

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

FIFTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT

FIRST SESSION

WRITTEN ADJOURNMENT RESPONSES

6, 7 and 8 December 2011

(Extract from book 19)

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

Legislative Council standing committees

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

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

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

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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Law Reform Committee — (*Council*): Mrs Petrovich. (*Assembly*): Mr Carbines, Ms Garrett, Mr Newton-Brown and Mr Northe.

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Council — Clerk of the Legislative Council: Mr W. R. Tunnecliffe

Parliamentary Services — Secretary: Mr P. Lochert

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

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WRITTEN ADJOURNMENT RESPONSES

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

Tuesday, 6 December 2011

Loaves and Fishes: funding

Raised with: Minister for Regional and Rural Development

Raised by: Ms Tierney

Raised on: 28 June 2011

REPLY:

Minister Wooldridge, the Minister for Community Services, has referred the matter in the adjournment debate of 28 June 2011 to me for a response, as this is a matter that falls within my portfolio responsibility.

I can advise that following discussions with Regional Development Victoria's Warrnambool office, the Portland Loaves and Fishes food bank has submitted an application for a grant of \$50 000 in accordance with the commitment given by the member for South-West Coast and Minister for Ports, Major Projects, Regional Cities and Racing, the Hon Dr Denis Napthine MP.

The application was received by Regional Development Victoria on 9 November 2011, to complete a project consisting of three key components:

- conduct a review of current operations and prepare a strategic plan for the future;
- delivery of a skills and professional development program for staff and volunteers;
- implementation of approved actions from the review and strategic plan.

The application is in the process of being assessed and a decision will be made shortly.

City of Ballarat: civic hall

Raised with: Minister for Local Government

Raised by: Mr Ramsay

Raised on: 31 August 2011

REPLY:

The Ballarat City Council advise that this project is the result of almost two years of preliminary work including consultations with the community, five council decisions, stakeholder briefings, provision of information through *My Ballarat* and the seeking of options via website feedback. A community advisory panel has been established to assist council in finalising the design of the building and public spaces over the next twelve months.

The Local Government Act 1989 requires councils to consult with their communities through a public submission process when considering their council plans and annual budgets. It is noted that the Ballarat City Council gave public notice for its 2011–12 budget which includes the proposed borrowing of \$30 million.

Councils operate as a democratically elected separate tier of government and are each responsible for setting their own priorities for the benefit of their local communities, including the setting of service levels and delivery locations. Such decisions are made within the framework of their council plan and budget processes.

The proposed redevelopment of the civic hall site is primarily to provide council's own office accommodation and car parking for the CBD area.

Thomas Embling Hospital: security

Raised with: Premier

Raised by: Ms Broad

Raised on: 14 September 2011

REPLY:

I thank the member for raising the important issue of patient and staff safety in forensic clinical care.

Thomas Embling Hospital is a world-class secure forensic mental health facility. It forms part of the forensic mental health clinical services provided in Victoria by Forensicare, a statutory agency established in 1997 which is accountable to the Minister for Mental Health.

Effective security operations are crucial to ensuring patient, staff and visitor safety at Thomas Embling. As part of this, the facility's security contractor, G4S, has obligations to meet stringent performance requirements.

The lockout to which the member refers occurred in the context of an industrial dispute between G4S and its employees. On one day only, G4S imposed a lockout of staff taking industrial action. To ensure that appropriate perimeter security measures were maintained, additional staff were relocated from other facilities to Thomas Embling Hospital. The dispute has since been resolved and security operations have returned to normal.

I am advised that there was strong communication regarding the industrial dispute and its impact on operations between G4S, Forensicare and the Department of Health, and the Minister for Mental Health was briefed to ensure that all appropriate actions had been taken. This included seeking and receiving assurances that contingency plans initiated by G4S during the lockout were sufficient to maintain security, patient, staff and community safety.

Croydon South Primary School site: future

Raised with: Minister for Education

Raised by: Mr Leane

Raised on: 15 September 2011

REPLY:

I am informed as follows:

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development has undertaken a review of the former Croydon South Primary School site, and determined that the condition of the buildings is not appropriate for redevelopment. Demolition and clearing of the site will be undertaken in early December 2011.

