

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

FIFTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT

FIRST SESSION

WRITTEN ADJOURNMENT RESPONSES

16, 17 and 18 August 2011

(Extract from book 11)

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The Lieutenant-Governor

The Honourable Justice MARILYN WARREN, AC

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Procedures Committee — The President, Mr Dalla-Riva, Mr D. M. Davis, Mr Hall, Mr Lenders, Ms Pennicuik and Mr Viney

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

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.

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

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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FIFTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT — FIRST SESSION

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Kronberg, Mrs Janice Susan	Eastern Metropolitan	LP	Viney, Mr Matthew Shaw	Eastern Victoria	ALP

CONTENTS

WRITTEN ADJOURNMENT RESPONSES

TUESDAY, 16 AUGUST 2011

<i>Roads: Nagambie bypass</i>	2605
<i>Bridges: Yackandandah Creek</i>	2605
<i>Children: Take a Break program</i>	2605, 2611
<i>Rail: Newport station</i>	2606
<i>Kindergarten Inclusion Support Services:</i>	
<i>eligibility criteria</i>	2607
<i>Roads: western suburbs</i>	2607
<i>SPC Ardmona: future</i>	2607
<i>Carbon price: introduction</i>	2608
<i>Electricity: price comparisons</i>	2609
<i>Gaming: revenue</i>	2609
<i>Western Port: port expansion</i>	2610
<i>School buses: Northern Victoria Region</i>	2610
<i>Energy: Latrobe Valley</i>	2612
<i>Glen Devon Primary School site: future</i>	2613
<i>Eaglehawk Primary School: future</i>	2613
<i>Rail: tender process</i>	2613
<i>Planning: Officer</i>	2614
<i>Rail: Altona loop service</i>	2614
<i>Timboon P-12 School: upgrade</i>	2615
<i>Colac Secondary College: football and cricket</i>	
<i>oval</i>	2615
<i>Victoria Legal Aid: funding</i>	2616
<i>Rail: level crossings</i>	2616
<i>Ford Australia: exports</i>	2616
<i>City of Hume: Sunbury separation</i>	2617
<i>Mice: control</i>	2617
<i>Motorised scooters: safety</i>	2618
<i>Public transport: ferry service</i>	2619
<i>Wind farms: health effects</i>	2619
<i>Heinz Australia: Girgarre factory closure</i>	2620
<i>Manufacturing: Victorian Competition and</i>	
<i>Efficiency Commission report</i>	2621
<i>Regional and rural Victoria: fuel prices</i>	2621
<i>Community sector: wages</i>	2622
<i>Regional cities: government policy</i>	2622
<i>Regional Policy Advisory Committee:</i>	
<i>membership</i>	2623
<i>Wyndham Park Primary School: upgrade</i>	2623
<i>Strathmore Primary School: upgrade</i>	2624

WEDNESDAY, 17 AUGUST 2011

<i>McIvor Highway, Bendigo: speed limit</i>	2625
<i>Melbourne Wholesale Fish Market: relocation</i>	2625
<i>Essendon Airport: future</i>	2626

THURSDAY, 18 AUGUST 2011

<i>City of Port Phillip: skate park</i>	2629
<i>Floods: Bunyip River</i>	2629
<i>Goulburn-Murray Water: board</i>	2630

<i>Water: charges</i>	2630
<i>Water: flood level reporting</i>	2631
<i>Environment: Mornington Peninsula aquatic</i>	
<i>centre</i>	2632
<i>Beaumaris: bicycle path</i>	2632
<i>Port Campbell: headland site</i>	2632
<i>Grand Strzelecki Track: native vegetation</i>	2633
<i>Floods: Benjeroop</i>	2633
<i>Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial</i>	
<i>Research Organisation: Highett site</i>	2633

WRITTEN ADJOURNMENT RESPONSES

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

Tuesday, 16 August 2011

Roads: Nagambie bypass

Raised with: Minister for Roads

Raised by: Mr Tee

Raised on: 4 May 2011

REPLY:

The issue raised was that there are allegations that individuals who are not locals are being engaged at the expense of local labour on the Nagambie bypass project. VicRoads has investigated the allegations and it is my understanding that the Abigroup Contract workforce is comprised of local labour and Abigroup employees who have relocated to Nagambie.

Bridges: Yackandandah Creek

Raised with: Minister for Roads

Raised by: Ms Broad

Raised on: 24 May 2011

REPLY:

Following a recent meeting with representatives of Murray Goulburn and local members of Parliament, I requested VicRoads to examine alternative construction options that would reduce the time frame to commence and complete construction on the Yackandandah Creek Bridge.

I am pleased to advise that VicRoads has since commenced demolition works on the bridge and work on the reconstruction is expected to commence in the coming months.

Improved signage has been installed along the length of the detour, as have speed restriction signs of 70 kilometres per hour at the intersections of the Kiewa Valley Highway and Lindsay Road, Lindsay Road and Wodonga-Yackandandah Road, and the Kiewa Valley Highway and Wodonga-Yackandandah Road. To further enhance the safety of all road users, an 80-kilometres-per-hour speed limit is to be introduced along the detour route. Speed restriction signs will be in place until the highway is reopened.

VicRoads has also completed works to remove small vegetation from the roadside edge, enhance the warnings for drivers of approaching intersections and increase the number of road and roadside reflectors for night travel. These improvements have made a significant difference for road users.

Children: Take a Break program

Raised with: Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development

Raised by: Ms Mikakos

Raised on: 24 May 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 was undertaken without any consultation with the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.

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.

In light of the commonwealth's decision to withdraw occasional child-care funding, coupled with their more recent decision to reduce the GST revenue available to Victoria and the prior expenditure of the 2011–12 funds, the Victorian government is no longer in a position to continue to meet the cost of the commonwealth's responsibility, and as such, the program cannot be sustained unless the commonwealth reverses its decision to withdraw funding.

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 this decision.

I have asked the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development 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.

Rail: Newport station

Raised with: Minister for Public Transport

Raised by: Mr Finn

Raised on: 24 May 2011

REPLY:

The coalition government is committed to improving Newport railway station and is working closely with Metro to develop a detailed scope of works to upgrade the car park and associated drainage.

The broad scope of works calls for an additional 200 car spaces, with a fully asphalted surface, line marking and signage.

Drainage will be improved as part of the car park works and a footpath will be provided to connect the car park to the existing council footpath.

Additional lighting and closed-circuit television cameras will also be installed to improve safety.

Metro has been notified of the presentation of the station and asked to investigate and rectify issues in line with its franchise agreement with the government.

Kindergarten Inclusion Support Services: eligibility criteria

Raised with: Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development

Raised by: Ms Pulford

Raised on: 25 May 2011

REPLY:

The Victorian government is committed to ensuring that children with a disability or developmental concerns are supported to access kindergarten. Consequently the government committed an additional \$10 million over four years and \$2.7 million ongoing to expand the eligibility for kindergarten inclusion support packages in the 2011–12 state budget.

This additional funding will broaden the eligibility criteria for kindergarten inclusion support to provide for children with complex medical care needs, who require a high level of ongoing supervision and specific medical care to attend kindergarten.

While the guidelines for complex medical care packages will not be introduced until 2012, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development will provide pro-rata support for Miss 'W' for the remaining two terms of kindergarten in 2011.

I am in receipt of your correspondence about the particular case to which you refer and will respond to it directly.

