

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

FIFTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT

FIRST SESSION

WRITTEN ADJOURNMENT RESPONSES

13, 14 and 15 September 2011

(Extract from book 13)

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* *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, 13 September 2011

Kindergartens: funding

Raised with: Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development

Raised by: Mr Ramsay

Raised on: 4 May 2011

REPLY:

I am informed as follows:

Victoria's implementation plan for achieving universal access includes seven key actions for achieving universal access to 15 hours of kindergarten per student in the year before school. Key activities undertaken to date include:

- 35 pilots currently in place in a variety of settings;
- 23 grants to assist services to increase their infrastructure capacity to offer universal access by 2013;
- 190 early childhood educators funded since 2007 to upgrade their qualification to become early childhood teachers; and
- \$6.4 million over two years to councils and kindergarten cluster managers, to plan and implement change that will optimise available kindergarten places and support the implementation of universal access.

The government recently announced that a total of \$26 million will be invested in early childhood infrastructure in 2011–12. This funding will provide the single largest investment in early childhood infrastructure in any year.

The government does, however, have concerns about the ability of the Victorian sector to provide the policy objective of universal access.

This stems from the fact that the former Labor state government agreed to implement federal Labor's policy without first assessing:

- the capacity of Victorian kindergartens to cope with the increased hours;
- the impact that the agreement may have on the ability of services to continue providing other programs such as kindergarten for three-year-olds, fun groups and playgroups;
- the ability of the sector to recruit and train additional teachers; and
- the overall cost of infrastructure needed to implement the partnership agreement.

As part of an 18-month review of the agreement between the commonwealth and Victoria the Baillieu government will be seeking to secure additional funding and flexibility around the time line for the implementation of 15-hour programs to relieve pressure on services, prevent the displacement of programs for three year olds and allow more time for services to adjust.

Children: Take a Break program

Raised with: Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development

Raised by: Ms Broad

Raised on: 1 June 2011

REPLY:

I am informed as follows:

The funding of child care is a commonwealth government responsibility and the Take a Break (TAB) child-care program was historically funded by the commonwealth, with a state contribution. From 1 July 2010, the commonwealth withdrew funding to the states and territories for neighbourhood model occasional care. This decision gave just six weeks notice to services.

The former Victorian government agreed to fully fund the TAB child-care program in the 2010–11 financial year as a temporary measure by bringing forward all state funds allocated for 2011–12.

The Victorian government cannot be expected to meet the full cost of the commonwealth's responsibility, and as such, the program cannot be sustained unless the commonwealth reverses its decision to withdraw funding.

A commitment to continue funding for the program under the previous longstanding arrangements has been made by the Victorian government and the federal government has been invited to match this. The ball is fairly and squarely in the federal government's court.

All services currently receiving TAB funding will receive the equivalent of six months of their annual allocation in June 2011. These funds will enable both the provision of services until at least 30 September 2011, and the funding of any wind-up or transition arrangements that may result from the federal government failure to reinstate its 2010 funding cuts.

A request for the federal minister to consider flexibility in the federal child-care benefit program so that these services can continue has also been made. To date no reply has been received.

A request was also made to the leader of the Victorian opposition, Daniel Andrews MP, in August 2011 to join with the Baillieu government in asking that this request be considered. No support was offered.

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development has been directed to identify those services receiving TAB funding that offer the only centre-based child care in isolated small rural communities. Where services are at risk of closure, the department will work with local communities to identify sustainable options for child care provision, including pursuing discussions with the commonwealth government to ensure services receive appropriate child-care funding support.

Yarra Valley Racing Centre: track redevelopment

Raised with: Minister for Racing

Raised by: Hon. M. P. Pakula

Raised on: 29 June 2011

REPLY:

I thank you for your adjournment debate question on 29 June 2011 seeking assurance that the government would provide sufficient funding to ensure that drainage remediation and track redevelopment at Yarra Glen racecourse are done concurrently.

The government is well aware of the current difficulties facing the Yarra Valley Racing Club and the importance of this facility to the Victorian racing industry and the local community. We are also aware that the racing industry, the club and the community will be best served by a resolution that not only returns racing to Yarra Glen as early as possible but one that will also address the cause of the ongoing flood problems.

Along with the member for Seymour, Cindy McLeish, I have been keeping in regular contact with representatives of the Yarra Valley Racing Club to determine the best way to provide a long-term future for the racecourse.

