

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

FIFTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT

FIRST SESSION

WRITTEN ADJOURNMENT RESPONSES

11, 12 and 13 September 2012

(Extract from book 15)

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By authority of the Victorian Government Printer

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The Lieutenant-Governor

The Honourable Justice MARILYN WARREN, AC

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Procedure Committee — The President, Mr Dalla-Riva, Mr D. 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 Leane, #Mr Lenders, #Mr Ondarchie, Ms Pulford, Mr Ramsay and Mr Somyurek.

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

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

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Joint committees

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Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee — (*Council*): Mr Leane, Mr Ramsay and Mr Scheffer. (*Assembly*): Mr Battin and Mr McCurdy.

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Family and Community Development Committee — (*Council*): Mrs Coote and Ms Crozier. (*Assembly*): Mrs Bauer, Ms Halfpenny, Mr McGuire and Mr Wakeling.

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Rural and Regional Committee — (*Council*): Mr Drum. (*Assembly*): Mr Howard, Mr Katos, Mr Trezise and Mr Weller.

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

Parliamentary Services — Secretary: Mr P. Lochert

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FIFTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT — FIRST SESSION

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Koch, Mr David Frank	Western Victoria	LP	Tierney, Ms Gayle Anne	Western Victoria	ALP
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, 11 September 2012

Government: appointment process

Raised with: Premier

Raised by: Mr Lenders

Raised on: 10 November 2011

REPLY:

In regard to any matter which comes before cabinet, ministers take required steps to ensure the appropriate cabinet processes are followed.

Crime: Western Victoria Region

Raised with: Minister for Police and Emergency Services

Raised by: Ms Pulford

Raised on: 1 March 2012

REPLY:

The government is conscious of the need for sufficient police resources in communities such as Hamilton and is committed to making our communities safer so families can feel safe on our streets, on public transport and in their homes. To achieve this the government is providing \$602 million to deliver 1700 extra front-line police members by November 2014, and by the end of June this year, there were an additional 850 sworn officers out working in their local communities across Victoria.

The member will recall that after 11 years of the previous government, Victoria was left with the least number of front-line police per person of any state in Australia. The coalition's record investment in 1700 extra front-line police is allowing Victoria Police to fill chronic shortages.

The allocation of police officers across the state is not fixed and police command regularly reviews the distribution to ensure that the changing needs of each police service area (PSA) are taken into account. Ongoing announcements by Victoria Police about the allocation of police highlight that the force has undergone a process to determine where additional police should be placed.

Over the two years to 30 June 2012, the western region of Victoria Police was allocated an additional 133 police officers, and will receive a further 99 officers during the current year to 30 June 2013. This amounts to a substantial increase of 232 front-line police over this three-year period.

Any increase in crime within a community is always of concern. In relation to the increase in crime against the person, it should be noted that this in part reflects increased reporting of family violence incidents, as a result of the increased confidence victims have in speaking up, and better police procedures and support in dealing with these situations. This is demonstrated in relation to the increase in the rate of assaults, which is much lower when family violence incidents are excluded.

In regard to the increase in the rate of car theft and other property crime, I note that the acting inspector for the Southern Grampians PSA has advised that targeted operations are being conducted by local uniform and plain-clothes police officers, and that a number of offenders have been identified and charged. I also note that in

instances where the number of offences is comparatively small, such as car theft in the Southern Grampians PSA, which increased by 10 offences, the activities of one offender can have a significant impact on the crime rate for this category.

Thank you for raising this matter with me.

Schools: education maintenance allowance

Raised with: Minister for Education

Raised by: Ms Darveniza

Raised on: 15 August 2012

REPLY:

I am informed as follows:

The EMA provides eligible families on low incomes assistance with costs associated with the education of their children in school up to the age of 16.

This year's budget increases the amounts received by parents under the education maintenance allowance, benefiting families of more than 160 000 schoolchildren.

Families with children in primary school (years 1–6) will see their direct EMA payments increase from \$117.50 to \$150 per year — a 28 per cent increase.

Families with children in secondary school (years 8–12 up to the age of 16) will see their direct EMA payments increase from \$235 to \$250 per year — a 6 per cent increase.

The School Start bonus which was received by EMA families has been discontinued as a separate payment and merged into the EMA. As a result, parents of children in prep and Year 7 will receive boosted direct EMA payments of \$200 and \$300 respectively in those years.

EMA payments will no longer be provided to schools. However, \$62 million over four years will be redirected from the school-based component of EMA to the annual budgets of the state's most needy schools.

