

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

FIFTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT

FIRST SESSION

WRITTEN ADJOURNMENT RESPONSES

27 and 29 November 2012

(Extract from book 19)

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By authority of the Victorian Government Printer

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

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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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FIFTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT — FIRST SESSION

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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, 27 November 2012

Western Hospital: upgrade

Raised with: Minister for Health

Raised by: Mr Finn

Raised on: 31 August 2011

REPLY:

The Baillieu Government recognises the need to provide high quality health care to all Victorians.

I am informed that Department of Health officers are working with Western Health to undertake a Masterplan Study of three Western Health Campuses, including the Western Hospital Campus. This study is targeted for completion in December 2011. The findings from this study will assist the department in future planning and development of capital works on the Western Hospital site.

The Victorian Health Priorities Framework 2012–2022: Metropolitan Health Plan released in May this year, establishes a framework for the planning and development of priorities for health services across the State over the next decade. The framework articulates reform priorities and sets out the long-term directions for metropolitan Melbourne's health services. The Rural and Regional Health Plan 2012–2022 and the Health Capital and Resources Plan 2012–2022 are currently being developed and will be released later this year.

This planning process recognises the importance of planning services in alignment with demographic trends including the population growth occurring in outer metropolitan Melbourne. These plans will provide health services with the policy direction within which to set out their planning and service delivery strategies to meet the needs of communities in western metropolitan Melbourne. The Baillieu Government will work with the health sector on the implementation of these plans.

Western Health has as you are aware been the recipient of significant new capital to improve maternity service capacity and build long awaited ICU capacity.

Legislative Council: procedures

Raised with: Minister for Health

Raised by: Mr Lenders

Raised on: 8 December 2011

REPLY:

The Baillieu Government is working to honour its election commitments.

Coal seam gas: exploration

Raised with: Minister for Energy and Resources

Raised by: Mr Lenders

Raised on: 23 May 2012

REPLY:

I refer to the matter you raised during the Adjournment debate in the Legislative Council on 23 May 2012 regarding community information and consultation on coal seam gas.

The Coalition Government is supporting research by industry experts, through the National Partnership Agreement and the National Harmonisation Framework. These are technical matters requiring technical research rather than a Parliamentary Inquiry.

As you know, on June 2012 Victoria signed a National Partnership Agreement with the Commonwealth on coal seam gas and large coal mining development. This Agreement provides Victoria with access to independent expert advice as well as research funding which will be used to better understand and protect our water assets.

Victoria is also participating in the creation of the National Harmonised Framework for coal seam gas regulation. This aims to ensure that the very best regulatory practice will operate in Victoria (and elsewhere) to give the community confidence that the development of any onshore gas resources will be consistent with the protection of other economically and environmentally significant assets.

The national framework process is considering leading practice approaches to the regulation of the coal seam gas industry, including water management and monitoring, well design and integrity, hydraulic fracturing, chemical use and industry and community engagement. State and Federal Energy and Resources Ministers are expected to consider the framework in December 2012.

The Victorian Coalition Government has also established a new Earth Resources Ministerial Advisory Committee to provide industry and community advice to the Energy and Resources Minister on a range of natural resource issues, with an initial focus to be on coal seam gas. This will be a key forum for collaborative consultation and a chance for the community and industry to identify and discuss emerging issues and potential solutions.

In view of this, your accusation that the Government is undertaking a “secret in-house inquiry in the Department of Primary Industries” is clearly completely false. This baseless scaremongering is a threat to the evidence-based policy and consultation process being undertaken as part the National Partnership Agreement, and further demonstrates Labor is not fit to govern in Victoria.

Renewable energy: guidelines

Raised with: Minister for Planning

Raised by: Mr Barber

Raised on: 30 August 2012

REPLY:

This is a matter for my colleague, the Hon Ryan Smith MP, Minister for Environment and Climate Change, as it relates to an area of Crown land administration and other matters covered by the Coastal Management Act 1995 and the Lands Act 1958.

The Victorian planning system however, provides for assessment of the impacts of renewable energy proposals with specific provisions in place for renewable energy facilities, which include marine energy. State Planning Policy within all Victorian planning schemes recognises the importance of renewable energy and appropriate siting and design of these facilities.

Where a planning permit is required for such facilities, Clause 52.42 of Victorian planning schemes specifies the type of information to be submitted with an application, which includes assessment of the potential amenity impacts of the proposals and calculations of their greenhouse benefits. Decision guidelines require that the effect of the proposal on the surrounding area, such as noise, impact on significant views, and impact on natural environment, be considered.