In February this year Ms McLeish and I visited the racecourse to see firsthand the problems faced by the club. Following that meeting, I wrote to my parliamentary colleague the Minister for Water seeking his assistance and that of Melbourne Water to fully investigate the ongoing flooding issues to help determine a long-term solution for the racetrack.

Melbourne Water has been working closely with the club, Racing Victoria and with Country Racing Victoria to identify a range of options to reduce the risk of the racecourse being severely affected by floods.

Following Melbourne Water's investigations, the club is now working with Racing Victoria Limited and Country Racing Victoria to identify the scope and cost of a project which will return thoroughbred racing to the track at the earliest possible opportunity.

I am advised by the club that this project will seek to reduce the risk of flooding to the course, repair the track drainage system and reduce the impact of flooding on the marquee area. I anticipate, following discussions, RVL and the club will then approach the government to outline their proposal and seek assistance.

I thank you for bringing this matter to my attention.

Retail sector: Chapel Street, Prahran

Raised with: Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations

Raised by: Mrs Coote

Raised on: 16 August 2011

REPLY:

Melbourne continues to be the most desirable city in Australia for international retailers to invest based on a survey of 323 top retailers operating in 73 countries (CB Richard Ellis).

A key driver in Melbourne's ongoing retail success is its amazingly diverse market.

It is for this reason that one of the world's most successful retailers Topshop will open their largest Australian store in the Jam Factory in mid-November. The 1300-square metre store will employ approximately 80 staff and be a major destination drawcard from across Victoria.

Vacancy rates along Chapel Street are at 3.8 per cent — one of the lowest of all strips.

Next month in the same complex, Target will open their first Urban Target Store.

Catering to a younger urban consumer, this store is the first of its type in Australia.

My department works actively with the retail industry and domestic and international investors to ensure that Melbourne remains Australia's number one retail investment destination.

Huyck.Wangner Australia: government support

Raised with: Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations

Raised by: Mr Koch

Raised on: 30 August 2011

REPLY:

On 1 April 2011 officers of the Department of Business and Innovation met with Dale Smith, managing director of Huyck.Wangner Australia to explore possible avenues of assistance for the company. Officers of the department discussed assistance to maintain employment levels, attract new footloose manufacturing investment to Geelong from Huyck.Wangner's global parent and to create up to 30 new manufacturing jobs in regional Victoria.

The Department of Business and Innovation continues to work with the company and is reviewing options to support the company's future growth.

In addition, departmental officers have liaised with their regional counterparts at Skills Victoria who have also met with the company to determine potential opportunities for training assistance.

Manufacturing: government performance

Raised with: Minister for Manufacturing, Exports and Trade

Raised by: Mr Somyurek

Raised on: 1 September 2011

REPLY:

Victoria is the leading manufacturing state in Australia. Under the Baillieu government, Victoria is also leading the nation when it comes to finding ways to improve the competitiveness of our manufacturers in a very tough and unforgiving global economy. This government is committed to strengthening our manufacturing sector so it continues to attract investment and innovation and to generate high-value jobs. When the previous government was in power they treated the manufacturing sector with neglect and indifference for over a decade.

The Victorian government is in the serious business of policy development. The former Brumby government's policy development was to put together a glossy brochure full of stunts, slogans and spelling mistakes. That is Labor's dismal record on manufacturing. In fact we have also heard the federal trade minister, Craig Emerson, tell the *Australian Financial Review* that he sees no future in large-scale manufacturing in Australia. His parliamentary colleague Nick Sherry said in June that bookshops will cease to exist. That is the extent of the vision of the Labor Party. They talk about a patchwork economy — it is more like Labor's tumbleweed economy.

In contrast, this government has committed to reinvigorating manufacturing. That is why it has committed VCEC, the Victorian Competition and Efficiency Commission, to inquire into the future of Victorian manufacturing. Victoria under Premier Baillieu is doing the hard yards of serious policy review and reform, and it is being watched by the rest of the country.

On 17 August officials from governments across the nation gathered for the Australian manufacturing network. They met right here in Melbourne in my department, the Department of Business and Innovation. The Labor governments of South Australia and Tasmania sent delegates and so did the commonwealth. They were very interested to hear of some of the research and policy analysis into the future of manufacturing.