To ensure that the commitment to provide additional space for the Croydon community is met, space will be made available at the former Croydon North Primary School site, now operating as Blackburn English Language School.

Electricity: price comparisons

Raised with: Minister for Energy and Resources

Raised by: Mr Barber

Raised on: 11 October 2011

REPLY:

I refer to the adjournment debate matter you raised for my attention on 11 October 2011 regarding electricity price comparisons.

The Victorian government has agreed to the implementation of a National Energy Customer Framework. The National Energy Customer Framework will include mandatory requirements on electricity retailers to provide customers with comparisons of their electricity consumption against benchmarks established by the Australian Energy Regulator.

Anglesea River: water quality

Raised with: Minister for Environment and Climate Change

Raised by: Ms Tierney

Raised on: 12 October 2011

REPLY:

The Anglesea River water quality review was released on 23 October 2011.

The review took longer than expected as the scope of the review was widened somewhat after a number of additional concerns from the community were added to the investigation. The review received over 100 submissions dealing with complex issues and these needed to be given the attention they were due.

The findings of the review along with the results of the continuing water quality and fish monitoring programs will help provide vital information to update the current Anglesea River estuary management plan. This revised plan will help guide the future management of the estuary.

Western suburbs: trucks

Raised with: Minister for Roads

Raised by: Ms Hartland

Raised on: 13 October 2011

REPLY:

I note your concern regarding the impact of truck traffic on local communities in the western suburbs.

I can confirm my office is currently in contact with the Westgate Ramps Coalition to organise a meeting by the end of the year.

Rail: Melton station car park

Raised with: Minister for Public Transport

Raised by: Ms Pulford

Raised on: 25 October 2011

REPLY:

The Department of Transport (DOT), in consultation with V/Line, monitors all station infrastructure on a regular basis. The government is aware of the current condition of the car park at Melton railway station and agrees that it needs to be upgraded. DOT has drafted preliminary plans for the upgrade of the station car park.

The government will prioritise station improvements and pursue funding through the state budget development process.

Batesford community playground: funding

Raised with: Minister for Sport and Recreation

Raised by: Ms Tierney

Raised on: 25 October 2011

REPLY:

Golden Plains Shire Council's application for the Batesford Community Playground has been received under the Victorian government's 2012–13 Community Facility Funding Program — minor facilities category.

Applications are currently under assessment.

Alpine National Park: cattle grazing

Raised with: Minister for Environment and Climate Change

Raised by: Mrs Petrovich

Raised on: 26 October 2011

REPLY:

The Victorian government is committed to the delivery of this election commitment and to use every fuel mitigation method available.

Disability services: parking permit scheme

Raised with: Minister for Roads

Raised by: Mr P. Davis

Raised on: 27 October 2011

REPLY:

The ability to move easily about the community to access facilities and services is important, particularly for people with a disability. Victoria is committed to improving the operation of disability parking.

VicRoads is currently responsible for the Disabled Persons Parking Scheme Code (the 'rules' in Victoria); however, the scheme is administered by 79 local councils. Local councils are also responsible for the supply of disability parking spaces and the enforcement of the associated road rules.

Victoria, through VicRoads, participated in the development of the new Australian Disability Parking Scheme and is consulting with all levels of government and other jurisdictions to progress the detailed administrative arrangements to enable its participation in the scheme.

These arrangements will address a number of longstanding issues with the current scheme; providing additional benefits to legitimate permit-holders and reducing the likelihood for abuse of the scheme.

Considerable consultation is required to finalise how best to implement these improvements, given the extra complexity of the current scheme being administered by local councils. In early 2012 I expect to be able to advise with greater clarity on these changes.

In the meantime, the current arrangements will continue in Victoria.

Permit holders, councils and stakeholders will be kept informed.

Schools: maintenance

Raised with: Minister for Education

Raised by: Mr Scheffer

Raised on: 8 November 2011

REPLY:

I am informed as follows:

The Victorian coalition government is committed to upgrading government primary and secondary schools across the state. Priority projects included in the capital works program for the first term of government are 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 Victorian coalition government has also made a commitment to increase funding for maintenance by \$100 million over four years. The new funding will go towards much needed maintenance works including repairing roofs and floors. The funding will also support the running costs of buildings built under the Building the Education Revolution and the Trade Training Centres in Schools programs.