In a climate of decreased revenues, including \$6.1 billion over the four-year 2012–13 budget period in lost GST revenue from the commonwealth, the Victorian government has increased education funding by more than 5 per cent in 2012–13. In May 2012 the Australian government introduced a schoolkids bonus for eligible primary and secondary school families, adding to the EMA assistance.

The Victorian coalition government will continue to deliver on its election promises and ensure that our children have the best start in life, a safe and caring environment at school and that learning and support in the classroom is our key focus. A strong and sustainable economy will ensure investment in services such as education can continue to be made in the years ahead, for the benefit of all Victorians.

Roads: Essendon Airport retail precinct

Raised with: Minister for Roads

Raised by: Mr Finn

Raised on: 15 August 2012

REPLY:

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

VicRoads is continuing to monitor traffic issues surrounding the Essendon Airport retail development. In addition, VicRoads is currently working with Essendon Fields to investigate and develop an appropriate treatment, to address the expected traffic impacts resulting from the proposed expansion of its retail operations.

Animal welfare: funding

Raised with: Minister for Agriculture and Food Security

Raised by: Mrs Petrovich

Raised on: 15 August 2012

REPLY:

I refer to the matter you raised for my attention during the adjournment debate in the Legislative Council on 15 August 2012, relating to the range of measures the coalition government is putting in place to boost animal welfare in Victoria.

The \$1.6 million Animal Welfare Fund announced by the government will provide grants over four years to non-government, not-for-profit organisations that improve the welfare of animals. Grant funding will be awarded to organisations that operate to provide:

- for the welfare of animals; or
- an ‘animal shelter’ service; or
- education programs on responsible ownership of animals; or
- services as a community foster care network for companion animals; or
- animal relief services and use of facilities to the community during emergencies.

The coalition government is offering this financial support in recognition of the excellent companion animal welfare services which are being delivered across Victoria by many not-for-profit organisations. These grants recognise that companion animals play a significant role in the lives of Victorians. It was an election commitment to provide such funding to animal welfare organisations.

The objective of the Animal Welfare Fund grants scheme is to improve responsible pet ownership and provide better animal welfare services to the community, particularly during natural disasters.

Online applications for grant funding in 2012–13 will be open from 1 September 2012 to 30 September 2012 through the Department of Primary Industries website at <http://www.dpi.vic.gov.au/pets>.

I will set priority areas for funding each year in consultation with the Victorian Animal Welfare Advisory Committee, which reflects the animal welfare views within the Victorian community. The first year of grant funds will be allocated to projects involving cats or dogs in the following priority areas:

- I. community education programs on responsible ownership of companion animals;
- II. animal relief services and use of facilities to the community during an emergency; and
- III. improvement in the rates of reuniting pets to their owners and rehoming of pets.

While preference will be given to applications that address this year's priorities, funding will not be restricted to these given an appropriate and worthy application for support.

I welcome the support of the member for northern Victoria for such grants for organisations such as the horse shelter organisation Project Hope Horse Welfare Victoria Inc., which has provided significant assistance to my

department and the horse-owning community during natural disasters (drought and fires), the equine influenza outbreak, and ongoing charitable efforts to assist owners with horses in distress.

I can assure you of the government's continued commitment to protect the welfare of animals in Victoria and promote responsible pet ownership.

Vocational education and training: reforms

Raised with: Minister for Higher Education and Skills

Raised by: Mr Ramsay

Raised on: 16 August 2012

REPLY:

I am informed as follows:

I can assure Mr Ramsay that my department and I are actively engaging with training providers across Victoria to improve vocational education and training outcomes for all Victorians.

As Mr Ramsay noted in his remarks, in 2008, the previous government introduced an uncapped market driven training system. In the absence of any controls on this market system, we have seen:

- training enrolments increase by 44 per cent but not always in areas of economic need or with good prospective job outcomes, e.g. courses to train fitness instructors have increased 1955 per cent since 2008.
- the cost of training blow-out from a projected and budgeted amount of around \$900 million in 2011–12 to an actual cost close to \$1.3 billion — a \$400 million black hole.
- some providers engaging in practices that appear more profit-driven than focused on the genuine skills needs of learners and industry.
- substantial evidence that this uncontrolled market driven system has put the quality of the training delivered at risk.

The changes to Victoria's training system will make quality the prime focus, while maintaining a balance of choice and access for students. Most importantly, the changes are designed to encourage training in areas of the state's skill needs whilst ensuring the costs of the system are sustainable into the future.

To this end, the government has committed an additional \$1.033 billion over four years in the state budget to enable training subsidies of \$1.2 billion in 2012–13 and similar amounts for the following three years. This is a record four-year investment in training.