Roads: western suburbs

Raised with: Minister for Roads

Raised by: Ms Hartland

Raised on: 26 May 2011

REPLY:

The government is committed to improving freight efficiency and addressing congestion and amenity concerns in Melbourne's inner and outer suburban areas, including the Western suburbs. To this end, there are three key strategies currently under development.

The government is assessing a range of possible initiatives in the context of the new metropolitan planning strategy and transport solutions.

The government has also announced the preparation of a Growing Freight on Rail strategy, to be completed by the end of the year, which will consider the potential for moving more metropolitan freight by rail.

SPC Ardmona: future

Raised with: Minister for Manufacturing, Exports and Trade

Raised by: Mr Somyurek

Raised on: 26 May 2011

REPLY:

With manufacturing activity in Victoria contributing more than \$30 billion in gross state product and employing over 300 000 people, the Baillieu government is committed to revitalising this key sector of our economy after a decade of neglect and indifference by the former Labor government.

Victoria's new government has a strategic approach to manufacturing that is about backing local innovation and improving international competitiveness.

I understand that Mr Terry Davis, the CEO of the parent company of SPC Ardmona, Coca-Cola Amatil, has warned that the local food manufacturers might have to consider shifting operations offshore. He listed three reasons:

1. if the dollar remains high;
2. if private label groceries gain a bigger share of the market;
3. if the competitive position of local manufacturers is eroded by federal Labor's carbon tax.

It is important to understand how important a factor the potential carbon price is, not just for this company but for many companies in the manufacturing sector.

It is true that SPC is currently undertaking a review of its three SPC facilities. Our government is working with SPC to understand what the review will be. Obviously the government cannot pre-empt the outcome of the review of SPC Ardmona, but it will continue to maintain contact with the company as it undertakes its review.

Carbon price: introduction

Raised with: Minister for Manufacturing, Exports and Trade

Raised by: Mr Ondarchie

Raised on: 31 May 2011

REPLY:

In my capacity as Minister for Manufacturing, Exports and Trade, I have conducted a series of industry round tables to listen, firsthand, to the needs of Victorian manufacturers. These roundtables have occurred in metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria, with more scheduled to come.

Earlier this year, in February, I chaired the northern metropolitan business round table in Bundoora, where I know that you, Mr Ondarchie, were present. We were able to consult with many representatives from the manufacturing industry within the Northern Metropolitan Region.

No doubt, you are already aware that the Northern Metropolitan Region has a population of 883 000, 16 per cent of the population of metropolitan Melbourne. Of the 68 563 businesses (as at June 2009), 2590 employ more than 20 people; and of the 318 businesses in the north that have more than 100 employees, there are 201 businesses with 100–119 employees and 117 businesses with 200+ employees. Manufacturing happens to be one of the region's major business activities.

Unlike the previous Labor government, who neglected the manufacturing industry for over a decade, and who continue to talk down the manufacturing industry, Victoria's new government is committed to revitalising manufacturing in Victoria.

Throughout my consultations with various businesses, there have been a number of issues that have been continuously raised.

Along with the high Australian dollar, there is growing uncertainty over federal Labor's proposed carbon tax. I know that businesses in the Northern Metropolitan Region also share these concerns.

Just recently the CEO of the parent company Coca-Cola Amatil, Mr Terry Davis, warned that the local food manufacturers might have to consider shifting operations offshore. He listed three reasons for that: one is if the dollar remains high; the second is if private label groceries gain a bigger share of the market; and the third is if the competitive position of local manufacturers is eroded by Labor's carbon tax.

I think it is important to understand how important a factor the potential carbon price is. Uncertainty over the carbon tax being proposed by the Gillard government is not helpful to business confidence.

I look forward to working with you in the future.

Electricity: price comparisons

Raised with: Minister for Consumer Affairs

Raised by: Mr Barber

Raised on: 31 May 2011

REPLY:

Energy price comparison websites market themselves as enabling consumers to compare different energy contracts in order to identify deals that will save them money. As the energy market becomes more competitive, consumers will potentially make use of energy price comparison websites as they look for the best offer for their energy needs.

Like any other trader or service provider, energy price comparison websites must abide by the misleading and deceptive conduct provisions in chapter 2 of the Australian Consumer Law (ACL). They are also subject to the chapter 3 prohibition on making false or misleading representations about goods or services.

Consumer Affairs Victoria is examining the validity of claims of misleading and deceptive conduct by energy price comparison websites, and will follow up with the providers to ensure they understand and uphold their responsibilities under the ACL.

Consumers looking to compare gas and electricity offers may access the Essential Services Commission's 'Your Choice' website. Its primary functions include providing:

- information to help consumers work out what contract they are on and how they can negotiate a better deal; and
- a list of all the standing contracts in their area and details of a range of market contracts to help them choose a retailer.

Additionally, the Consumer Utilities Advocacy Centre (CUAC) recently provided the government with its report on this issue. The report's recommendations are being considered.

Gaming: revenue

Raised with: Minister for Gaming

Raised by: Hon. M. P. Pakula

Raised on: 1 June 2011

REPLY:

The Victorian budget for 2011–12 estimates that the state will raise \$1.74 billion in gambling taxes and levies, a growth of 4.6 per cent (or \$76.4 million) compared with the revised estimates for 2010–11. This represents 3.67 per cent of total state revenue.

Gambling taxation revenue is related to private household consumption. As household consumption increases, it is generally the case that the amount spent on gambling will also increase.

The estimated growth in gambling taxation revenue for 2011–12 is based on predicted household consumption expenditure growth and also takes into account the impact of changes to the casino's licence conditions and

taxation arrangements agreed to by the previous government, which included a progressive increase in the tax rate on casino gaming machines and increases in the number of gaming tables.

The revenue forecast is not based on an anticipated revenue growth for any one gambling product.

Most gambling tax revenue is transferred by standing appropriation to the Hospitals and Charities Fund, the Mental Health Fund or the Community Support Fund. In 2011–12, it is estimated that 82 per cent (\$1.4 billion) of total gambling taxation revenue will be transferred by standing appropriation to these funds.

The government is committed to increasing the proportion of funding available from the Community Support Fund for direct grants for community projects and to reducing funds paid to government departments.

Significantly, in the 2011–12 budget the government announced funding of \$150 million over four years from the Community Support Fund, for the establishment of a new independent body, the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation. The foundation will have a mandate to reduce the prevalence and severity of problem gambling in Victoria.

Western Port: port expansion

Raised with: Minister for Planning

Raised by: Ms Pennicuik

Raised on: 1 June 2011

REPLY:

I thank the member for Southern Metropolitan for her question concerning the government's proposed development of the port of Hastings as a second major container port in Victoria, which would cater for the growth of container trade and strengthen competition as well as economic benefits for the state.

Your question highlighted the importance of up-to-date scientific knowledge and community consultation to underpin planning for development of the port of Hastings.

As previously announced by the Minister for Ports, when the *Transport Legislation Amendment (Port of Hastings Development Authority) Bill 2011* was introduced to Parliament, the Port of Hastings Development Authority will be tasked with undertaking economic, environmental and social assessments to provide a basis for more detailed planning and development of the port. The recently appointed Victorian Regional Channels Authority, led by the chair, Mr Ken Jarvis, will also play a key role in planning for the port's development.

It is more than likely that the review of scientific knowledge regarding Westernport being led by Professor Mick Keough, from the University of Melbourne, will be one of the inputs to the Port of Hastings Development Authority's examination of the environmental issues related to the port's expansion. However, only when the authority is formed and commences work will it be possible to establish the best way for it to proceed in planning for development of the port.