The Victorian coalition government will also conduct a complete audit of the maintenance needs of all Victorian government schools. This audit will assist schools in managing their buildings and prioritising maintenance issues.

Rail: Williamstown North level crossing

Raised with: Minister for Public Transport

Raised by: Hon. M. P. Pakula

Raised on: 10 November 2011

REPLY:

On 25 October 2011, Mr Bill Jaboor, chief executive officer of Hobsons Bay City Council, wrote to Mr Thomas Sargent, chair of the Victorian Railway Crossing Safety Steering Committee (VRCSSC). Mr Jaboor requested

funds for VicTrack to immediately install automatic safety gates at the pedestrian crossing on the north side of the railway crossing on Kororoit Creek Road, near Williamstown North railway station.

On 14 November 2011, Mr Sargant advised Mr Jaboor that he will raise this matter with the VRCSSC's Rail Crossing Technical Group for consideration of council's request and advise Mr Jaboor of the outcome as soon as possible.

Carbon tax: economic impact

Raised with: Minister for Agriculture and Food Security

Raised by: Mr Ramsay

Raised on: 10 November 2011

REPLY:

Thank you for your adjournment debate question of 10 November 2011, in which you expressed concern about the impact of the Australian government's carbon tax legislation on Victorian food producers and small businesses in the western region of Victoria.

The dairy sector will be hardest hit by higher electricity prices, plus will face a half cent per litre (0.5 cpl) cost pass-through from the impact of the carbon tax on dairy processors. Using five Victorian dairy farm case studies, the Department of Primary Industries assessed on farm cost-price pass-through impacts to be between \$3900 and \$24 000 per annum at 100 per cent cost pass-through, for those particular farms.

Extensive producers such as grains and grazing will be hardest hit by transport fuel cost increases post June 2014.

Small businesses will face rising electricity costs estimated at 10 per cent per annum for the first five years, increased transport costs for goods moved by rail, and perhaps lesser disposable income from consumers, all potentially impacting negatively on profitability.

Several businesses operating in Western Victoria processing dairy, poultry, vegetables and grains, may be liable to direct carbon price impacts. Whether or not small businesses affected by the carbon price will be able to pass costs on to consumers will depend largely on whether their products face competition from imports and the price elasticity of demand for their products and services.

In addition to these pressures, Big Brother will be watching small businesses. The Australian Consumer and Competition Commission (ACCC) has warned small businesses that they will be closely monitored to ensure they do not exaggerate any carbon tax related price increases. Notably, concerns persist regarding the administrative complexity of the scheme and the costs of participation.

It is clear that this tax will present significant challenges to many involved in the production of our nation's food supply, including many in western Victoria. I would be happy to work with the local members for Polwarth and South-West Coast together with Mr Ramsay to meet with key food producers and processors in these electorates across western Victoria, to discuss these and other issues.

Glen Devon Primary School site: future

Raised with: Minister for Education

Raised by: Mr Elsbury

Raised on: 24 November 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 has prepared a business case for the establishment of a community education centre, including an English language school, at this site.

I am advised that the department has been involved in discussions with Wyndham City Council regarding complementary use of the school buildings to provide a range of education and community services. These discussions included Werribee Community and Education Centre having access to and utilising the buildings for appropriate training programs for young people.

A cost-benefit analysis for retaining the site for educational purposes was completed in November 2011 and the department continues to provide advice on the recommendations arising from that report.

Unfortunately the recent fire destroyed one of the blocks at the former school site and that block is now being demolished as it is unsafe. I understand that the site has been secured, and police are investigating the matter.

The department is considering the feasibility of rebuilding the damaged block as part of the overall reinstatement and refurbishment works that would be required for the community education centre.

