

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

FIFTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT

FIRST SESSION

WRITTEN ADJOURNMENT RESPONSES

24, 25 and 26 May 2011

(Extract from book 7)

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

Environment and Planning Legislation Committee — Mr Elsbury, Mrs Kronberg, Mr Ondarchie, Ms Pennicuik, Mrs Petrovich, Mrs Peulich, Mr Scheffer, Mr Tee and Ms Tierney.

Environment and Planning References Committee — Mr Elsbury, Mrs Kronberg, Mr Ondarchie, Ms Pennicuik, Mrs Peulich, Mr Scheffer, Mr Tee and Ms Tierney.

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

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

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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, 24 MAY 2011

<i>Disability services: Ocean Grove family</i>	1479
<i>Princes Highway: Waurn Ponds–Winchelsea duplication</i>	1479
<i>Rail: South Morang</i>	1480
<i>Pioneer Road, Waurn Ponds: upgrade</i>	1480
<i>Housing: Swags for Homeless</i>	1481
<i>Floods: local government response</i>	1481
<i>Insurance: fire services levy</i>	1482

WEDNESDAY, 25 MAY 2011

<i>Hospitals: bypass target</i>	1483
<i>Rail: Cardinia Road station</i>	1483
<i>Water: opposition briefings</i>	1484
<i>Public transport: western suburbs</i>	1484

THURSDAY, 26 MAY 2011

<i>Medical practitioners: Edenhope</i>	1485
<i>Castlemaine: hospital redevelopment</i>	1485
<i>Western Region Health Centre: dental service funding</i>	1486, 1487
<i>Health: research funding</i>	1486
<i>Budget: sport and recreation</i>	1487

WRITTEN ADJOURNMENT RESPONSES

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

Tuesday, 24 May 2011

Disability services: Ocean Grove family

Raised with: Minister for Community Services

Raised by: Ms Tierney

Raised on: 22 March 2011

REPLY:

I entirely agree with you that the funding Mrs Colby previously received, which was set up by the previous government, was inadequate to meet her needs.

The response of this government in relation to the previous government's failure to meet Mrs Colby's needs has been significant. An Individual Support Package, which allows Mrs Colby 70 hours of personal care each week, has now been allocated. This was communicated to the family on 28 March and I am told they are very pleased with this outcome.

Far from not taking on individual cases, as you wrongly stated in Parliament, I am keenly aware of the many individuals and families who were for so long neglected by the previous government. As a result of this neglect I, and the government as a whole, are totally committed to working on behalf of vulnerable Victorians to ensure they can finally access the support they need and deserve.

Princes Highway: Waurm Ponds–Winchelsea duplication

Raised with: Minister for Roads

Raised by: Mr Koch

Raised on: 5 April 2011

REPLY:

The Princes Highway West is a key transport route through south-western Victoria and provides a strategic link for road freight, tourism, farming and regional development.

I would like to thank the member for Western Victoria, David Koch for his tireless work advocating for the \$220 million duplication of the Princes Highway between Waurm Ponds and Winchelsea whilst in opposition.

Whilst I acknowledge the funding provided by the previous government, I share Mr Koch's frustration at the delays that have plagued the project to date, but I was extremely pleased to attend a sod turn on 25 March 2011 which finally marked the start of construction.

I am advised that despite these delays, the duplication between Waurm Ponds and Winchelsea will be completed by 2014.

This project is part of a broader corridor strategy which calls for the duplication of this vital stretch of rural highway between Waurm Ponds and Colac and I am delighted to advise that the 2011–12 state budget included \$5 million which will enable planning on the next stage of the duplication begin immediately.

This also fulfils a coalition election commitment to fund half of this \$515 million project and I would like to acknowledge the federal government for their support in funding the other half of this project and the duplication between Waurin Ponds and Winchelsea.

An important part of the corridor strategy, in addition to the duplication, is the provision for overtaking lanes between Colac and the South Australian border. I am pleased to advise that this was also funded in the 2011–12 state budget with an allocation of \$15 million which will see the Princes Highway West corridor strategy fully implemented — quite an achievement.

I thank the member for Western Victoria for his commitment to improving road infrastructure in Western Victoria and I look forward to working with him to deliver these important projects.

Rail: South Morang

Raised with: Minister for Public Transport

Raised by: Mr Ondarchie

Raised on: 5 April 2011

REPLY:

The South Morang rail extension project involves duplication of the 5 kilometres of single track between Keon Park and Epping and a 3.5 kilometres double track extension from Epping to South Morang. Work began on the track duplication between Keon Park and Epping in August 2010.