The Ministerial guidelines for assessment of environment effects under the Environment Effects Act 1978, provide clear guidance to proponents on the process for referral of projects that may have significant impacts on the environment.

Resources: government policy

Raised with: Minister for Energy and Resources

Raised by: Mr Lenders

Raised on: 30 August 2012

REPLY:

I refer to the matter raised by you in the Legislative Council during the Adjournment debate on 30 August 2012 in relation to the Coalition Government's policy on resources in Victoria.

As stated in both media releases to which you have referred, this Government supports regional jobs and investment in the minerals and resources sector, and continues to work with industry and local communities to deliver responsible economic growth.

With the upcoming National Harmonised Framework to regulate the coal seam gas industry, new standards may be set in Victoria to complement our already strong community and environmental protections. Initiating the hold on approvals for hydraulic fracturing and new coal seam gas exploration licences while the National Harmonised Framework is being finalised will smooth the transition to any new standards the Government may establish in future.

The Government is preparing its response to the Economic Development and Infrastructure Committee's Inquiry into Greenfields Mineral Exploration and Project Development in Victoria. The response will further demonstrate this Government's support for the responsible development of Victoria's earth resources sector.

By contrast, the actions of the former Labor government in issuing mining licences for the Abel's Reef bulk sample operation in the Wombat State Forest in 2007, only to have the Labor member for Ballarat East condemn any mining activities on these leases, as he did in the Legislative Assembly on 29 August 2012, demonstrates the type of inconsistency and hostility to mineral resources development that will damage the future of this industry in Victoria should Labor's policies be adopted.

Thank you for raising this matter with me.

Regional and rural Victoria: subdivision approvals

Raised with: Minister for Planning

Raised by: Mr Tee

Raised on: 6 September 2012

REPLY:

Protecting water quality in open drinking water catchments is important to ensure the health of our communities. The Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) prepared the content for the current Guidelines for planning permit applications in open, potable water supply catchment areas, 2009 to provide guidance when

considering a permit application in these areas. A Victorian Water Industry Association (VicWater) Catchment Working Group, including the DSE, has reviewed the guidelines to identify opportunities for making them more flexible while continuing to protect water quality. The Working Group's recommended changes are being actively considered.

Asbestos: non-occupational exposure

Raised with: Minister for Consumer Affairs

Raised by: Ms Pennicuik

Raised on: 6 September 2012

REPLY:

Thank you for your Adjournment Debate you raised regarding the Asbestos Management Review Report (the Report) prepared on behalf of the Commonwealth Government.

The Report, which makes 12 recommendations to improve asbestos management and awareness in Australia, was released on 16 August 2012, and the Hon. Bill Shorten MP, Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations, announced the Commonwealth Government response on 4 September 2012.

I understand that the Commonwealth Government supports the central recommendations of the Report and is establishing a new national asbestos co-ordination agency, the Office of Asbestos Safety (OAS), to lead the development of a national strategic plan for asbestos. However, other recommendations have not been specifically supported including those identifying the priority areas for a national strategic plan, such as the proposal to improve the asbestos identification and awareness in residential buildings.

The Commonwealth Government has advised that, among other matters, the OAS will develop a road map for improving the handling of asbestos, and consider the practicalities of implementing the Report's recommendations. I am advised that, to support the development of the national strategic plan, the OAS will undertake a number of research projects including a cost-benefit analysis of prioritised removal of in-situ asbestos, a study into the current and future capacity of infrastructure dealing with asbestos waste, and community awareness of, and attitudes to asbestos.

In providing the Commonwealth Government response, Minister Shorten advised that consultation on the OAS and the national strategic plan will continue with State and Territory governments, and other stakeholders.

In these circumstances, the Victorian Government will contribute to the national discussions and the finalisation of the national strategic plan rather than take action that may duplicate or conflict with broader efforts.

Thank you for raising this important matter with me.

Dementia: age-specific care

Raised with: Minister for Ageing

Raised by: Ms Mikakos

Raised on: 12 September 2012

REPLY:

I am pleased to see cross-partisan support for the establishment of the Victorian Parliamentary Friends of Dementia.

Unfortunately at this point in time there is no cure for dementia.