As Minister for Planning, I may have a role in establishing and overseeing the formal process for environmental assessment of port development at Hastings, which may involve an environment effects statement (EES) under the *Environment Effects Act 1978* (EE act). Suffice it to say, the required process will draw on the best scientific information available, will involve extensive opportunities for public input and will give due regard to the health of Western Port Bay, as well as to the economic benefits that would accrue from enhanced port facilities.

School buses: Northern Victoria Region

Raised with: Minister for Public Transport

Raised by: Ms Darveniza

Raised on: 1 June 2011

REPLY:

The Department of Transport (DOT) works closely with Bus Association Victoria to routinely review all free school bus routes within Victoria to ensure the services provided are meeting demand and are operating in accordance with Department of Education and Early Childhood Development guidelines.

School bus reviews have been undertaken regularly under all state governments for more than 20 years. Reviews are necessary as student numbers change each year.

As a result of the reviews, existing school bus routes may continue with no changes, or where demand has increased, may be extended and when justified additional buses introduced. Where student numbers have reduced, routes may be altered so that fewer buses are used to transport eligible students.

The government believes that the free school bus network is crucial to ensure children across regional Victoria can get to school, particularly those who live in isolated, rural areas where there are no other public transport alternatives.

The school bus review process will ensure that school buses operate efficiently and effectively, and will continue to provide a valuable service to the community.

Children: Take a Break program

Raised with: Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development

Raised by: Ms Pulford

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 was undertaken without any consultation with the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.

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.

In light of the commonwealth's decision to withdraw occasional child care funding, coupled with their more recent decision to reduce the GST revenue available to Victoria and the prior expenditure of the 2011–12 funds, the Victorian government is no longer in a position to continue to meet the cost of the commonwealth's responsibility, and as such, the program cannot be sustained unless the commonwealth reverses its decision to withdraw funding.

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 this decision.

I have asked the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development 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.

Energy: Latrobe Valley

Raised with: Minister for Energy and Resources

Raised by: Mr Lenders

Raised on: 1 June 2011

REPLY:

In response to the matter of the future of the Brown Coal Mining in the Latrobe Valley, I make the following comments.

The greatest uncertainty for the coal industry in the Latrobe Valley is the Gillard government's carbon tax. The Baillieu government has spoken out on its concerns with the impact of this carbon tax proposal on Victoria and the Latrobe Valley.

The commonwealth government did not seek to consult in any detail with the Victorian government prior to its carbon tax announcement.

I also note that the structural adjustment assistance proposed under Labor's carbon tax package is completely inadequate, given the economic impact it will have on many communities throughout Victoria including, but not limited to, the Latrobe Valley. At \$200 million over seven years, it is even less than the (inadequate) \$200 million over five years proposed under the Rudd government's carbon pollution reduction scheme.

Mr Lenders seeks that I sit down with people in the industry to come forward with a plan for the future that deals with security of supply.

I have discussed this issue with the Latrobe Valley generators. I have raised this issue with the commonwealth minister, Martin Ferguson, and have discussed the economic future of the region with local representatives, including the Latrobe City Council, and will continue to represent the interests of Victorians and the Latrobe Valley in future.

The Victorian government also announced the cessation of negotiations for the partial closure of Hazelwood, which was Mr Lenders's policy when in government. The CEO of the Latrobe City Council and the Gippsland Trades and Labor Council welcomed that decision.

This government has also advocated for commonwealth funding for low-emissions coal technology, and the CarbonNet project. HRL and CarbonNet were projects supported by the previous government and are supported by this government, despite being accused of 'cuddling up to coal' by Mr Lenders's Labor colleagues, and the Gillard government's failure to provide one dollar of new funding for the development of clean coal technologies as part of its carbon tax package.

The coalition government is continuing the coal resource strategic planning work of Clean Coal Victoria (CCV). The planning activity involves considerable community consultation with industry, local and state government and community groups. Part of the strategic planning for coal involves a Victorian brown coal roadmap. This will involve local and international industry, academic and government personnel to define a pathway for coal that will assist government in decisions on coal.

The coalition government will continue to support the development of lower emissions technology. In the 2011–12 budget the government doubled the funding to \$82 million for the Energy Technology Innovation Scheme (ETIS), and will open ETIS to all low emissions technology-including clean coal technologies-through the sequence of research, development and demonstration. This is in contrast to the last round of ETIS funding under the Labor government, which was restricted to renewable energy technology.

On Mr Lenders's final point, I have recently made an announcement regarding the necessary steps and timing for the safe reopening of the Princes Freeway at Morwell.

Glen Devon Primary School site: future

Raised with: Minister for Education

Raised by: Mr Elsbury

Raised on: 2 June 2011

REPLY:

I am informed as follows:

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development is reviewing options for the future use of the former Glen Devon Primary School site. The department, through Western Metropolitan Region, is preparing a business case for the establishment of an English language centre at this site.

I am further advised that the regional office has been involved in discussions with Wyndham City Council regarding complementary uses of the school buildings which would provide a range of education and community services. These discussions included Werribee Community and Education Centre (WCEC) having access to and utilising the buildings to provide appropriate training programs for young people.

The department will prepare comprehensive advice once these discussions are finalised in July.

To ensure that the buildings on the site are not further vandalised a decision was made to shutter the windows and doorways and to increase the frequency of security patrols to make safe the site until it is reoccupied.

Eaglehawk Primary School: future

Raised with: Minister for Education

Raised by: Mr Drum

Raised on: 2 June 2011

REPLY:

I am informed as follows:

Last year the coalition guaranteed the future of Eaglehawk Primary School and indicated that the school would have a dedicated principal, school council and the necessary investment to restore enrolments. This is a guarantee which the coalition has carried into government.

I have received and endorsed the independently conducted community consultation report. This report reflects many sound ideas from the people of Eaglehawk that have been captured in an action plan. The action plan will be implemented immediately and includes both short and long term strategies to ensure that Eaglehawk Primary School can build a bright and sustainable future.

With regards to the capital funding committed to the school, \$2 million was announced in the May budget on top of \$850 000 that was already allocated and is currently being spent. The community of Eaglehawk will see \$1.215m spent on the school facilities in the next 12 months, and a further \$1.635m in the year after that.

This is clear evidence of the commitment of the Baillieu government to the future of Eaglehawk Primary School.

Rail: tender process

Raised with: Minister for Public Transport

Raised by: Mr Somyurek

Raised on: 2 June 2011

REPLY:

The 2011–12 Victorian budget commits \$210.36 million for the procurement of seven additional X'Trapolis train sets and associated capital works. This represents stage 1 of the government's commitment to procure 40 new trains for the metropolitan network.

The procurement of these seven trains was the subject of a direct negotiation with the current supplier, Alstom. The negotiated outcome is considered excellent value for money having regard to both the competitive purchase price and the increased local content from existing orders. The local content of these seven trains will be at least 30 per cent, an increase of approximately 5 per cent from the existing order.

The procurement methodology and local content requirements for the further 33 trains is still under development. In terms of the procurement for the further 33 trains, I can assure the member that the purchase will be the subject of a competitive process with a strong focus on local content.

Planning: Officer

Raised with: Minister for Planning

Raised by: Mr O'Donohue

Raised on: 2 June 2011

REPLY:

With regard to the Officer precinct structure plan and specifically the realignment of the road network in the Officer township proposed as part of the precinct structure plan, I can confirm the following.