What is occurring here in Victoria is the most detailed, extensive and rigorous review of the manufacturing industry anywhere in the country, and it will serve as the basis for framing strong and effective policy responses to the challenges facing manufacturing in this state. This government will work with businesses to find opportunities to

strengthen, compete and ensure that we expand even in the most difficult circumstances, with the aim that they can emerge from the current cycle better prepared to compete successfully in global and domestic markets.

What we are doing here in Victoria is showing some real policy leadership. It is serious policy development, and the other states, including the Labor states, are watching closely. Let us not have anyone in the Labor Party pretend they have answers on anything to do with jobs in the manufacturing sector. Labor's ranks are in utter disarray on these issues. My federal counterpart Senator Carr said he saw no need for an inquiry into manufacturing. He has a point because a forensic review of manufacturing policy is already under way right here in Victoria, commissioned by the Baillieu government.

WRITTEN ADJOURNMENT RESPONSES

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

Wednesday, 14 September 2011

Princes Freeway, Morwell: closure

Raised with: Minister for Roads

Raised by: Mr Viney

Raised on: 25 May 2011

REPLY:

As incident controller, Victoria Police established a strategic advisory group to address traffic management issues associated with the Princes Freeway closure at Morwell. The group comprises of VicRoads, State Emergency Services, Country Fire Authority, Ambulance Victoria, Department of Transport and Latrobe City Council.

VicRoads prepared and implemented a traffic management plan, in consultation with the strategic advisory group, to facilitate the closure of the freeway. The plan included a number of road safety and operational improvements along the Morwell–Traralgon road (Princes Drive) which is the designated diversion route through Morwell. The improvements included alterations to the directional and information signing, line marking, synchronisation of traffic signals, speed reductions, reduction of the number of merge lanes, traffic media alerts to the public and the reopening of sections of the freeway for the use of local traffic.

VicRoads, in consultation with Victoria Police, is monitoring the operation and safety of Princes Drive during the freeway closure.

VicRoads implemented a maintenance regime to manage road conditions along Princes Drive as well as the other alternative routes. Regular inspections are undertaken along these routes to identify potential hazards to motorists and appropriate maintenance is carried out to ensure that the road is kept in a safe condition. Pavement strengthening works have been completed along sections of Princes Drive.

VicRoads has now received expert advice on the mitigation works necessary to allow the reopening of the closed section of the Princes Freeway at Morwell. These works are expected to be completed to allow the reopening of the Freeway in time for the September school holidays.

Point Cook: traffic management

Raised with: Minister for Roads

Raised by: Mr Finn

Raised on: 31 May 2011

REPLY:

Planning for traffic management in the Point Cook area was considered in the *Laverton/ Point Cook: Road and Transport Network Study* completed by VicRoads in 2004. The study identified that this would be through the construction and promotion of the Palmers Road corridor, with future consideration to be given to a major upgrade to Point Cook Road south of Dunnings Road.

The first elements of this strategy, comprising construction of the Palmers Road Extension and the upgrade and signalisation of the intersection of Point Cook and Dunnings Roads, were completed in 2008. The upgraded intersection layout allows for the future duplication of Point Cook and Dunnings Roads.

As the next stage of this strategy, a \$24 million state government-funded project will extend the Palmers Road overpass beyond the Princes Freeway across the Werribee rail line to Sayers Road at Laverton North. This direct road link between Point Cook and Williams Landing will provide improved north-south access and is expected to further ease congestion on Point Cook Road. Major works will start in 2011 and be completed in late 2012.

Also consistent with the strategy, a \$1.5 million package of road safety improvements on Point Cook Road between Seabrook Boulevard and Homestead Run has been funded under the safer roads infrastructure program. The works include pavement widening to allow for a new centre median, exclusive right-turn lanes and bicycle lanes; line marking and signage improvements; the removal of roadside hazards and an upgrade to existing safety barriers; and street lighting improvements. VicRoads is undertaking these improvement works in consultation with the City of Hobsons Bay, which is also contributing to the project. Construction is expected to commence in October 2011.

VicRoads, in consultation with the Hobsons Bay Council, is investigating other options to reduce congestion on Point Cook Road and improve access to the road network, as well as options to improve road safety.

Public transport: Armstrong Creek

Raised with: Minister for Public Transport

Raised by: Ms Tierney

Raised on: 17 August 2011

REPLY:

Buses currently operate between Geelong and Ocean Grove (route 80) and Geelong and Torquay (routes 72 and 74) seven days a week and travel through the planned growth area. These are in addition to the V/Line coaches that provide longer haul public transport via the Surf Coast Highway.