These funding changes, together with important measures being introduced to improve quality in the system and encourage better industry engagement, will build a strong and sustainable vocational training system for Victoria's future, contributing to a well-trained, job-ready workforce that is prepared to meet Victoria's industry and business skills needs.

The government shares Mr Ramsay's positive assessment of our highly valued TAFE institutes.

The Baillieu government is committed to working with TAFE's to make sure their full potential is realised. This is a great chance for TAFE institutions to consolidate their prime place in Victoria's training system, capitalise on the TAFE brand and make positive changes in the form of greater collaboration between providers, sharing of services and delivery, innovative delivery modes, greater productivity in employment conditions and closer alignment with higher education programs.

WRITTEN ADJOURNMENT RESPONSES

Tuesday, 11 September 2012

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I am pleased to note Mr Ramsay's discussions with senior officials of TAFE institutes in his electorate confirm that TAFEs are taking up these challenges and are continuing to provide high quality relevant VET to students in rural and regional Victoria.

WRITTEN ADJOURNMENT RESPONSES

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

Wednesday, 12 September 2012

Water: storages

Raised with: Minister for Water

Raised by: Mr Lenders

Raised on: 24 November 2011

REPLY:

On 15 December 2011, the Victorian coalition government announced its plan to phase out Melbourne's reliance on the north-south pipeline, using it only for critical human needs and then only where there is sufficient water in the Goulburn system. This was a key election commitment.

Water will only be transferred down the north-south pipeline when Melbourne's water storage levels are below 30 per cent on 30 November any given year. The 30 per cent trigger level relates only to water held in Melbourne's 10 dams.

Melbourne's share of water savings in Eildon Reservoir will be separately reported on as a 'critical water reserve'.

The Melbourne water businesses will continue to hold a legal right to water savings from stage 1 of Northern Victorian Irrigation Renewal Project (NVIRP) in return for their collective contribution towards this project.

Each year, Melbourne's share of the independently audit water savings will be added to the 'critical water reserve' in Eildon Reservoir.

This water can be carried over from year to year, under the same terms and conditions of other entitlement holders in the Goulburn system, so that Melbourne can store water in Eildon Reservoir ready to be used when needed. The Melbourne businesses may decide to trade its water on the temporary basis.

City of Port Phillip: charity bins

Raised with: Minister for Environment and Climate Change

Raised by: Mrs Coote

Raised on: 22 May 2012

REPLY:

The Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) is currently working with its portfolio partners Sustainability Victoria (SV) and the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) and the National Association of Charitable Recycling Organisations (NACRO) to deliver a support package targeting illegal dumping at charity stores.

The government has designed a \$2 million funding agreement with NACRO to help ease the financial burden on charitable recyclers caused by illegal dumping in two ways:

- \$1.5m in funding to relieve the costs of disposing illegally dumped waste which includes supporting NACRO to directly address the issue; and

- \$500 000 in funding and support to help charitable recyclers deter people from dumping their rubbish in the longer through the development of prevention strategies, and working with stakeholders on strategic compliance and enforcement planning and activities.

I have written to the mayor of the City of Port Phillip about these initiatives, and I have also asked EPA and SV to contact the City of Port Phillip to discuss how this funding will assist charities.

West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority: jobs

Raised with: Minister for Water

Raised by: Mr Lenders

Raised on: 5 June 2012

REPLY:

The 2012–13 state budget focused on delivering strong state finances within the current challenging economic conditions. This has required reallocations across a range of government programs in all sectors. This has in turn had impacts for a variety of government statutory bodies, including all 10 catchment management authorities (CMAs).

CMAs are independent statutory bodies, and as such determine their own resource requirements, including their mix of project and operating staff, contractors and other service providers.

In the current economic conditions, some CMAs have made decisions to restructure to improve efficiencies for program delivery. Environmental projects in West Gippsland that are funded through the environmental contribution levy will continue through 2012–13 and beyond. In 2012–13, the West Gippsland CMA will be funded approximately \$814 000 through this levy alone, with additional funding being allocated through related natural resource management programs.

While funding for priority on-ground works for the river and wetland management program has been reduced for next year, it will increase in the subsequent three years to enable implementation of works to protect and improve the environmental condition of priority waterways in West Gippsland.

West Gippsland CMA is currently working to plan and implement its 2012–13 project delivery schedules, which will continue to be based on a model that is directly aligned with funding. The focus will remain on supporting the community to deliver works that protect and enhance priority environmental assets.

The Department of Sustainability and Environment is working closely with West Gippsland CMA to assist in the review of programs for 2012–13, to ensure minimal disruption to these community-supported priority projects.