A draft precinct structure plan has been prepared for Officer by Cardinia Shire Council, in partnership with the Growth Areas Authority. A number of changes have been made to the plan including parks, drainage reserves, the road network, school sites, community centres and the identification of activity centres. The draft precinct structure plan is now available for discussion. Once consultation has been undertaken, it is expected that the precinct structure plan will be submitted to me for approval.

I am aware of the issues that face the Officer township and I can confirm that the road network in the draft precinct structure plan relating to the township has been amended. I will seek to ensure that the precinct structure plan that is approved for Officer will benefit the township.

I can also confirm that I attended a recent town meeting in Officer and again visited the township on 3 June 2011. I have spoken with residents and small business owners regarding their concerns with the changes proposed for the township of Officer.

Rail: Altona loop service

Raised with: Minister for Public Transport

Raised by: Ms Hartland

Raised on: 15 June 2011

REPLY:

I met with a group of residents from Altona on 13 April 2011 to discuss their concerns about the May 2011 timetable change.

Representatives from the Department of Transport (DOT) also attended a community meeting on 29 March 2011 to explain in detail why the changes were made.

Timboon P-12 School: upgrade

Raised with: Minister for Education

Raised by: Ms Pulford

Raised on: 15 June 2011

REPLY:

I am informed as follows:

The Victorian government is committed to the upgrading of government primary and secondary schools across the state. The Victorian Liberal-Nationals coalition Plan for Education was released in November last year and outlined our priorities in the school building program. The government provided capital funding for a number of these school projects in the Victorian state budget 2011-12.

The government is aware other schools have been involved in planning under the previous government's capital program and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development has recognised the needs of Timboon P-12 School. A master plan for the school has been completed and design development for the first stage of the project will shortly be finalised.

The needs of schools and funding allocations for projects like that at Timboon P-12 which are at the planning stage will be considered in future state budgets.

Colac Secondary College: football and cricket oval

Raised with: Minister for Education

Raised by: Ms Tierney

Raised on: 15 June 2011

REPLY:

I am informed as follows:

In the 2011-12 state budget the government announced \$11m for the completion of stage 3 of the Colac Secondary College regeneration project.

The final stage of this project will include facilities for visual and performing arts, and food technology, general purpose classrooms, and an upgrade of indoor physical education amenities shared jointly with Colac Otway Shire's Blue Water Fitness Centre.

As part of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development's commitment to shared community facilities the provision of a sporting field will be part of this project. Whether this will be a soccer or hockey pitch or an oval will be determined by Colac Secondary College following consultation with Colac Otway Shire.

This will ensure that the sporting facilities developed at the school will complement those already provided at Colac Otway Shire's Central Reserve, which is located across the road from the school, rather than duplicate these.

Victoria Legal Aid: funding

Raised with: Attorney-General

Raised by: Hon. M. P. Pakula

Raised on: 15 June 2011

REPLY:

Demand for state-funded VLA services has grown substantially in recent years. While the previous government provided around \$25 million per year in the three financial years to 2011–12 in response to this demand growth, that funding boost sunsets in 2011–12.

In other words, the previous government failed to provide ongoing funding to keep up with demand for legal aid. The Baillieu government will now need to consider the issue in the context of preparing the 2012–13 budget.

Our commitment in relation to the Public Purpose Fund was that we would not seek to raid the Public Purpose Fund for programs such as the Costs Court that ought to be funded from the budget. We intend to honour that commitment.

Rail: level crossings

Raised with: Minister for Roads

Raised by: Ms Mikakos

Raised on: 15 June 2011

REPLY:

The government's 'Metro Level Crossing Blitz' identifies ten crossings for treatment, commencing in its first term, which represent some of Melbourne's busiest level crossings where high train and traffic volumes are creating congestion on the road system.

State budget funding of \$16.5 million in 2011–12 and 2012–13 is targeted at getting construction started at Mitcham and Springvale (three level crossings), and at getting planning started at another five crossings — Mountain Highway, Scoresby Road, North Road, Blackburn Road, and Burke Road.

Ford Australia: exports

Raised with: Minister for Manufacturing, Exports and Trade

Raised by: Mr Somyurek

Raised on: 16 June 2011

REPLY:

1. The automotive industry in Victoria is an important contributor to the state's manufacturing sector and economy. Victoria is one of only a small number of locations around the globe where a vehicle can be taken from concept through to design, and ultimately, volume production.
2. The industry is currently facing significant challenges due to the high Australian dollar and rising fuel prices. Additionally, the industry has been impacted by cutbacks in federal government assistance programs such as the abolition of the Federal Green Car Innovation Fund.

3. The automotive sector has seen significant turnaround: in May, Ford Australia announced an after-tax profit of \$12.2 million; and, local manufacturers also grew their turnover from \$3.1 billion to \$3.3 billion. This strong result points towards further investment by Ford.
4. The Victorian government remains committed to ensuring Ford's long-term presence in Victoria and shares a strong relationship with Ford. Unlike the opposition, the Victorian government will never talk down the manufacturing sector in this state.

City of Hume: Sunbury separation

Raised with: Minister for Local Government

Raised by: Mrs Petrovich

Raised on: 16 June 2011

REPLY:

I thank the member for Northern Victoria for her question. I have publicly affirmed the government's commitment for the people of Sunbury to have a say on possible secession from Hume City Council.

As the *Local Government Act 1989* does not include a process for this to occur, I have sought advice from my department as to the appropriate process to give effect to this commitment.

I expect to shortly be provided with some options to consider. Importantly, I will be seeking to ensure that as much information that can be attained to assist this process is provided and this includes economic assessment material.

Further information will be provided about the next steps in this matter in due course.

Mice: control

Raised with: Minister for Agriculture and Food Security

Raised by: Mr Lenders

Raised on: 28 June 2011

REPLY:

In attempting to link the control response to both locust plagues and on-farm mice infestations, the opposition is once again demonstrating the lack of understanding Labor has of agriculture.

There exists a clear and long-agreed role for the state in financially contributing to the control of plague locusts, dating back to 1976 when the Australian Plague Locust Commission (APLC) was established and commenced operations. The primary purpose of the APLC was to overcome past difficulties in organising the control of an insect (locusts) which migrates over long distances and poses an interstate threat to agricultural industries. It is recognised that locusts will cause significant damage not only to commercial crops and pastures but also to community asset vegetation.

The APLC was formed following the major infestation of 1973–74, when the then Prime Minister of Australia and the Premiers of the States of New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria and South Australia agreed to establish a dedicated locust control organisation. The APLC has continued a program of monitoring, forecasting, research and control since that time. The commission is jointly funded by the commonwealth (50 per cent), New South Wales (32.5 per cent), Victorian (10 per cent), South Australian (5 per cent) and Queensland (2.5 per cent) governments.

The success of the APLC coordination of effort has been the effective containment of locusts in New South Wales in most seasons. The former government was forced into action in 2010 by the then coalition opposition to take

action to prepare for and encourage community and landowner participation in the campaign to control locusts and stop their threatened spread from northern Victoria down into the state's south.

By contrast, mice infestations are a frequent issue in parts of Victoria's grains production area which is traditionally controlled by landowners themselves. Mice infestations do not travel as rapidly nor as widely as locusts and damage caused by mice is primarily to private infrastructure and crops.