Following an extensive community consultation process undertaken in 2009, the project team undertook further design work to achieve a general lowering of the rail line along the extension which will mitigate amenity impacts for local residents. In some cases, the rail line has been lowered by over eight metres more than the earlier concept designs discussed with the community in 2009.

Where the rail line is at surface level, earth mounds with landscaping will be provided. These will mitigate the bulk of the rail noise which is caused by the contact of the train wheels with the track. Additionally, other measures will be undertaken to further minimise the impacts of the rail operations including use of modern rail infrastructure, such as continuously welded rail, concrete sleepers, special fasteners and rubber pads.

The South Morang rail extension project also includes grade separations to mitigate impacts to roads in the local area. Road overpasses will be constructed at Cooper Street in Epping, and Pindari Avenue and Civic Drive in Mill Park. No new at-grade crossings will be created by the rail extension.

The South Morang rail extension project is also committed to keeping the community and key stakeholders informed of construction activities in advance of any impacts. The project team encourages the local community to communicate directly with the community relations team to obtain information, discuss concerns and work to resolve issues in a timely manner.

The primary mechanism for keeping the community and key stakeholders informed is through the distribution of construction notification letters. Where appropriate, communication tools such as signage, variable message boards, newspaper and radio advertising, and community notice boards are also used.

I visited the project site on 19 April 2011 and was very pleased to observe that work between Keon Park and Epping is progressing well and will be completed before the end of 2011, one year ahead of schedule.

Pioneer Road, Waurin Ponds: upgrade

Raised with: Minister for Roads

Raised by: Ms Tierney

Raised on: 5 April 2011

REPLY:

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

I am pleased to advise the member for Western Victoria that consistent with the coalition's election commitment, the 2011–12 state budget includes \$5 million for stage 1 of the duplication of Pioneer Road, Grovedale.

This will address significant traffic issues in this area associated with the completion of the Geelong Ring Road — section 3, the growth and development of the Waurm Ponds Shopping Centre and the recently opened Leisurelink Aquatic and Recreation Centre.

The duplication of the highest volume section of the road will also include an upgrade of the Princes Highway/Pioneer Road intersection to include two right turn lanes into Pioneer Road for east-bound traffic (coming from the Geelong Ring Road) and a dedicated left turn lane into Pioneer Road for west-bound traffic (coming from the city centre).

Planning is already under way on this important project, which will also include an upgrade to the shopping centre entrance off Pioneer Road.

The Baillieu government is delivering on its election commitments and this project will deliver significant benefits to the Geelong community, particularly Grovedale and Waurm Ponds, by improving traffic flow, improving access and improving safety.

Housing: Swags for Homeless

Raised with: Minister for Housing

Raised by: Ms Mikakos

Raised on: 5 April 2011

REPLY:

I met with Mr Clarke, chairman of Swags for Homeless at a time when the then Minister for Housing Mr Wynne would not meet with him. I raised this in Parliament in 2008.

I have been working to review all aspects of homelessness within Victoria to ensure that there is a positive resolution of homelessness under this government. Getting better outcomes for all people experiencing homelessness is a priority of mine.

Any measures the government determines, including for rough sleepers, will need to take into account the safety and security of people assisted and their long-term stability within the community.

Floods: local government response

Raised with: Minister for Local Government

Raised by: Mr O'Brien

Raised on: 7 April 2011

REPLY:

The cultural heritage management plan process is generally utilised when there is a change of land use that involves a high impact activity in an area of cultural heritage sensitivity.

Flood repairs or the reinstatement of existing assets or infrastructure will not usually involve high impact activities as set out in the *Aboriginal Heritage Regulations 2007*, cultural heritage management plans will not be required.

However, works undertaken in the vicinity of waterways could potentially impact upon Aboriginal cultural heritage values and it is important that councils check with the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Register before commencing works.

Aboriginal Affairs Victoria, will work with councils to facilitate resolution of any cultural heritage management issues that may arise during flood repairs.

Insurance: fire services levy

Raised with: Treasurer

Raised by: Mr Lenders

Raised on: 7 April 2011

REPLY:

I am informed as follows:

The government is committed to implementing the Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission recommendation that “the state replace the fire services levy with a property-based levy and introduce concessions for low-income earners”.