WRITTEN ADJOURNMENT RESPONSES

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

Wednesday, 7 December 2011

Loaves and Fishes: funding

Raised with: Minister for Community Services

Raised by: Ms Tierney

Raised on: 28 June 2011

REPLY:

This program does not fall under the portfolio responsibilities of the Minister for Community Services. It is the responsibility of the Hon. Peter Ryan, MP, Minister for Regional and Rural Development.

Housing: Ashwood Chadstone Gateway project

Raised with: Minister for Housing

Raised by: Ms Crozier

Raised on: 11 October 2011

REPLY:

I thank the member for Southern Metropolitan for her congratulations on the release of the Victorian Homelessness Action Plan 2011–2015 and her invitation to visit the Ashwood Chadstone Gateway project.

This government is committed to meeting the challenge of creating new innovative approaches to tackling homelessness, and to reforming the homelessness service system. The Victorian Homelessness Action Plan is the first step in this process, one which will complement the development of a strategic housing framework for Victoria to address the future housing challenges for low income Victorians.

In this context I would be pleased to visit the Ashwood Chadstone Gateway project, a joint project of my department and the Port Phillip Housing Association. This development is creating new housing for over 200 low-income Victorian households, and at the same time adding to the stock of affordable private housing in the area.

Prisons: health care

Raised with: Minister for Corrections

Raised by: Ms Pennicuik

Raised on: 13 October 2011

REPLY:

The coalition government welcomes the Ombudsman's report *Investigation into Prisoner Access to Health Care — August 2011*, tabled on 30 August 2011.

I am advised that the Department of Justice has accepted most of the recommendations contained in the report, and many are currently being implemented. These include the introduction of condoms and dental dams, the development of a communicable diseases policy, and a comprehensive review of complaints handling, to ensure that prisoners' concerns about their health care are dealt with in a transparent and timely manner.

The department will continue to work on implementation of the recommendations that have been accepted, and to address concerns raised in the Ombudsman's recent report.

I understand that the department will provide regular reports to the Ombudsman of progress against the recommendations. The Ombudsman may decide to publish details in his reports to Parliament. I do not consider it necessary for separate progress reports to be tabled for the next 10 years.

Thank you for raising this matter.

Rail: Epping service

Raised with: Minister for Public Transport

Raised by: Mr Barber

Raised on: 26 October 2011

REPLY:

The new Thomastown and Epping railway stations and dual-track section will be in full operation on 28 November when trains begin running in both directions.

The newly duplicated track will provide improvements to on-time reliability and performance for the Epping line. The new railway stations will also provide a significant upgrade in facilities for commuters.

There are currently 25 weekday train trips and 1 Saturday train trip on the Epping line that contain layovers in the current timetable. These trains are required to wait up to 7 minutes on the boundary of a single-track section for an oncoming train to pass.

The extended layovers resulting from the single-track constraints between Keon Park and Epping will be removed as part of the 28 November 2011 timetable change.

Supporting infrastructure for the South Morang rail extension, including an upgrade to traction power supply capacity, is under construction. Additional peak period trips are planned to be introduced following the completion of the South Morang rail extension next year.

Geelong–Greenhill roads, Mount Helen: pedestrian safety

Raised with: Minister for Roads

Raised by: Mr Ramsay

Raised on: 27 October 2011

REPLY:

Mr Ramsay asked that I visit the site of the proposed pedestrian refuge in the Ballarat-Buninyong Road (Main Road) in the Ballarat East electorate. I have visited the Ballarat area on a number of occasions and am satisfied that the course of action recommended by VicRoads is appropriate, that is, that the existing 70 km/h speed zone be reviewed when the pedestrian refuge and associated intersection improvements have been installed at the Greenhill Road intersection.

Legal practitioners: retail tenancy fees**Raised with: Attorney-General****Raised by: Hon. M. P. Pakula****Raised on: 27 October 2011****REPLY:**

Under the Legal Profession Act 2004 third-party payers such as Mr McNally are entitled to request an itemised bill within 30 days from when the bill is given. Furthermore, third-party payers are entitled to request a review of costs by the Costs Court within 12 months after the bill was given or the costs were paid (if a bill or request for payment was not made). The Costs Court has the task of conducting an independent review of the appropriateness of the costs charged.

