site as part of the capital works planning process.

The Grampians region is continuing to keep the school community and the Golden Plains shire informed of ongoing developments, working in partnership with the school in relation to appropriate forward planning.

### **Public transport: access**

**Raised with:** Minister for Public Transport

**Raised by:** Ms Hartland

**Raised on:** 1 September 2011

#### **REPLY:**

The Victorian coalition government is committed to ensuring that transport infrastructure meets the needs of passengers who use it. As part of this commitment, the government has introduced legislation into Parliament to establish a Public Transport Development Authority (PTDA).

In relation to commuter parking at railway stations in the western metropolitan area, a recent upgrade to Laverton railway station in September 2010 provided 462 additional car parking spaces. Further increases in commuter parking will result from completion of the new Williams Landing railway station and future stations on the regional rail link.

The government is also supporting cycling, and has provided \$1.4 million over four years to expand the West Gate punt. This investment will make it easier for cyclists to move between the inner-west and Melbourne. Bicycle cages are available for commuters at Werribee, Hoppers Crossing and Laverton railway stations on the Werribee line, and the Regional Rail Link Authority has plans to provide cycling infrastructure as part of the regional rail link project.

When established, the PTDA will be responsible for analysing the service needs of all public transport users. In the meantime, the Department of Transport is providing advice to government on how user and community considerations can be better reflected in the design and operation of transport infrastructure.

### **Firewood: collection permits**

**Raised with:** Minister for Agriculture and Food Security

**Raised by:** Mr Lenders

**Raised on:** 1 September 2011

#### **REPLY:**

Firewood is an important, traditional and renewable source of heating for many Victorians during winter.

On 30 August 2011, the Minister for Environment announced a more simplified approach for the collection of firewood from public land by domestic users for their own personal household use.

These changes deliver on the government's election commitment to reduce the red tape and make firewood collection much easier for regional Victorian households.

This new approach to firewood management means that:

residents can collect firewood for their own domestic use without a permit.

firewood can only be collected on public land from within designated firewood collection areas.

firewood collection is allowed in an autumn season (1 March–30 June) and a spring season (1 September–30 November).

firewood collected by domestic users without a permit is for their own personal use and cannot be sold to other parties.

firewood from within public land can only be collected, and sold, by appropriately licensed and accredited commercial operators.

There is no conflict in this policy from our commitment to support the timber industry. This approach forms part of the government's commitment to reducing red tape and guaranteeing the long-term access to native timber resources.

### **Harness racing: funding**

**Raised with:** Minister for Racing

**Raised by:** Hon. M. P. Pakula

**Raised on:** 13 September 2011

**REPLY:**

In 2005 Labor decimated country harness racing by closing seven country tracks. Closure of these country tracks has cost local jobs, damaged local economies and lead to owners, trainers, breeders and harness racing enthusiasts leaving the industry.

The coalition government is committed to returning harness racing to six regional racing clubs; Boort, Gunbower, Ouyen, St Arnaud, Wangaratta and Wedderburn racetracks. The government has been working closely with Harness Racing Victoria (HRV) to ensure that the work required to open these tracks for racing commences as soon as possible. HRV has conducted audits of each of the tracks and briefed each of the clubs involved on the measures required to re-open the tracks.

The government and HRV are currently finalising the costs and timeframe for the re-opening of all six tracks. Funding for the project is available through the coalition government's new Victoria Racing Infrastructure Fund to work with HRV to meet the cost of the works.

### **Rooming houses: Southern Metropolitan Region**

**Raised with:** Minister for Housing

**Raised by:** Mrs Coote

**Raised on:** 13 September 2011

**REPLY:**

I released the regulatory impact statement (RIS) for the proposed Residential Tenancies (Rooming House Standards) Regulations on 15 August 2011. The RIS explains why the government has decided regulation is the best method to improve safety, security, and amenity for rooming house residents. The public release of the RIS provides an opportunity for interested stakeholders, and those who will be affected by the proposed changes, to make submissions to the government about the design of the new regulations.

Key stakeholders were notified of the RIS's release and invited to attend consultation sessions, where they were briefed on the proposed regulations and were able to ask questions directly to departmental officers.

These consultation sessions were held on 8 September 2011 and were well received by attendees, which included representatives from the not-for-profit sector, private rooming house operators, and local councils. An invitation was extended to the cities of Stonnington, Glen Eira, and Port Phillip, and representatives from the City of Port Phillip attended the afternoon consultation session.