The government agrees with the royal commission that the current insurance-based model is inequitable and lacks transparency. The new levy will ensure that all Victorian property owners pay a fair contribution to our fire services.

The government is currently considering a number of issues in relation to the design and timing of a new fire services levy.

This is an important reform, and one that deserves careful attention to ensure that the new levy to fund the fire services is efficient, equitable, transparent and sustainable.

WRITTEN ADJOURNMENT RESPONSES

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

Wednesday, 25 May 2011

Hospitals: bypass target

Raised with: Minister for Health

Raised by: Mrs Coote

Raised on: 23 March 2011

REPLY:

The government committed to a transparent and accountable health system, after 11 years of Labor mismanagement and secrecy.

On 18 March 2011, the Department of Health published interim Victorian Health Service Performance data on hospital bypass and Hospital Early Warning System (HEWS).

Labor failed to report HEWS data since its introduction and the coalition is delivering on its commitment to make these figures possible. This in itself will have a positive effect in helping reduce times at the ambulance/emergency department interface.

The website will increase transparency, open disclosure, accountability and integrity and provide data in an accessible format for the Victorian public. The new website will make available a series of Victorian emergency department performance measures for the first time.

Access indicators form the major part of the department's hospital performance monitoring framework and measures that hospital services are accessible and provided in a timely manner. The percentage of operating time on bypass at each hospital is monitored and reported publicly each quarter.

Rail: Cardinia Road station

Raised with: Minister for Public Transport

Raised by: Mr O'Donohue

Raised on: 7 April 2011

REPLY:

An upgrade of the traction power supply is required to efficiently operate trains at Cardinia Road station.

The scheduled completion date for the power sub-station is June 2012. This is approximately six months after the currently scheduled completion of the railway station.

Metro Trains Melbourne and the Department of Transport are reviewing station construction schedules to identify opportunities to reduce the idle time without incurring significant additional contract costs.

Every effort is being made to deliver the power upgrades as soon as possible.

Water: opposition briefings

Raised with: Minister for Water

Raised by: Mr Lenders

Raised on: 3 May 2011

REPLY:

The government will continue to facilitate briefings for opposition members when appropriate.

Public transport: western suburbs

Raised with: Minister for Public Transport

Raised by: Ms Hartland

Raised on: 3 May 2011

REPLY:

Direct bus services from the Keilor Downs area to Kurunjang and Bacchus Marsh are not available at this time as there is not enough passenger demand to support this route.

I acknowledge that the current service options to travel to these areas involve a combination of trains and buses and that these travel options are time consuming and indirect.

The Department of Transport will consider improvements to bus routes in the western metropolitan area as additional funding becomes available. All initiatives are subject to budget availability following full analysis and prioritisation of proposals in the state budget development process.

WRITTEN ADJOURNMENT RESPONSES

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

Thursday, 26 May 2011

Medical practitioners: Edenhope

Raised with: Minister for Health

Raised by: Mr Ramsay

Raised on: 24 March 2011

REPLY:

I am pleased to reinforce that the Baillieu government is committed to the provision of health services to the people of Edenhope and the surrounding districts.

The feasibility study for the redevelopment of the Edenhope and District Memorial Hospital which has been completed by the Department of Health in conjunction with the hospital includes the co-location of the medical clinic on the hospital site.

I note that Edenhope and District Memorial Hospital has recently received a grant of \$482 300 to “construct a medical clinic on the premises of Edenhope and District Memorial Hospital”.

This will be the first purpose-built medical clinic in Edenhope and will contribute to the future recruitment and retention of doctors for the community.

I am advised that officers from my department, including the Grampians regional office, will be meeting with representatives from Edenhope and District Memorial Hospital in June 2011 to progress detailed design and construction of the medical clinic.

I can assure the community of Edenhope and surrounding districts that the delivery of the most suitable range of health services in appropriately designed facilities is of paramount importance to the Baillieu government.

Castlemaine: hospital redevelopment

Raised with: Minister for Health

Raised by: Mr Jennings

Raised on: 6 April 2011

REPLY:

I am pleased to reinforce that the Baillieu government is committed to the provision of health services to the people of Castlemaine and the surrounding districts.

The Baillieu government, as a pre-election policy announcement, made a commitment to allocate \$10 million for upgrades to Castlemaine Health, including the relocation and refurbishment of its accident and emergency department, construction of a second emergency theatre and the provision of a new day surgery ward and recovery area.