The charging of excessive legal costs in connection with the practice of law can constitute a breach of professional obligations and warrant disciplinary action. On this basis, Mr McNally may wish to consider making a complaint to the legal services commissioner ('the commissioner'), the independent statutory entity responsible for the management of complaints about legal practitioners in Victoria.

I also note Victoria's decision to implement the Legal Profession National Law, which will introduce a number of beneficial consumer-focused reforms. For example, the national law will expand the jurisdiction of the commissioner to resolve costs disputes to capture complaints made by third-party payers. This will allow for small business owners, such as Mr McNally, to utilise the free dispute resolution process where legal costs are less than \$100 000 (or in circumstances where the bill for legal costs is greater than \$100 000, where the amount in dispute is less than \$10 000). Furthermore, the national law will introduce an overarching obligation on law practices to charge no more than fair and reasonable legal costs. It is envisaged the national law will come into operation in 2013.

Wedge-Frankston-Dandenong roads, Carrum Downs: traffic management**Raised with: Minister for Roads****Raised by: Mr Tarlamis****Raised on: 27 October 2011****REPLY:**

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

VicRoads has corresponded with community members on a number of occasions about the performance of this intersection, and I am aware that it is an issue of concern to many of your constituents.

In order to address these concerns, VicRoads carried out an extensive evaluation of the intersection of Wedge Road and Dandenong-Frankston Road. To accommodate traffic growth in the area, the capacity of the intersection will require enhancement which needs to be factored into the scope for any proposal to install traffic signals. VicRoads will continue to monitor traffic volumes at this site, and evaluate the need for such improvements as part of a future roads program.

Housing: Princes Hill estate**Raised with: Minister for Housing****Raised by: Mr Barber****Raised on: 8 November 2011****REPLY:**

Tender documents are currently being arranged for proposed upgrading and maintenance works to units 1–12 of Solly Avenue, Carlton North. These works are planned to commence in 2012. The scope of works consists of internal and external upgrades that are aimed at improving the living conditions of occupants. Internal improvements to tenancies shall include:

- partial bathroom upgrades
- partial/complete kitchen upgrades
- internal painting
- carpet/vinyl floor replacement
- blinds
- various internal repairs/replacements (gaps between concrete panels, internal doors, security doors, door seals, flyscreens).

External estate improvement works shall comprise of:

- external painting
- individual water meters
- replacement of roof decking
- service external light fittings
- modifications to stairwell handrails and balustrades
- two external bench seats
- clean and flush all gutters and downpipes.

An independent asbestos audit will be carried out to the block affected by the proposed works, and any asbestos-related materials identified that are deemed a risk will be removed and monitored in accordance with current standards and practices.

The other units which form the Princes Hill Estate are part of a long-term upgrade and maintenance program. This program is aimed at improving living conditions of tenants housed in the various walk-up blocks throughout this estate.

Stage 1 upgrade works to the walk-up units located at 1–12/5 Solly Avenue, Carlton North, were completed in 29 June 2010 and stage 2 upgrades are scheduled to be completed in October 2012.

Footscray City Primary School: curriculums**Raised with: Minister for Education**

Raised by: Ms Hartland

Raised on: 10 November 2011

REPLY:

I am informed as follows:

Footscray City Primary School has spent 10 years attempting to develop sound and harmonious relationships within its school community. I am advised that these efforts have been largely unsuccessful. Therefore, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development has made the decision for the school to offer a single mainstream curriculum from 2012 as this was deemed in the best interests of the students and staff.

All students are able to continue their education at Footscray City Primary School in 2012. If this does not suit some families, the school is providing information about local government schools and other government schools with Steiner streams. The department is supporting all families by offering them one-on-one meetings at the school where they can discuss future education options for their child.

While the government is supportive of autonomous schools, it cannot allow a school to continue to operate in a way that is not in the best interests of students and staff. There are a number of government schools which offer specialised curriculum, including six schools with Steiner streams: Collingwood College, Briar Hill Primary School, East Bentleigh Primary School, Mornington Park Primary School, Thornbury Primary School and Castlemaine Secondary College.