The proposed regulations are designed to balance the safety and security of residents with the business demands of rooming house owners. Rooming house owners in St Kilda, Prahran, and Albert Park, like all those across the state, will be given a year to comply with the proposed regulations. The proposed regulations are not designed to force closures; rather, they aim to provide vulnerable Victorians with a better minimum standard of accommodation while maintaining the sector as a viable form of accessible housing.

### **Victorian certificate of applied learning: funding**

**Raised with: Minister for Education**

**Raised by: Mr Leane**

**Raised on: 14 September 2011**

#### **REPLY:**

I am informed as follows:

This year more than 18 700 Victorian students are expected to undertake VCAL with 429 providers across Victoria. This certificate provides an alternative year 12 to the Victorian certificate of education. It provides pathways for students into employment, further education and training through an applied learning approach.

VCAL was first introduced in 2003, and at that time funding was provided to support coordination to establish the program. After eight years VCAL is a well-established senior secondary certificate.

There has been no reduction to the funding for the delivery of VCAL. VCAL, along with other programs offered in Victorian government schools, continues to be funded through the student resource package (SRP). The SRP is based on the number of students enrolled and schools have flexibility within that budget provision to deliver the programs and support that are designed to improve educational outcomes. In fact, this year SRP funding supported an 8.5 per cent increase in the number of students undertaking the VCAL from 2010.

This change brings VCAL into line with the vocational education and training in schools (known as VET in Schools) and VCE programs which do not receive additional funding for coordination and have their coordination role funded within the SRP.

Schools and other education providers have access to a number of support services for VCAL students. The Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, the Victorian Applied Learning Association, the local learning and employment networks and the workplace learning coordinators program can and do provide support to VCAL providers. They assist in the development of curriculum resources and co-ordinating structured workplace learning placements to satisfy the requirements of the VCAL.

The Victorian government provided a significant boost for education in the 2011–12 state budget, allocating more than \$1 billion in new funding to early childhood development, school education and higher education and training services. This funding included:

\$156 million over four years to meet increased demand in the Program for Students with Disabilities (PSD);

\$32 million over four years for Vocational Education and Training in Schools (VETiS). This funding was scheduled to lapse this year, however, the coalition government has committed to continued funding to reflect the importance of this option for students; and

\$1 million over three years to pilot and support new research-based educational approaches to re-engage young people who are disengaged or at risk of disengaging from schooling.

### **Victorian certificate of applied learning: funding**

**Raised with:** Minister for Education

**Raised by:** Ms Pennicuk

**Raised on:** 14 September 2011

#### **REPLY:**

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**Victorian certificate of applied learning: funding****Raised with: Minister for Education****Raised by: Mr Scheffer****Raised on: 15 September 2011****REPLY:**

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**WRITTEN ADJOURNMENT RESPONSES**

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

**Wednesday, 12 October 2011**

**Ambulance services: Grantville**

**Raised with: Minister for Health**

**Raised by: Mr O'Donohue**

**Raised on: 30 August 2011**

**REPLY:**

The Baillieu government has committed to an additional 210 paramedics for rural and regional Victoria as part of a \$151 million boost to Victoria's ambulance services.

Across Gippsland, the government has committed 40 new paramedics and 6 patient transport officers. This includes the establishment of a new 24-hour branch for the Grantville community, as well as 18 MICA paramedics to support 3 new single responder units established in Wonthaggi, Bairnsdale and Sale.

I am please to advise that Grantville has been operating a peak period ambulance unit since April 2011 and that this service will be upgraded to a 24-hour service by the end of October 2011.

Grantville's new \$2 million ambulance station is due to be completed in early 2012. The new Grantville ambulance station will provide upgraded facilities for the 24-hour ambulance teams.

**Hendra virus: government action**

**Raised with: Minister for Racing**

**Raised by: Hon. M. P. Pakula**

**Raised on: 30 August 2011**

**REPLY:**

The Hendra virus occurs sporadically in horses in Queensland and northern NSW as a result of spillover from flying foxes in which the virus is endemic but causes no apparent disease. Although infection is rare, the virus has a high case fatality rate in horses and humans.

The Department of Primary Industries (DPI) has conducted a risk assessment that indicates that the probability of a case of Hendra virus occurring in a Victorian horse is very low. The introduction to Victoria of an infected horse from the 'Hendra belt' in Queensland/northern NSW is also unlikely as state authorities impose immediate movement restrictions when the disease occurs. In the improbable event of an introduced infected horse, I have been advised by DPI that it is highly unlikely that there would be an outbreak in Victoria, since outbreaks are invariably spillover events from contact between flying foxes and horses rather than spread from horse to horse.