Increasing awareness of the value of healthy ageing may reduce the rate of dementia. Some research suggests significant links between living well physically, socially and mentally, and delaying the onset of dementia, or reducing the chance of dementia. The Victorian Government continues to fund healthy ageing and living initiatives, such as the Active Ageing Network and health promotion messages, for example in heart, stroke, cancer and obesity campaigns.

A diagnosis of dementia is difficult to receive at any age, and for family and friends. For younger people, it may mean there are school children in the family, a mortgage, a working partner, and a need to build superannuation funds.

The Commonwealth has primary responsibility for dementia research, support packages, and workforce training. As dementia is now recognised as the ninth national health priority in Australia, I look forward to a greater focus by the Commonwealth on research into dementia, more intensive and flexible support packages for people with dementia and their carers and families, and training to support staff being responsive to individuals' needs.

The Baillieu Government is continuing to fund the Support for Carers of People with Dementia Program (\$1.52 million per annum), including support of young people with dementia and their carers. This program provides flexible support in people's homes. Such support varies from family to family, because everyone's needs are different, including needs and preferences of young people with dementia.

Recently the Parliamentary Secretary for Health, Nick Wakeling, MP, launched some new resources for supporting people with dementia. Dementia practice guidelines for assessment services in the Home and Community Care Program aim to improve assessment, care planning and service provision. There is also a guide to services that support people with dementia and their carers, enabling timely information, supports and referrals.

I look forward to working in a cross partisan manner with all those who seek to support people with dementia their families and carers.

Northern Health: interpreting service

Raised with: Minister for Health

Raised by: Ms Mikakos

Raised on: 9 October 2012

REPLY:

I am advised Northern Health are improving coordination and targeting of services towards those who need assistance across their patient journey, while maintaining the current service level.

Further I am advised Northern Health will maintain both internal and external interpreting services and will continue to work closely with clinicians to enhance access to appropriate language services through active communication with their patients, and ensure their processes for identifying and managing clinical risk is unchanged.

Northern Health will continue to deliver quality health services and promote good patient care and will always provide an interpreting service to those patients who require support.

Northern Health is strengthening its interpreter service. Clinical need will be the determinant of the provision of interpreter services. I note that last year Northern Health's interpreter team won the National Excellence Award for Outstanding Contribution to the Translating and Interpreting Industry, the highest recognition in the industry.

Aged care: Peninsula Health facility

Raised with: Minister for Ageing

Raised by: Ms Mikakos

Raised on: 10 October 2012

REPLY:

Peninsula Health is one of about 19 Commonwealth funded residential aged-care providers on the Mornington Peninsula with over 1700 approved residential aged care places.

Peninsula Health Board has made the decision to explore potential partnership arrangements for the delivery of one of its three residential aged care services, Rosebud Aged Care Services. This decision does not require my approval as decisions regarding changes to services are made by individual health service boards.

In its public statements Peninsula Health has guaranteed to protect the interests of current residents and has also indicated that there will be no staff redundancies through any changes that may arise. As these services are approved, accredited and funded by the Commonwealth Government, any new provider interested in assuming responsibility for the service will have to demonstrate its capacity and expertise to the satisfaction of the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing.

Peninsula Health has indicated it will require that the residential aged care places remain on the existing Rosebud site or are located in the Rosebud/southern part of Mornington Peninsula area.

In relation to advice provided to residents and staff, I understand that Peninsula Health is engaged in a comprehensive communications process and schedule of meetings and briefings for staff, residents, relatives and community groups regarding the expression of interest for the future of services at Rosebud. This process is ongoing.

Gas: Koo Wee Rup supply

Raised with: Minister for Regional and Rural Development

Raised by: Mr O'Donohue

Raised on: 10 October 2012

REPLY:

Regional Development Victoria (RDV) is delivering the Energy for the Regions Program on behalf of the State and has implemented a staged approach to ensure that gas is delivered in an efficient and cost effective manner. The first stage of the Program, which involved direct negotiations with the gas distribution businesses is now complete with agreement to connect Huntly and augment Mildura's supply network.

On 12 May 2012, I announced the next stage for delivering the Program, which involves a broadened strategy to engage natural gas suppliers in both the conventional pipeline and alternative delivery markets. As a priority town, Koo Wee Rup will have the opportunity to be considered for connection to natural gas under this next phase of the Program.