Schools within the Western Metropolitan Region offer a range of programs which provide parents with high-quality choices of education. In addition, numerous schools provide alternative curriculums, such as the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Program at Footscray Primary School, Kingsville Primary School, Seabrook Primary School and Kororoit Creek Primary School, language immersion programs at Wyndham Park Primary School and Footscray Primary School and the Senior Secondary International Baccalaureate Program at Werribee Secondary College. On 2 November I also had the honour of officially opening Suzanne Cory High School, Victoria's first selective entry high school for academically gifted students in the western suburbs.

I have met with parents and school councillors from Footscray City Primary School from the main and Steiner streams.

WRITTEN ADJOURNMENT RESPONSES

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

Thursday, 8 December 2011

Alpine parks: cattle grazing

Raised with: Minister for Environment and Climate Change

Raised by: Mr Scheffer

Raised on: 8 February 2011

REPLY:

As Mr Scheffer did not seek any action, no response will be provided.

St Kilda pier: upgrade

Raised with: Minister for Environment and Climate Change

Raised by: Mrs Coote

Raised on: 24 May 2011

REPLY:

In regard to your request to support the Royal Melbourne Yacht Squadron I can advise that the Victorian government has now brokered agreement with the yacht squadron to allow its proposal to proceed. This represents the first step towards the vision of a revitalised St Kilda harbour. The Royal Melbourne Yacht Squadron will finalise its development plans for planning, approvals and consents this year. The government will review other aspects of the concept plan, including boatyard and management aspects of the proposed public swimming pool and potential funding options. The draft concept plan is being considered in the light of comments received during the consultation process.

Jacks Magazine: future

Raised with: Minister for Environment and Climate Change

Raised by: Mr Elsbury

Raised on: 25 October 2011

REPLY:

The Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) is coordinating the transfer of Jacks Magazine from Delfin Lend Lease to the Crown. The transfer is expected to be completed by the end of the year.

DSE will be meeting with the Maribyrnong council to discuss the management of the site. I would be pleased to visit the Jacks Magazine site and surrounding area. My office will be in contact to organise this in the coming weeks.

Broiler farms: shire of Golden Plains

Raised with: Minister for Water

Raised by: Mr O'Brien

Raised on: 25 October 2011

REPLY:

I am pleased to accept the invitation from Mr O'Brien to meet with Golden Plains Shire Council representatives and discuss their proposals. I look forward to meeting in 2012.

Youth Referral and Independent Person program: volunteers

Raised with: Attorney-General

Raised by: Mr Leane

Raised on: 25 October 2011

REPLY:

The administration of this program is not within my portfolio responsibilities. However, the Department of Justice have provided me with the following information:

Due to the administrative burden of providing honoraria payments to 350 Youth Referral and Independent Person Program (YRIPP) volunteers, the Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY), which administers YRIPP, examined ways to improve the efficiency of this aspect of the program.

Consideration was given to shifting from a monetary honorarium, which to date has been \$10 for each call-out, to a gift card honorarium. While this is an honorarium and not a reimbursement of expenses, Coles/Myer gift cards were chosen on the basis of the number of stores at which they could be redeemed across Victoria and the relevance to the sorts of expenses volunteers may incur in the course of their duties. The card can be redeemed at stores including Coles, Coles Express, Myer, Target, Kmart and Officeworks, and therefore volunteers could purchase, for example, petrol, snacks and pre-paid SIM cards for phone calls.

CMY undertook consultation regarding the proposal with volunteer representatives on the YRIPP reference group. As a result of this consultation, it was decided that the program would shift generally towards gift cards, but that volunteers who preferred to receive a monetary honorarium could continue to do so.

Two items of correspondence were sent to all YRIPP volunteers outlining the reasons for the move towards gift cards, explaining that the shift to a gift card payment was optional, and inviting any volunteers who wish to continue to receive a monetary honorarium to inform the program administration.

Coal seam gas: groundwater protection

Raised with: Attorney-General

Raised by: Mr O'Brien

Raised on: 10 November 2011

REPLY:

The Victorian government is aware of community concerns about the potential impacts of coal seam gas (CSG) extraction, and other mining activities on groundwater resources in Victoria and other eastern states. The

government has recognised these issues in the recently released Gippsland region and western region sustainable water strategies. These strategies also outline policies and actions for managing the impacts of new mining projects on water resources.