In recent months I have also been consulting with Racing Victoria about their response to the Hendra virus outbreaks in Queensland and Northern NSW. In early August 2011 Racing Victoria sent an 'Important Notice to Trainers and Owners Concerning Hendra Virus Infection' by direct email to trainers and owners and placed it on the trainers' toolkit website. This notice provides detail on the Hendra virus to trainers and owners and informs them on how to further minimise risks.

Given DPI's low risk assessment of the Hendra virus, mandating additional controls is not proposed and would only result in unnecessary regulation for Victoria's racing industry during the critical spring carnival period.

### **Firewood: collection permits**

**Raised with:** Minister for Local Government

**Raised by:** Mr Lenders

**Raised on:** 14 September 2011

#### **REPLY:**

From 1 September 2011 residents no longer needed a permit to collect firewood for personal use within state forests and other parks where collection is allowed.

Collection is permitted in specifically marked designated collection areas between 1 March and 30 June, and between 1 September and 30 November each year.

The new policy does not apply to roadside collections, which remain the responsibility of the relevant road management authority — either VicRoads or local councils — to determine whether firewood collection will or won't be allowed on those roads they control.

Further information on firewood collection is available on the Department of Sustainability and Environment's website.

### **BlueScope Steel: job losses**

**Raised with:** Minister for Manufacturing, Exports and Trade

**Raised by:** Mr O'Donohue

**Raised on:** 14 September 2011

#### **REPLY:**

The Victorian government has responded quickly in support of the displaced employees at the BlueScope plant in Hastings with the offer of re-training under the Victorian training guarantee.

The local steel industry is under intense competitive pressure. The high Australian dollar has made it difficult to maintain export markets and compete against imports. Raw material costs have escalated. Federal Labor's carbon tax will add to those costs and serve as a further impost to business.

The Victorian coalition government recently commissioned Deloitte Access Economics to analyse the effect of the carbon tax on the Victorian economy. The results show the devastating impact that this new tax will have on this state. By 2015, will have 35 000 fewer jobs than if there were no carbon tax; investment will be down \$6.3 billion, or 6.6 per cent; per capita income will be \$1050 lower; and, the Victorian state budget is predicted to be almost \$660 million worse off.

Victoria's new government is committed to securing new opportunities for Victorian industry. On 9 September I announced the government's support of a new automotive component manufacturing operation by Nexteer Automotive which will create 256 new jobs. The Baillieu government understands the need to support employment across the state and we are working closely with many companies in support of increasing employment opportunities.

**WRITTEN ADJOURNMENT RESPONSES**

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

**Thursday, 13 October 2011**

**Snowy Scientific Committee: membership**

**Raised with:** Minister for Water

**Raised by:** Mr Barber

**Raised on:** 30 June 2011

**REPLY:**

I am pleased to advise that on 21 July 2011, I was formally requested by the NSW Minister for Resources and Energy, the Hon Chris Hartcher, MP (the responsible minister for this matter) to provide him with two nominations for appointment to the membership of the Snowy Scientific Committee.

The Victorian coalition government maintains its support for the Snowy Scientific Committee and the request is being dealt with in a prompt manner.

I would also like to advise Mr Barber of the nature of the Snowy Scientific Committee which is specified under NSW legislation. As such, the Snowy Scientific Committee falls under the jurisdiction of the relevant NSW minister and my discretion in this matter is limited.

**Mental health: federal funding**

**Raised with:** Premier

**Raised by:** Ms Hartland

**Raised on:** 18 August 2011

**REPLY:**

I thank the member for raising the important issue of national mental health reform.

I agree that mental health issues are a key priority for the Victorian government. That is why we are investing an additional \$105 million over four years for mental health under the 2011–12 budget.

The 19 August 2011 COAG meeting was an important opportunity to consider next steps in national efforts to address mental health issues. COAG also had the benefit of presentations from three Australian mental health experts: Professor Patrick McGorry AO; Mr Frank Quinlan; and Monsignor David Cappo, AO.

Victoria joined with other jurisdictions to agree that COAG would commence work on a Ten Year Roadmap for National Mental Health Reform, and proceed to prepare a National Partnership Agreement on Mental Health.

At the COAG meeting, the Prime Minister expressly acknowledged Victoria's significant investment in mental health under the 2011–12 state budget. The Prime Minister indicated that this investment would be taken into account as a relevant state funding contribution when the commonwealth assesses Victorian proposals for funding under the national partnership agreement.