There exists no accepted interstate government cost-sharing regime for mouse control.

The coalition government has been pleased to support the call by affected grain producers and the Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) for the Australian Pesticide and Veterinary Medicines Authority to approve an emergency use permit for the treatment of unsterilised wheat as an additional mouse bait option. This option would be in addition to existing commercially marketed mouse baits.

The support of the coalition government for our farming sector on this issue has been recognised by the VFF, whose VFF Grains Group President, Mr Andrew Weidemann, said in a press release dated Tuesday, 21 June 2011:

The VFF thanks Minister Peter Walsh, the Department of Primary Industries Chemical Standards Branch, and the APVMA, for assisting in this emergency plague response. This decision is a good example of how industry and government can work cohesively to achieve a response in the best interests of farmers and the community.

This coalition government will continue to work with food and fibre producers to tackle the varied challenges of weather, pests and diseases and to grow a strong commercial agricultural sector to provide food security for the future.

Thank you for raising this issue with me.

Motorised scooters: safety

Raised with: Minister for Roads

Raised by: Mrs Coote

Raised on: 28 June 2011

REPLY:

Motorised mobility device is a term used to describe a (generally) battery powered, three or four-wheel ride-on vehicle that is designed to assist the mobility of aged or physically disabled people and primarily replace extended walking in normal daily activities. Maintaining personal mobility allows a person to preserve their independence and maintain their quality of life.

These motorised mobility device users are legally regarded as pedestrians and therefore the road rules that apply to pedestrians are the same road rules that apply to users of motorised mobility devices.

The Victorian parliamentary Road Safety Committee made a recommendation in its Inquiry into Road Safety for Older Road Users in 2003 that VicRoads produce a guide for users of motorised mobility devices.

As a result, in 2006, VicRoads released 'A guide for choosing and using motorised mobility devices: mobility scooters and electric wheelchairs'.

The guide covers who may use a motorised mobility device, how to choose the right motorised mobility device, road rules for pedestrians on motorised mobility devices, checks to make before each trip and your responsibilities as a rider when using a motorised mobility device. This guide was updated in April 2010 and is available to view or download from the VicRoads website. The guide was also distributed to suppliers and manufacturers of these vehicles as well as to local government.

Public transport: ferry service

Raised with: Minister for Public Transport

Raised by: Mr Finn

Raised on: 29 June 2011

REPLY:

The Department of Transport (DOT) has received numerous letters suggesting that a bay commuter ferry service be provided as an alternative public transport option for commuters from the Wyndham, Geelong and Bellarine Peninsula areas.

DOT has previously engaged consultants to evaluate commuter ferries on Port Phillip Bay. The consultants concluded that there are a number of challenges that limit the appropriateness of ferries for Melbourne.

Journey times would be significantly longer than existing land-based means. Ferry operation along the Yarra River to the CBD is hampered by the combination of a 5-knot speed limit and numerous low bridges. The use of Station Pier as an alternative suffers from its remoteness from the CBD and the need for commuters to make a connecting tram journey into Melbourne.

Due to the weather conditions that are commonly experienced on Port Phillip Bay, including large swells, it is considered that a ferry service would suffer from cancellations and uncomfortably rough trips on a regular basis. Larger vessels could provide a reliable all-weather service, although these vessels would be too large for the anticipated patronage.

Interstate and overseas experience shows that successful commuter ferry services offer short direct trips between two population centres that are otherwise distant by land-based routes. The large size of Port Phillip Bay limits new opportunities to create routes that offer time advantages over existing land-based routes.

The upgrade of land-based transport modes will provide higher capacity, faster and more reliable journey times than could be realistically achieved by a commuter ferry service.

Wind farms: health effects

Raised with: Minister for Planning

Raised by: Mr Ramsay

Raised on: 29 June 2011

REPLY:

The Victorian Liberal-Nationals coalition 'Plan for Planning' and 'Plan for Energy and Resources', set out a range of actions intended to facilitate best practice in wind energy facility development in Victoria. Policy actions will be implemented progressively following further research and examination of legislative options.

The Victorian government has moved quickly by changing the Victoria planning provisions and all Victorian planning schemes on 15 March 2011 to implement the first stage of policy actions by:

- Making local government the responsible authority for all wind energy facility permit applications.
- Revising planning provisions including strengthened consideration of local amenity impacts and adoption of the best practice New Zealand Standard *NZ6808:2010, Acoustics–Wind Farm Noise* (the 2010 standard) to set noise limits.

- Updating the *Policy and Planning Guidelines for Development of Wind Energy Facilities in Victoria (March 2011)* to reflect the amendment and introduce additional application requirements to ensure a proposal can be more clearly understood.
- Providing transitional arrangements that apply to existing permits for wind energy facilities that have not yet been acted on. Transition is only for one year up to 15 March 2012. Any extension of time of a permit granted must specify an expiry date from the commencement no later than 15 March 2012.

Next Implementation Stage

The next stage of implementation will include:

- Prohibiting turbines within 2 kilometres of an existing dwelling, unless there is written consent from the owner of the dwelling.
- Prohibiting wind energy facilities in inappropriate locations such as National Parks, the Mornington and Bellarine Peninsulas, the Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges, the Great Ocean Road region, Macedon and McHarg ranges, the coastal area of the Bass coast and regional population growth corridors.

Any new wind farm proposals will have to comply with the new requirements when they are introduced.

The prohibition of turbines within 2 kilometres of an existing dwelling, (unless agreement is reached with the owner of the dwelling), is in keeping with the recommendation from the Senate inquiry ‘that further consideration be given to the development of policy on separation criteria between residences and wind farm facilities’.

The ‘no go’ locations identified in the policy commitments are amongst the most sensitive environmental and landscape locations in the state and should therefore be excluded from wind energy facility development as well as identified regional centres to provide for future population growth. These policy commitments will be implemented shortly.

Further investigations are under way across the relevant government portfolio areas to finalise the remaining elements of the government’s policy including the establishment of a shared payment scheme and making data on the energy output of wind farms publicly available. An inter-agency working group has been established to implement these commitments.

Waubra Wind Energy Facility

In relation to concerns relating to the operation of the existing Waubra wind energy facility, the Department of Planning and Community Development and the Environment Protection Authority are currently investigating this issue. I expect advice about these matters shortly.

Heinz Australia: Girgarre factory closure

Raised with: Minister for Manufacturing, Exports and Trade

Raised by: Ms Darveniza

Raised on: 29 June 2011

REPLY:

The news of the job losses at Heinz in Girgarre is obviously extremely disappointing. The government has spoken to Heinz, which has described the decision as part of a global consolidation strategy.

Heinz had stated that all employees will be provided with support through its outplacement program, including counselling, job search services and new skills training. This will be supported by the Victorian government. Heinz has indicated its commitment to Victoria and is seeking to ensure the long-term future of its Australian and Victorian operations.

As we know, the company is planning an investment of \$5 million at its nearby Echuca site, which manufactures baby food. The company has also made arrangements for Cedenco Foods to accept this season's tomato crop from local growers.

The Victorian government held talks with Heinz on 1 June about information sessions for all staff, with a further meeting between Heinz and a representative from the Victorian government's Bendigo office having taken place on 27 June 2011.

An employment response workshop was discussed and has been scheduled for early August 2011.

I also understand that the acting CEO of Regional Development Victoria has recently met with the local council to discuss possible options and look more broadly at how Girgarre can be supported. It is anticipated that the department will continue to meet with Heinz to discuss ways in which we can work together and assist the region, site and employees.