Coal seam gas extraction and groundwater protection

CSG is treated as a mineral under the Mineral Resources (Sustainable Development) Act 1990 (MRSDA) which requires separate licences for exploration and extraction. There are currently three exploration licences in Victoria for CSG. No extraction licences have been issued.

Victoria has rigorous approvals processes for new mining projects through the MRSDA, Planning and Environment Act 1987 and the Environment Effects Act 1978. This legislation ensures that environmental, social and economic impacts from proposed mining projects are identified, and appropriately managed to avoid or mitigate any impacts.

A significant issue associated with the mining of CSG is the extraction of water to allow the gas to flow. CSG proponents are required to meet their water needs by obtaining a new water licence, or trading a water licence within the permissible consumptive volume of the relevant water resource in accordance with the Water Act 1989. This is the same requirement as for any prospective water user.

Mining exploration or development approvals are not granted unless it can be demonstrated that the risks affecting water resources can be removed or controlled to an acceptable level on par with best practice environmental regulation. Each development proposal is subject to approvals by the Department of Primary Industries, the relevant water corporation, the Minister for Planning or local council and possibly the Environment Protection Authority.

The Water Act 1989 also provides formal protection of the environmental qualities of waterways, catchments and groundwater. This ensures Victoria's water resources are conserved and properly managed for sustainable use by present and future Victorians. It also includes consideration of the potential impacts on other water users or water dependent environmental values.

The disposal of poor-quality water, to either the surface or groundwater, is subject to strict environmental conditions under the MRSDA, the Environment Protection Act 1970 and the Water Act 1989. If water resource impacts cannot be adequately mitigated or offset, a project would not be given approval to proceed.

This approach to managing impacts of new mining activities provides the mining industry with clear options for proceeding with the development of important projects, whilst protecting the rights of water users and the environment from potential water resource impacts associated with these projects.

Importance of groundwater for consumptive use

Throughout Victoria, groundwater is a critical and highly reliable resource supporting many communities, businesses and parts of the natural environment. Faced with the prospect of a more variable climate and unpredictable rainfall patterns, it will become increasingly important for supplying agriculture, towns and industry and supporting regional economic growth. Therefore, the resource needs to be managed appropriately.

Approximately 75 towns are reliant on groundwater as either a supplementary or primary water supply, the largest being Greater Geelong. Geelong relied heavily on the Barwon Downs borefield between April 2006 and August 2010. During this period the borefield supplied 43 per cent of Barwon Water's needs. Above-average rain since winter 2010 has allowed reservoirs to recover and the Barwon Downs borefield to be rested.

In 2007–08, Barwon Water commenced investigating additional groundwater supplies from the Jan Juc Groundwater Management Area to diversify their urban water supply. A bulk entitlement was issued on 1 July 2009 for the Anglesea borefield, which is now operational.

Actions the government is taking to assess groundwater reserves and aquifers

The government acknowledges that groundwater is an important resource that helps underpin the prosperity and livability of many Victorian regions.

Sustainable Water Strategies

The recently released western region and Gippsland region sustainable water strategies each dedicate a chapter to outlining the government's policies and actions for improving the understanding groundwater resources in each region and improving the management of these resources.

These strategies take a long-term view of water resource planning, considering all sources of water and the needs of towns, industry, agriculture and the environment. They guide the development, integration and implementation of management plans prepared by water corporations and regional catchment management strategies prepared by catchment management authorities operating within each region.

The key actions for improving groundwater information and management outlined in the sustainable water strategies are:

- a. clearly outlining rules for sharing water in each aquifer by developing local management plans by the end of 2012;
- b. encouraging trade and carryover of groundwater entitlements where sustainable;
- c. undertaking strategic groundwater resource assessments to determine the capacity of aquifers to supply additional water;
- d. making more water available from aquifers after strategic resource assessments have been completed;
- e. identifying and managing groundwater/surface water interactions;
- f. establishing secure, ongoing investment for the State Observation Bore Network to ensure the necessary data is being collected to improve our understanding of groundwater resources;
- g. clarifying responsibilities for groundwater monitoring; and
- h. managing potential impacts of new extractive industries on groundwater resources.