Priorities for Victoria identified by the coalition government align well with the priority areas for funding under the new national partnership, being stable accommodation and support; and presentation, admission and discharge

planning in major hospitals and emergency departments and related support services. The 2011–12 state budget invests \$27 million over four years to expand specialist clinical community mental health services; \$24 million to increase capacity of Psychiatric Disability Rehabilitation and Support Services (PDRSS); and \$1.2 million to centrally coordinate mental health beds, thus reducing the time spent by emergency departments searching for suitable beds.

The coalition government looks forward to participating in national efforts which will improve mental health outcomes for all Victorians.

### **North–south pipeline: government policy**

**Raised with:** Minister for Water

**Raised by:** Mr Lenders

**Raised on:** 30 August 2011

#### **REPLY:**

Melbourne Water manages Melbourne's water supply and storages using a strategy which optimises the water resources and utilises the most cost effective supply options. Melbourne Water has maintained the Sugarloaf Reservoir's water level in accordance with its annual operating plan.

The Sugarloaf Reservoir is a storage reservoir which does not have its own catchment, but gets its water from the Yarra River at Yering Gorge and the Maroondah Reservoir. There has not been any water transferred through the north–south pipeline to the Sugarloaf Reservoir since October 2010. Melbourne Water has maximised transfer of water from Maroondah Reservoir which has been spilling continuously and is the highest quality and lowest cost source water for Sugarloaf. Melbourne Water has also maximised water harvesting at Yering Gorge to take advantage of the high flows in the Yarra River. The high flows and ability to continue harvesting from the Yarra River over summer and autumn was unprecedented. Water from the Sugarloaf Reservoir is treated at the Winneke water treatment plant and is then transferred directly into the Melbourne supply system.

It should also be noted that demand for water has been low during the wetter summer and winter period.

### **Australian Labor Party: political activity**

**Raised with:** Attorney-General

**Raised by:** Mrs Peulich

**Raised on:** 1 September 2011

#### **REPLY:**

As Attorney-General, it would not be appropriate for me to comment on an ongoing police investigation, whether it is occurring in Victoria or elsewhere.

**Israel: Melbourne protests**

**Raised with:** Attorney-General

**Raised by:** Mr Finn

**Raised on:** 13 September 2011

**REPLY:**

'Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions Group' (BDS) protesters have conducted protests at the premises of the Max Brenner chain of chocolate shops at Melbourne Central and QV as part of a campaign to boycott businesses with Israeli ownership or which conduct business with the government of Israel.

I am advised that although Victoria Police consider that the BDS protesters did not breach the *Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001* in the Max Brenner protests, numerous charges have been laid for breaches of the *Summary Offences Act 1966* (trespass, besetting premises and hindering, resisting and assaulting police).

Victoria Police has advised the following details:

- on 20 May 2011, two arrests were made in relation to the protests, which resulted in one penalty notice for riotous behaviour and charges pending for assaulting police;
- on 1 July 2011, 19 people were arrested in connection with the protests, resulting in two penalty notices for riotous behaviour (for locking onto the Max Brenner store) and 17 protesters charged with offences under the *Summary Offences Act 1966* including trespass, besetting premises, hindering police, resisting police and assaulting police;
- 16 of those 17 protesters were bailed with some being subject to the condition not to enter either Melbourne Central or QV, with that condition being amended later on appeal to not attending within 50 metres of either of the Max Brenner stores at Melbourne Central or QV; and
- on 20 July 2011, five demonstrators breached their conditions of bail by attending within 50 metres of both of the Max Brenner Chocolate Bar stores, and that five of those people had their bail revoked, were taken into custody and brought before a magistrate. All five are now on the same bail conditions with sureties totalling \$28 000.

It would not be appropriate for me to comment further on matters that are the subject of legal proceedings.

**Carbon tax: economic impact**

**Raised with:** Minister for Regional and Rural Development

**Raised by:** Mr Ramsay

**Raised on:** 14 September 2011

**REPLY:**

The Victorian government has consistently called on the commonwealth to release the full state-specific economic modelling of the impact of the carbon tax.

The failure to release this data meant that the Victorian government commissioned our own modelling to understand the impact of the carbon tax on Victoria.

The analysis, released by the Victorian government on 20 September 2011, clearly shows the impact of the carbon tax on Victorian families and businesses. The report prepared by Deloitte Access Economics shows that in 2015, when compared to a scenario without the carbon tax:

- there will be 35 000 fewer jobs;
- investment will be down almost \$6.3 billion;
- per capita output will be \$1050 lower; and
- the Victorian state budget is predicted to be almost \$660 million worse off.