Patterson Lakes: water charges

Raised with: Minister for Water

Raised by: Mr Lenders

Raised on: 15 August 2012

REPLY:

I, along with Mrs Inga Peulich MP, member for South Eastern Metropolitan, and Mrs Donna Bauer MP, member for Carrum, have met with the residents groups from Patterson Lakes on a number of occasions to discuss their concerns, most recently on 15 August 2012. Melbourne Water (MW) also attended these meetings.

MW has been actively consulting with residents from Patterson Lakes about proposed changes to the precept charge for the water plan 3 period (from 2013–14 to 2017–18).

As the community has expressed concern about the proposed changes, MW has suggested that an independent review be carried out to look at the issues raised and determine the best way forward for the management of the lakes and waterways in this area.

Seaspray: caravan park

Raised with: Minister for Environment and Climate Change

Raised by: Mr Viney

Raised on: 15 August 2012

REPLY:

The Seaspray Caravan Park relocation is being overseen by the Seaspray Reserves Committee of Management, a volunteer community-based committee. A considerable amount of community engagement, planning and consultation has been undertaken from the 2008 announcement of a government investment of \$4.26M to relocate and upgrade the Seaspray Caravan Park until the present time.

Three concept plans were developed and presented to the community and key stakeholders including public information sessions in Seaspray and Traralgon prior to the project working group adopting the current plans in 2010.

When the safety fence was erected around the construction site, there was some concern expressed by part of the community at the lack of ability to drop off directly in front of the hall.

The committee of management now have plans to construct a turnaround area and provide for two-way traffic at the front of the hall to alleviate the concerns of the community. This will be implemented when the final security fencing for the redeveloped caravan park is put in place.

This development will provide a state-of-the-art caravan park for the town and will open up a considerable amount of open space on the Seaspray foreshore.

Southern Peninsula Aquatic Centre: ministerial approval

Raised with: Minister for Environment and Climate Change

Raised by: Ms Pennicuik

Raised on: 16 August 2012

REPLY:

On 8 May 2012, I approved the use of the Rosebud foreshore as the location of the Southern Peninsula Aquatic Centre pursuant to Section 40 of the Coastal Management Act 1995.

In making my decision to grant consent under the act for the use of the Rosebud foreshore as the location of the Southern Peninsula Aquatic Centre, I gave regard to the Victorian coastal strategy, the Central Coastal Board's Mount Eliza to Point Nepean coastal action plan, the recommendations of the Victorian Environment Assessment Council and the purpose for which the land is reserved, as is required under section 40 of the act.

The Victorian coastal strategy sets out the criteria for use and development of coastal Crown land (page 56). These criteria recognise that coastal Crown land is a limited resource and needs to be used sparingly for net community and public benefit. The Southern Peninsula Aquatic Centre is to be located within an existing activity node, meets a demonstrated community need, and will accommodate a range of community uses.

The Central Coastal Board's 'Mount Eliza to Point Nepean coastal action plan' is applicable to the land and the proposal is considered consistent with the planning principles of a major activity node such as Rosebud. Activity nodes cater for a wide range of activities, including recreation, for the benefit of the local community.

The proposal is consistent with the general recommendations within the Victorian Environment Assessment Council's Melbourne Metropolitan Investigation which identifies the area as a coastal reserve. Recommendations for coastal reserves state that they be used to provide opportunities for recreation for large numbers of people.

The majority of the land is permanently reserved for public purposes and an aquatic centre is consistent with this purpose. There is a small parcel of land which is currently reserved for 'public hall and infant welfare and kindergarten centre' to facilitate the previous kindergarten at the site. As this kindergarten has now been relocated, this land will also be reserved for public purposes.

Pursuant to Section 37 of the Act, 'a person must not use or develop coastal Crown land unless the written consent of the Minister has first been obtained'. The existing consent is for the use of the Rosebud foreshore only and was issued with no conditions. Any development of the Rosebud foreshore will require further consent and the further information requested from Mornington Peninsula Shire Council must inform the consent application.

WRITTEN ADJOURNMENT RESPONSES

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

Thursday, 13 September 2012

Questions without notice: answers

Raised with: Premier

Raised by: Mr Lenders

Raised on: 13 October 2011

REPLY:

Early in the 57th Parliament the coalition government introduced sessional orders in the Legislative Assembly to improve the procedures for questions without notice.

Explicitly, the time limit for the answers to oral questions was reduced to 4 minutes, to require ministers to be succinct.

I note that these improvements were implemented on 9 February 2011, the third sitting day of the current Parliament.

The previous Labor government, of which the honourable member was a minister, had 11 years to introduce such improvements to improve accountability and transparency, but chose not to do so.