Manufacturing: Victorian Competition and Efficiency Commission report

Raised with: Minister for Manufacturing, Exports and Trade

Raised by: Mr Somyurek

Raised on: 29 June 2011

REPLY:

It is not my intention to pre-empt consideration of the final report by commenting on the draft report.

Regional and rural Victoria: fuel prices

Raised with: Minister for Consumer Affairs

Raised by: Ms Pulford

Raised on: 29 June 2011

REPLY:

I refer to the matter you raised during the debate on 29 June 2011 concerning the higher average price of petrol in Victorian regional and country towns compared to prices in Melbourne.

As you may recall, the Rudd-Gillard government was elected on a promise to keep petrol prices low. However, the federal Labor government's collapsed Fuelwatch policy failed to deliver lower petrol prices for Victorians, including those in rural and regional areas. Documents prepared by the federal Minister for Resources indicated that the proposal would not necessarily lead to reduced petrol prices, and an analysis of prices found that fuel consistently cost more in Perth (where petrol stations are required to provide pricing information for online comparison) than in Sydney and Melbourne.

The city-country price differential is an ongoing concern for consumers and businesses in country areas and has been the subject of numerous inquiries, including by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC).

Following a report by the ACCC in 2007 on 'Petrol Prices and Australian Consumers', the commonwealth government requested that the ACCC monitor and report annually on petrol prices for three years to the end of 2010. I am advised that the aim was to alert government and the community to situations where competition in petrol wholesale and retail markets was not delivering satisfactory outcomes. To assist with this work, the ACCC monitored petrol price in capital cities and 150 regional and country towns across Australia and obtained cost and profit information from petrol companies.

The resulting reports are published on the ACCC website at www.accc.gov.au. The 2010 report notes lower fuel volumes, and thus higher costs per litre of fuel sold, as a key driver of higher prices in regional and country areas. Additionally, the report pointed to other factors that influence country fuel prices, such as:

- additional freight and storage costs;
- levels of local competition, including the number of service stations; and
- a lack or diversification or lower convenience product sales that are important for some service stations to achieve adequate returns.

The ACCC also hosts the Office of the Petrol Prices Commissioner (OPPC), which has full powers under the *Australian Competition and Consumer Act 2010* to formally monitor and investigate petrol prices.

Should you wish, you may raise the matter directly with the OPPC at GPO Box 520, Melbourne or 9290 1800 so that your concerns may be captured in the future work of the ACCC.

Community sector: wages

Raised with: Minister for Community Services

Raised by: Ms Hartland

Raised on: 29 June 2011

REPLY:

The government values the outstanding work done by community sector workers and acknowledges that it is often incredibly physically and mentally demanding and draining work.

This government wholeheartedly supports the principle that men and women should receive equal remuneration for work of equal or comparable value. Before the last election, the coalition government made a firm commitment of support for this principle in relation to the pay equity case before Fair Work Australia which was brought by a number of unions on behalf of community sector workers.

The government demonstrated its good faith and support by setting aside \$50 million a year, or \$200 million over four years, towards any equal pay order that Fair Work Australia might make. This was published, up-front, in our costings before the election and confirmed in the state budget.

The recent minimum rates adjustment granted by Fair Work Australia that Ms Hartland has referred to will form part of the government's response to any outcome from the pay equity case.

Having set these funds aside specifically for this purpose, the government now is waiting for Fair Work Australia to consider the submissions it has received and the evidence for and against the claim, and then hand down its decision.

In anticipating the decision in this way the coalition government has taken a financially responsible position where the former government did not.

If Fair Work Australia determines that the figure should be higher than what this government has made provision for, we will look at the decision at that time.

Regional cities: government policy

Raised with: Minister for Regional Cities

Raised by: Ms Tierney

Raised on: 29 June 2011

REPLY:

The Regional Cities portfolio represents local councils that contain the ten largest regional cities in Victoria. These local councils form the membership base of Regional Cities Victoria which is a self-appointed group. Regional Cities play an important role by supporting a network of smaller centres and surrounding rural area within their regions.

The \$1 billion Regional Growth Fund developed by the coalition government will provide support for all regional councils. Smaller councils will benefit from more generous funding rations in programs such as the Putting Locals First Program and the Local Government Infrastructure Fund in comparison to councils represented by the Regional Cities portfolio.

The government will continue to meet and work with local councils to develop the role of all cities and centres that provide important services to regional and rural Victorians.

Regional Policy Advisory Committee: membership

Raised with: Minister for Regional and Rural Development

Raised by: Mr Drum

Raised on: 29 June 2011

REPLY:

The Victorian government is currently in the process of finalising the appointment of members to the Regional Policy Advisory Committee. I look forward to being able to advise the house of the membership of the Regional Policy Advisory Committee when these appointments have been confirmed.

The membership of the Regional Policy Advisory Committee will consist of representatives from all regions of non-metropolitan Victoria, and members will bring a wide range of backgrounds and areas of expertise to the table.

The Regional Policy Advisory Committee will play an important role in advising this government on issues across regional and rural Victoria, in addition to its core roles of overseeing the strategic projects of the Regional Growth Fund and considering the implications of legislation and policies for regional Victoria.

Wyndham Park Primary School: upgrade

Raised with: Minister for Education

Raised by: Mr Elsbury

Raised on: 30 June 2011

REPLY:

I am informed as follows:

I understand that Glen Devon Primary School and Glen Orden Primary School were allocated \$7 million in combined state and commonwealth funding to form Wyndham Park Primary School.

The department is continuing to work with Wyndham Park Primary School to achieve the best possible outcome within the available budget.

Wyndham Park Primary School is receiving additional funding to supplement refurbishment as well as further funding for an upgrade of its storm water and sewerage system.

Strathmore Primary School: upgrade

Raised with: Minister for Education

Raised by: Mr Eideh

Raised on: 30 June 2011

REPLY:

I am informed as follows:

The Victorian government has made a commitment to focus on 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. The needs of these schools will be given due consideration in determining future priorities for the building program and in future state budget processes.

Strathmore Primary School received \$3 000 000 for new classrooms under the Primary Schools for the 21st Century (P21) Program and a further \$200 000 for classroom refurbishment under the National School Pride Program.

WRITTEN ADJOURNMENT RESPONSES

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

Wednesday, 17 August 2011

McIvor Highway, Bendigo: speed limit

Raised with: Minister for Roads

Raised by: Mrs Petrovich

Raised on: 24 May 2011

REPLY:

VicRoads is currently undertaking a holistic review of speed limits in Victoria. In this review, VicRoads will investigate opportunities to simplify speed limits on the road network, provide more consistency in the application of the speed zoning guidelines and assist motorists to better comply with speed limits.

I will ask VicRoads to include McIvor Highway in the review. However, I note that a recent review of the speed zone on the highway in Junortoun has indicated that the existing 90 kilometre per hour speed limit is appropriate and in accordance with VicRoads' speed zoning guidelines.

The review also confirmed that the Bendigo Domain Village driveway has safe sightlines available to approaching traffic.

I am advised that 'Aged Pedestrians' warning signs were installed on 15 June 2011 on each approach to the pedestrian refuge near the Bendigo Domain Village and new traffic signals were also installed at the nearby intersection of McIvor Highway and Atlas Road on 13 July 2011.