There will be significant impacts on regional Victoria, by 2015 there will be 1600 fewer jobs in the Barwon area, 1250 fewer in Gippsland and over 1750 fewer jobs in Bendigo, Ballarat, Ararat, Bacchus Marsh and Gisborne.

Deloitte Access Economics' modelling produced more negative results than the commonwealth's report. However, to the extent they were publicly available, Deloitte Access Economics used the same assumptions as those in the commonwealth's modelling released on 10 July 2011.

### **Puppy farms: abolition**

**Raised with:** Minister for Agriculture and Food Security

**Raised by:** Mrs Petrovich

**Raised on:** 14 September 2011

#### **REPLY:**

Establishments breeding and rearing animals for profit in Victoria must register with local government councils under the *Domestic Animals Act 1994* as a domestic animal business. They must comply with the management standards of the mandatory *Code of Practice for the Operation of Breeding and Rearing Establishments* (the code). The welfare of the dogs on such enterprises is protected by the provisions of the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986*. Such enterprises must microchip their dogs before selling or giving them away and the legislation requires that the details be recorded on a Victorian licensed animal (microchip) registry to allow for tracing purposes.

This year, I authorised for the first time, the Inspectors of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) to have the same powers as local government officers for enforcing the code. RSPCA inspectors underwent training in their new powers and were formally invested with their new powers in April 2011. I have requested a full review of the mandatory *Code of Practice for Breeding and Rearing Establishments* to take place in the coming 12 months, commencing in November 2011.

The government is preparing legislation to stamp out illegal puppy farming enterprises in accordance with election commitments. The proposed changes will address the community's concerns regarding puppy farms and will include:

- significant increases in penalties for illegal operations.
- strengthening the powers of inspectors' ability to seize animals that are not being cared for appropriately or are at risk.
- controls on advertising.
- banning of involvement in breeding dogs by the courts.
- reducing the number of breeding females down to three (or more) for the definition of regulated domestic animal breeder.

**Greensborough College: funding**

**Raised with:** Minister for Education

**Raised by:** Mr Ondarchie

**Raised on:** 15 September 2011

**REPLY:**

I am informed as follows:

The previous government had ample opportunity to provide capital funding for Greensborough Secondary College. Despite the fact that the school's enrolment has nearly trebled over the last 10 years, very little funding has been provided.

I look forward to the opportunity of accompanying the local member on a visit to the school.

**Manufacturing: Victorian Competition and Efficiency Commission report**

**Raised with:** Minister for Manufacturing, Exports and Trade

**Raised by:** Mr Somyurek

**Raised on:** 15 September 2011

**REPLY:**

The Victorian government was elected with a commitment to revitalise the manufacturing industry.

We know the manufacturing sector has been under enormous pressure from federal Labor's carbon tax. At a time when there has been a high Australian dollar and intense global competition, what does the federal Labor government do?

It brings in a new tax.

The Baillieu government went to the election with a commitment to reinvigorate manufacturing. We went to the election with the process and the election commitment to reinvigorate manufacturing in this state and commissioned a review of manufacturing through VCEC (Victorian Competition and Efficiency Commission).

The Victorian government knows that the federal government is in disarray in terms of the manufacturing sector. The Victorian government knows the carbon tax and the high Australian dollar are putting enormous pressure on the manufacturing sector. That is why this government is treating the manufacturing sector with some respect, as opposed to the indifference over the past decade of the former Labor government here. This government is ensuring that what it sets forward is a policy framework that will ensure that Victoria can compete not only locally but globally.

**Bendigo: Discovery Science and Technology Centre**

**Raised with:** Minister for Regional Cities

**Raised by:** Mr Drum

**Raised on:** 15 September 2011

**REPLY:**

I am pleased to advise you that our commitment to the Bendigo Discovery Science and Technology Centre is now fully operational, with the first payment recently negotiated and to be paid by November 2011.

You may be aware that I announced our funding support of \$200 000 — that is, \$50 000 a year for the next four years — on 27 September 2011.

The funding supports a range of educational activities delivered by the centre including in-school and outreach programs as well as in-centre programs and activities. The funding will be of great value to communities across the region.

Our funding support is an acknowledgement that this government applauds forward thinking and planning in regional projects which create long-term sustainability and economic vitality for local communities.

This support will contribute to raising the profile and reputation of the Bendigo Discovery Science and Technology Centre as an important player in Bendigo and the state's education sector.