Officers from my department will continue to work closely with the Executive at Castlemaine Health on detailed planning and design of the proposed upgrades.

Western Region Health Centre: dental service funding

Raised with: Minister for Health

Raised by: Mr Finn

Raised on: 7 April 2011

REPLY:

I am familiar with the services provided by the Western Region Health Centre and am aware that the existing 11-chair dental service is delivered from two separate locations in Footscray. The children's dental service is in Geelong Road and the adult dental service is located at the Western Region Health Centre site at 78 Paisley Street, Footscray, attached to the community health service.

The Department of Health, in consultation with Western Region Health Centre, has undertaken a major master planning and feasibility study exercise for the redevelopment and expansion of the dental services into a new building on one site at 78 Paisley St, Footscray — to be integrated with the existing community health service.

This proposal will be considered in the context future budgets, given the reduction in GST funding to Victoria instituted recently by the commonwealth government.

Health: research funding

Raised with: Minister for Health

Raised by: Mr Ondarchie

Raised on: 7 April 2011

REPLY:

The possibility of a \$400 million cut in the May federal budget to health and medical research funded by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) is causing alarm in the medical research sector.

Government grant for medical research programs and projects across Australia are primarily funded using a nationally competitive peer-review process through the NHMRC.

The state government provides substantial capital and operational infrastructure support to underpin medical research within Victoria's leading hospitals and medical research institutes. However, it does not generally fund investigator-initiated research proposals. That has been a commonwealth responsibility for decades.

In addition, the commonwealth government is responsible for research support within universities.

Given that Victoria has the most highly developed medical research sector in Australia and currently receives 40 per cent of the NHMRC budget, it stands to lose disproportionately more than other states and territories.

I have been informed that with existing NHRMC research programs potentially coming to a close and a marked reduction in funding of new research projects, hundreds of high skill jobs would be lost in Victoria.

Health and medical research represents a long-term investment for the community. The Baillieu government is mindful of its many benefits and is keen to ensure that the efforts of Victoria's leading researchers are supported appropriately.

I have urged the commonwealth Minister for Health to consider the considerable impact that cuts to the NHMRC budget would have on Victoria and the cost to patient care that would follow.

Western Region Health Centre: dental service funding

Raised with: Minister for Health

Raised by: Mr Finn

Raised on: 3 May 2011

REPLY:

I am familiar with the services provided by the Western Region Health Centre and am aware that the existing 11-chair dental service is delivered from two separate locations in Footscray. The children's dental service is in Geelong Road and the adult dental service is located at the Western Region Health Centre site at 78 Paisley Street, Footscray, attached to the community health service.

The Department of Health, in consultation with Western Region Health Centre, has undertaken a major master planning and feasibility study exercise for the redevelopment and expansion of the dental services into a new building on one site at 78 Paisley St, Footscray — to be integrated with the existing community health service.

This proposal will be considered in the context future budgets, given the reduction in GST funding to Victoria instituted recently by the commonwealth government.

Budget: sport and recreation

Raised with: Minister for Sport and Recreation

Raised by: Mr O'Brien

Raised on: 5 May 2011

REPLY:

Thank you to the member for Western Victoria for raising the important matter of participation in local sport and recreation.

The coalition has certainly delivered on its election commitments by providing community and high-level sport with a \$79 million boost in the 2011/12 budget. The funded initiatives are being developed by my office in conjunction with Sport and Recreation Victoria, and I will release details of these programs in the forthcoming financial year.

The member for Western Victoria made reference to the importance of the Country Action Grant Scheme and Victalent funding. I am pleased to announce that I have approved the second phase of the 2011 Country Action Grant Scheme and Victalent funding, which involves grants totalling \$175 000 to 136 local sport and recreation organisations. Amongst the organisations to receive grants are five in the electorate of Western Victoria. They are:

- Dunkeld Tennis Club — \$2000 to conduct a Midweek Twilight Participation Competition.
- Lara Giants Basketball Club — \$4901 to deliver the Building Giant Leaders in Lara Program.
- Casterton Swimming Club — 2 x \$500 Victalent grants.
- Coleraine Golf Club — 1 x \$500 Victalent grant.
- Lara Sporting Club — 1 x \$500 Victalent grant

The grants will assist local clubs provide even better opportunities for their local communities, and support individuals to maximise their potential by contributing to travel costs in order to train and compete.