The new signage and traffic signals will assist pedestrians and harness horses to cross the highway safely. Breaks created in traffic when the new signals are operational will improve the opportunities for pedestrians and turning vehicles near the Bendigo Domain Village.

Melbourne Wholesale Fish Market: relocation

Raised with: Minister for Public Transport

Raised by: Mr Lenders

Raised on: 14 June 2011

REPLY:

I issued a directive to VicTrack that it was required to purchase the site from Melbourne Wholesale Fish Market Pty Ltd by no later than 30 June 2011 and grant a licence to Melbourne Seafood Centre Pty Ltd (MSC) to:

- commence on 30 June 2011
- require it to offer each of the existing tenants of the site a fixed term sub-licence for eight months (also commencing on 30 June 2011).

VicTrack has executed a licence agreement with all members of the MSC commencing 30 June 2011 for a period of eight months. The majority of remaining tenants who are not part of the MSC have also signed sub-licences with it on the same terms.

The MSC is now responsible for managing the fish market at the Footscray Road site. VicTrack will continue to work closely with the MSC to ensure a smooth transition to the new premises at Kensington, which is expected to occur in early 2012.

Essendon Airport: future

Raised with: Minister responsible for the Aviation Industry

Raised by: Mr Elsbury

Raised on: 16 June 2011

REPLY:

I would like to thank Mr Elsbury for the address he gave in Parliament on the importance of Essendon Airport.

In response to his speech on 16 June, I would also like to assure Mr Elsbury that this government remains committed to maintaining Essendon as a working airport.

The federal government also supports our position and the federal Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, Anthony Albanese, has also confirmed that there are no current plans to close the airport or relax the curfew.

This is because Essendon Airport is of remarkable importance to the state of Victoria and Melbourne.

Situated on 305 hectares that falls within the boundaries of the Hume City Council, Essendon Airport is the base for a significant mix of aviation and non-aviation activities.

It supports over 50 000 aircraft movements per year, 95 per cent of which can be attributed to general aviation and emergency purposes while the other 5 per cent can be accounted for by regional airlines such as Sharp Airlines operating public services from Melbourne to Hamilton and Portland in Western Victoria.

Earlier this year, Sharp Airlines also commenced services between Essendon Airport and Flinders Island. This Victorian based airline carries 70 000 passengers per year of which a significant number travel through Essendon Airport.

Between July 2005 and June 2010 the airport had an average annual passenger growth of 17.4 per cent.

Essendon Airport is also the home of a number of pilot training schools, Altara and Pearson Aviation as well as chartered flight operators, Air Nostalgia owned by Australasian Jet (AusJet), a company that primarily focuses on servicing some of Australia's most luxurious jets for Australia's private sector executives.

Companies such as Air Nostalgia also offer the public a variety of scenic flights over Melbourne, Port Phillip Bay, the Great Ocean Road and transport tourists to winery and wilderness tours from Essendon Airport.

As a secondary capital city airport, Essendon allows Tullamarine Airport to be much more efficient and safer through providing a base for light and medium air traffic and preventing congestion at Melbourne Airport.

Essendon also plays a very important role as a base for Victoria's air ambulance and police air wing. Without Essendon Airport the Royal Flying Doctor Service and state emergency services would not have been able to protect the community during periods of bushfires, floods and other emergencies.

As Mr Elsbury stated in his address, during the Black Saturday bushfires a total of 6500 firefighters were flown into Essendon Airport from across Australia and New Zealand to assist with saving Victorians' lives.

With the federal government's approval of Essendon Airport's 20-year master plan in 2008, it has been guaranteed that the airport will continue to support and provide services which are vital to urban, regional and rural Victorians.

WRITTEN ADJOURNMENT RESPONSES

Wednesday, 17 August 2011

COUNCIL

2627

There is no doubt that Essendon Airport has provided essential aviation services to Victorian residents since its opening in 1921 and it will continue do so for a long time to come.

I appreciate Mr Elsbury's support for the aviation industry in Victoria and thank him for raising awareness of the importance of Essendon Airport.

WRITTEN ADJOURNMENT RESPONSES

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

Thursday, 18 August 2011

City of Port Phillip: skate park

Raised with: Minister for Environment and Climate Change

Raised by: Mrs Coote

Raised on: 5 April 2011

REPLY:

I recently met with City of Port Phillip councillors Rachel Powning (mayor) and Serge Thomann and Mr John Hicks, general manager, city and infrastructure services division, City of Port Phillip, to review the consent issued under the *Coastal Management Act 1995* for the marina reserve master plan.

Following this meeting, council agreed to amend the master plan to enhance public facilities at the site to ensure the plan serves the interests of all the community.

Amendments to the master plan include improvements to the skateable area, BBQ area, landscaping, inclusion of play equipment within the vicinity of the BBQ area and provision of a 300m² garden bed to separate the active and passive recreational areas. I have now given consent for the master plan as of 16 June 2011.

Council issued a media announcement on Monday, 20 June 2011.

Floods: Bunyip River

Raised with: Minister for Environment and Climate Change

Raised by: Mr Scheffer

Raised on: 5 May 2011

REPLY:

Melbourne Water has clarified that it has allocated \$7.5 million to the Bunyip Main Drain at Pakenham in budget paper 4 for the renewal and upgrade of the southern embankment of the Bunyip Main Drain, between Eleven Mile and Thirteen Mile Roads. The works are scheduled to commence in summer 2011–12, and they have been the subject of ongoing communication with stakeholders.

In relation to the reinstatement of the section of Bunyip River that has affected Cardinia shire roads, Melbourne Water has advised that it is working with the shire and other stakeholders to design and implement the required works. As the Bunyip River Road is located very close to the waterway, the required works are complex to design, and are estimated at \$6.5 million to implement.

Melbourne Water estimates that detailed investigation and design of the work will take up to three months. Waterway reinstatement is intended to commence around August 2011, subject to statutory approvals. Melbourne Water estimates that the work is likely to be completed within six months of commencement, but it could take longer if weather conditions are unfavourable. Stakeholder communication will be provided periodically as the project develops.

In relation to the impact of the flood on the waterway itself, Melbourne Water intends to commence removing fallen trees from the base of the waterway near Evans Road in the next few weeks, assuming weather conditions are favourable. Further plans to remove fallen and standing vegetation downstream of Evans Road to Eleven Mile Road are also progressing, guided by the results of a hydraulic review of the influence of vegetation on flow conveyance that is being undertaken.

Goulburn-Murray Water: board

Raised with: Minister for Water

Raised by: Mr Lenders

Raised on: 24 May 2011

REPLY:

The directors of Goulburn-Murray Water were appointed following due process including an extensive recruitment and interview process. The new board directors bring a combination of knowledge and expertise in the water industry, primary production, finance, risk management, governance and business.

Cr Neil Pankhurst is a farmer from Tongala and his extensive community and stakeholder networks will be crucial in ensuring that Goulburn-Murray Water understands the customer and stakeholder issues.

The Department of Sustainability and Environment's advice to the minister regarding board appointments is cabinet in confidence, and protected by cabinet privilege.

As such, I do not propose to release this advice on the appointment of Goulburn-Murray Water board directors.

Water: charges

Raised with: Minister for Water

Raised by: Mr Lenders

Raised on: 25 May 2011

REPLY:

The Victorian coalition government made an election commitment to 'phase out Melbourne's reliance on the north-south pipeline, using it only for critical human needs and, even then, only when there is sufficient water in the Goulburn system'.