These bus routes are ideally placed to service the residents who will move into the first two estates within Armstrong Creek, 'Warralily Promenade' and 'Warralily Coast'. These estates are located alongside the Surf Coast Highway and Barwon Heads Road respectively. Bus stop infrastructure will be built by the developer of these estates during the construction phase and will therefore be in place and ready to use when new residents move in.

Planning work continues to be carried out by the Department of Transport and the City of Greater Geelong to ensure that further bus routes are introduced as future Armstrong Creek development stages are completed.

Stawell RSL: ministerial visit

Raised with: Minister for Veterans' Affairs

Raised by: Mr O'Brien

Raised on: 18 August 2011

REPLY:

In my capacity as Minister for Veterans' Affairs I intend to visit the Stawell RSL sub-branch in the near future.

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

Thursday, 15 September 2011

Altona: beach renourishment

Raised with: Minister for Environment and Climate Change

Raised by: Mr Finn

Raised on: 8 February 2011

REPLY:

I thank Mr Finn for his invitation to meet with him as well as Mr Ewan and interested local residents to examine the condition of Altona Beach. I met with Mr Finn on 21 April 2011 and again on 17 May 2011.

Northern Victoria Irrigation Renewal Project: progress

Raised with: Minister for Water

Raised by: Mr Lenders

Raised on: 30 June 2011

REPLY:

The Ombudsman commenced an inquiry earlier this year into the development and implementation of water savings projects in northern Victoria, particularly the Northern Victoria Irrigation Renewal Project (NVIRP), formerly known as the food bowl modernisation project. Whilst the Ombudsman sets his own terms of reference it is understood that the inquiry is focusing on:

- the effectiveness of the management, oversight and governance of the NVIRP state-owned enterprise; and
- the appropriateness and rigour of the methodology for estimating, verifying and allocating water savings.

The Victorian coalition government believes it is necessary to undertake the investigation following two critical reports by the Auditor-General and the majority of the project still to be delivered. The government believes the report will:

- improve the outcomes of irrigation modernisation in northern Victoria;
- minimise project risks;
- increase transparency; and
- ensure that Victorian taxpayers, food producers and the commonwealth receive value for money for their investment in irrigation modernisation.

NVIRP is to be commended for maintaining the continued efficient delivery of the project while the Ombudsman's inquiry is under way.

When the inquiry is completed and the Ombudsman's reports his findings, the government will consider how the findings can be used to enhance oversight of the project and provide best value for the community.

Firewood: collection permits

Raised with: Minister for Environment and Climate Change

Raised by: Mr Lenders

Raised on: 16 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 received 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.

Environment: illegal dumping

Raised with: Minister for Environment and Climate Change

Raised by: Mr Barber

Raised on: 16 August 2011

REPLY:

Thank you for your adjournment debate question of 16 August 2011 regarding the dumping of household wastes in the city of Banyule.

The government takes illegal disposal of waste very seriously. It is an issue that spans a range of wastes, from cigarette butts, to dumped household goods, to more significant and systematic illegal dumping and land filling. These are being actively addressed by government through partnerships between the Victorian Litter Action Alliance (VLAA) and its member bodies, which include EPA, Sustainability Victoria, VicRoads, regional waste management groups, local government, and non-government and community organisations.

An illegal dumping strike force has been established to address large scale dumping and illegal landfilling. It supports the great work undertaken by local government by taking decisive action against those whose actions warrant a greater penalty than allowed for under the litter provisions.

The strike force is complemented by the EPA litter prevention officer program which will employ litter prevention officers in 9 Victorian local councils covering 14 local government areas. This program is funded through the

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COUNCIL

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Victorian litter strategy. The initiative incorporates a range of measures including education, enforcement and capacity building to ensure we successfully tackle litter and illegal dumping. The City of Banyule did not apply for funds under the program.

I encourage your constituents to report any specific incidents of littering associated with motor vehicles that they witness to the EPA Litter Report line on 1800 35 25 55 or via the internet at <http://www.epa.vic.gov.au/Reporting/litter.asp>. Specific observations of more significant illegal dumping of waste should be reported to EPA's Pollution Watch Line on 9695 2777.