The Dilwyn aquifer in the south-west is one such aquifer where additional water could be released for appropriate uses. It is the deepest water supply aquifer in south-west Victoria and is used mainly for urban water supply and some domestic and stock. In 2011, the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE), Southern Rural Water and Wannon Water completed the first part of a study to better understand the aquifer. It is likely that water from the Dilwyn aquifer will support industry and new farming enterprises into the future.

Groundwater monitoring

Good groundwater management includes regular monitoring of the source and metering extractions. DSE maintains the State Observation Bore Network (SOBN) which monitors the movement, availability and quality of Victorian groundwater, and the linkages between groundwater and surface water systems throughout the state.

To ensure that the quality of groundwater information gathered through the SOBN is continually improved, the Victorian government has initiated the SOBN refurbishment project. In partnership with Goulburn-Murray Water, Grampians-Wimmera-Mallee Water and Southern Rural Water, this DSE-funded project is:

- upgrading ageing infrastructure;
- addressing problems of failed or blocked bores;
- improving distribution of bores in key areas; and

- improving the data and information that is collected.

A key area of the project is the rationalisation of the number of bores in the network to ensure that they are sited in the best locations to provide a baseline understanding of Victoria's groundwater resource. The decommissioning of observation bores that have failed or no longer provide critical data is one aspect of the refurbishment project.

In 2007, Victoria completed a program to meter all groundwater licence entitlements greater than 20 ML/year. All commercial and irrigation licences issued since then are also metered.

SAFE project

The Secure Allocations Future Entitlements (SAFE) project is funded by the commonwealth government under the National Groundwater Action Plan to progress the management of groundwater in Victoria.

The SAFE project will ensure all of Victoria's groundwater is included in an appropriate management area and that there is consistency in the way groundwater is managed across the state. This includes developing:

- management boundaries that cover all groundwater in the state;
- guidance for decisions about managing each area;
- guidelines for better determining the volume of groundwater available for consumptive use.

Defining management boundaries based on groundwater systems will improve management and support trade as connected aquifers will be included in the same management areas. Common management objectives for similar types of groundwater systems will be developed.

The project builds on and complements work done by Southern Rural Water to prepare 3D hydrogeological maps of key aquifers in southern Victoria. Southern Rural Water is also rolling out its Southern Groundwater Futures Project (SGFP). The SGFP aims to engage users and communities to raise their understanding of groundwater. This centres around the development of an atlas to draw together the most current information on groundwater resources for the region.

Groundwater resource appraisal program

DSE has a groundwater resource appraisal program. Over the last five years it has identified 13 aquifers for further detailed assessment. These assessments have supported improved management regimes in these areas.

In addition, the Department of Primary Industries has also been researching new technologies and methods for undertaking three dimensional mapping of groundwater aquifers. These new techniques are helping to improve the understanding of the complex geological structures that contain groundwater resources, and can greatly improve the understanding of groundwater availability in key aquifers.

Information and communications technology: procurement process

Raised with: Assistant Treasurer

Raised by: Mr Somyurek

Raised on: 10 November 2011

REPLY:

The refresh of the eServices panel, which concluded on 31 October 2011, has delivered on its objective to improve access for small to medium enterprises to government business opportunities and to provide greater choice and competition for government departments when engaging with the industry.

Responses were received from a broad cross section of the ICT industry responding to the requirements set out in the request for tender documentation. The refresh resulted in an increase of ICT suppliers on the panel to 368, of which approximately half represent Victorian small and medium enterprises.

Government issued contracts to all successful tenderers for the eServices panel on 2 November 2011. Until these contracts are signed and returned, companies cannot be activated on the panel and are referred to as unavailable.

The complete eServices panel supplier list is published on government's procurement web site at www.procurement.vic.gov.au. As at Wednesday 16 November, 38 suppliers remain unavailable. This list is updated regularly and will continue to highlight the unavailable suppliers until their contracts are signed and returned.