The north-south pipeline was opened in February 2010, however, seven months later it was switched off so that Melbourne Water could make the most of strong inflows from the Yarra catchment. The north-south pipeline has been turned off since this time.

Melbourne storages are currently around 59 per cent full, which is more than 20 per cent higher than the same time last year. Sugarloaf Reservoir, however, is over 99 per cent full. This means there is nowhere in Melbourne to store water from the north-south pipeline.

Contrary to the claims of Mr Pakula, there is no way to transfer water from Sugarloaf or Maroondah Reservoirs to Cardinia Reservoir. Water can only leave Sugarloaf Reservoir if it is being used to satisfy customer demand in the northern, western and central suburbs.

In addition, further increases in Melbourne storage levels are likely in the coming winter/spring filling season.

The previous government panicked in a time of drought and have committed water users to much higher water prices in the future by short sighted water augmentation which was too big and too expensive. The desalination plant will cost Melbourne's water customers \$24 billion.

A lack of planning and forethought from the previous government is the reason that water consumers are paying higher costs for water.

Water: flood level reporting

Raised with: Minister for Water

Raised by: Mr Lenders

Raised on: 26 May 2011

REPLY:

The township of Rochester experienced major flooding in January 2011. The last time Rochester flooded extensively was in 1956, which is beyond the recall of most residents. The recent January 2011 flood was therefore an unusual event for this community, which was reflected in the community's poor understanding of the impacts.

I appreciate your concern with the community confusion regarding gauges and information provided to the community on the likely flood impacts.

Flood level predictions at Rochester provided by the Bureau of Meteorology were related to a gauge located approximately 4 kilometres downstream of Rochester township. This gauge is set to an arbitrary datum. However, a second gauge, located within the Rochester township, is related to the Australian Height Datum (a standard height measurement above sea level). Reporting the levels from two gauges at different locations and to different datums appears to have led to some confusion in the community.

A universal approach to gauge datums across the state runs the risk of creating further confusion in locations where flooding is experienced more frequently and people are often more aware of the impacts and of the implications of different flood levels. Farmers for example, can often predict that once a local stream gauge reaches a certain height, certain parts of their properties will be affected by flooding.

A more prudent approach is to review flood warning gauges for each location, in consultation with the local community, and to adopt a single gauge datum. This single datum is most appropriate to build on improving community understanding.

The *Review of the 2010–11 Flood Warnings and Response Interim Report* released on 30 June 2011 noted a number of themes that have been consistently raised through community meetings. The key themes relevant to this matter, include the lack of locally relevant informative flood advice, and general confusion regarding the descriptive terms used in flood information.

On 2 May 2011, I announced funding of \$18.419 million over four years to repair flood warning networks damaged in the January floods, to undertake more riverine flood mapping and to develop a system to improve flood information and flood warnings. This funding will significantly contribute to helping communities, including Rochester, prepare for, respond to and recover from future flood events.

Included in this suite of flood programs is the development of a flood intelligence system 'Floodzoom'. This system will assist emergency service agencies target vulnerable properties in the future. Flood information can be depicted on maps that show the extent of flooding, overlaid over property information (e.g. property boundaries, street names and property street numbers), and the maps can be correlated to a nearby river gauge. Flood information will be made available via a website.

For Rochester, funding will be made available to undertake a detailed study of the impacts of flooding for a range of flood events including the mapping of levels of inundation across the township. This, combined with the

development of Floodzoom, will provide for a new and better way to inform the Rochester community as to the likely impacts of any future flood.

The Victoria State Emergency Service also works with local government and the community to develop 'Floodsafe' programs for towns such as Rochester to raise the awareness of flooding, what flood gauge levels mean to individual properties and how to minimise the damage caused.

The development of 'Floodzoom' together with a 'Floodsafe' program will prevent such confusion occurring in the future, and make a contribution to address the themes that have emerged in the *Review of the 2010–11 Flood Warnings and Response Interim Report*.

Environment: Mornington Peninsula aquatic centre

Raised with: Minister for Environment and Climate Change

Raised by: Mr Scheffer

Raised on: 2 June 2011

REPLY:

As Minister for Environment and Climate Change I have power under the *Coastal Management Act 1995* to issue consent for use and development of Coastal Crown land. In deciding whether or not to give consent to an application to use or develop coastal Crown land I must have regard to the Victorian coastal strategy and any coastal action plan applying to the land.

In relation to an aquatic centre, I have not received any application for my consideration under the *Coastal Management Act 1995*. If an application is made, it will be considered in accordance with the requirements of that Act.

Beaumaris: bicycle path

Raised with: Minister for Environment and Climate Change

Raised by: Ms Crozier

Raised on: 16 June 2011

REPLY:

I thank Ms Crozier for her invitation to meet and discuss the issue of the Beaumaris bicycle path extension, and I am pleased to accept this invitation. In collaboration with her office, a date will be scheduled as soon as possible.

Port Campbell: headland site

Raised with: Minister for Environment and Climate Change

Raised by: Ms Pennicuk

Raised on: 16 June 2011

REPLY:

Land purchases by the Department of Sustainability and Environment target strategic portions of land which contain communities of threatened species or lands that are required for conservation purposes. No such values

have been identified on the Southern Ocean Beach House land at Port Campbell, and the department's purchasing criteria have therefore not been met in this case.

Grand Strzelecki Track: native vegetation

Raised with: Minister for Environment and Climate Change

Raised by: Mr P. Davis

Raised on: 28 June 2011

REPLY:

I have recently approved the removal of very high conservation significance native vegetation associated with the project which will allow construction of the track to proceed.

Once the offset requirements have been determined, the Department of Sustainability and Environment will work with Grand Strzelecki Track Incorporated to identify an appropriate offset that is proportionate to the impact of the vegetation removal.

Floods: Benjeroop

Raised with: Minister for Water

Raised by: Mr Lenders

Raised on: 29 June 2011

REPLY:

A summary of the terms of reference for the Lower Loddon irrigators recovery package task force has been available to the public on the Department of Primary Industries (DPI) website since late May 2011. A copy of the full terms of reference has been provided to interested parties upon request.

I made the time lines clear when I announced the package on 27 April 2011, noting that it would commence on 1 July 2011 and run to 30 June 2012.

On 1 July 2011, the task force launched the package by publishing a fact sheet on the objectives and the options available under the package, and a map identifying the priority areas. These are available on the DPI website. The task force also sent a letter to all 69 land-holders in the high-priority areas, inviting them to consider the options and providing key contacts to discuss their situation.

The Benjeroop community is being kept up to date on implementation progress through the task force, community consultative committee and regional media.

Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation: Highett site

Raised with: Minister for Environment and Climate Change

Raised by: Ms Pennicuk

Raised on: 29 June 2011

REPLY:

The site is currently owned by the commonwealth and is, therefore, exempt from the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988* (FFG act) and *Planning & Environment Act 1987* (P&E act).

If the site was to be purchased and reclassified as freehold land, any development proposal would need to be assessed under the P&E act and development plans for the site would be expected to satisfy the three-step approach (avoid, minimise and offset) as required under *Victoria's Native Vegetation Management — A Framework for Action*.

No permit is required under the FFG act to take protected flora on freehold land with the exception of some species such as tree ferns and grass trees where they are taken for commercial purposes.

I have been informed that the critical habitat and interim conservation order (ICO) provisions of the FFG act would be considered inappropriate in this situation as the survival of the species or ecological community present is not reliant on this site.