On 12 June 2012, I met with Council representatives of municipalities with a priority town (including Cardinia Shire Council for Koo Wee Rup) at a Program Forum to discuss the next phase of implementation. At the Forum, Councils were encouraged to enter into discussions with gas distributors about pipeline based reticulation of natural gas supply, and engage with local communities.

As part of the broadened strategy, on 29 August 2012 I made fixed subsidy offers to Victoria's incumbent gas distributors to supply priority towns, which includes Koo Wee Rup, with reticulated natural gas. I understand that RDV has subsequently written to the Mayors and CEOs of affected councils (including Cardinia Shire Council)

providing details of the fixed subsidy offers, and welcoming the opportunity to present the revised Program delivery strategy to Council.

RDV will continue to work with the Cardinia Shire Council to ensure that the community of Koo Wee Rup is informed of the progress on the delivery of the Energy for the Regions Program.

I look forward to progressing the opportunity to extend the natural gas network to Koo Wee Rup through this next phase of Program delivery.

Ambulance services: regional mobile intensive care units

Raised with: Minister for Health

Raised by: Mr Viney

Raised on: 11 October 2012

REPLY:

The Baillieu Government has committed to provide an additional 310 paramedics and 30 patient transport officers as part of a \$151 million boost to Victoria's ambulance service.

The MICA single response units in Sale and Bairnsdale will be established initially as 12-hour peak period units and will subsequently be expanded to 24-hour services. Ambulance Victoria will continue to monitor response times and workloads to ensure future resources are most appropriately located and aligned with priority areas.

In contrast the Labor Government of which you were a member failed to have any dedicated MICA coverage in the ten centres that formed part of the package announced by the Baillieu opposition and which are currently being implemented to fulfil the election commitment.

Fire services levy: reform

Raised with: Minister for Consumer Affairs

Raised by: Ms Darveniza

Raised on: 11 October 2012

REPLY:

Thank you for the Adjournment Debate you raised regarding the measures being implemented to protect consumers during and after the transition to the new property-based Fire Services Levy (FSL).

The Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission (VBRC) recommended that the current insurance-based FSL be replaced by a property-based levy after the previous Labor government failed to take meaningful action in this area. The Victorian Coalition Government is implementing this recommendation with the introduction of the property-based levy from 1 July 2013.

Compared to the current arrangements, the new property-based levy will mean a more transparent and equitable funding arrangement for the Melbourne Fire Brigade (MFB) and the Country Fire Authority (CFA). The new levy will mean that Victorians will save more than \$100 million in the 2013–14 financial year.

While there are already strong consumer protections operating under the Australian Consumer Law, the Government is ensuring that consumers and businesses are protected during and after the transition to the new property-based levy by establishing a Fire Services Levy Monitor. Professor Allan Fels will be the Monitor and will have special powers to take action for false, misleading or deceptive conduct, and price exploitation by insurance companies. Substantial penalties of up to \$10 million for these offences will send a clear message to insurance companies about their expected conduct as the new property-based levy is introduced.

As you may be aware, the Fire Services Levy Monitor Bill 2012, which will establish the Office of the Monitor and his functions and powers, was introduced into Parliament on 13 November 2012 for passage before the end of the year.

The powers that will be conferred on the Monitor by the new Act will be broad enough to allow the Monitor to take and investigate complaints about the FSL charge in premiums paid by policy-holders at any time, including before the establishment of the Monitor. Complaints currently being made are being received by Consumer Affairs Victoria in preparation for the Monitor's office commencing operation.

The 2012–13 financial year will be the last financial year for which insurance companies contribute to the funding of the MFB and CFA. This means that they will continue to recover the cost of their 2012–13 contributions from their policy-holders by placing a FSL charge on policies for home and/or contents insurance that includes cover for the effects of fire, and which are taken out or renewed in this financial year.

While the period of an insurance policy may extend beyond the 2012–13 financial year, depending on the date the policy commenced, the FSL charge relates only to the current financial year.

Thank you for raising this matter with me.

Solar energy: feed-in tariff scheme

Raised with: Minister for Energy and Resources

Raised by: Mrs Petrovich

Raised on: 11 October 2012

REPLY:

I refer to the matter you raised during the Adjournment debate in the Legislative Council on 11 October 2012 regarding the effects of the carbon tax on the solar feed-in tariff schemes introduced by the former Government.

Renewable energy has an important role to play as Victoria makes the transition to a lower emissions future.

The Victorian Coalition Government has accepted the recommendations of the independent Victorian Competition and Efficiency Commission's (VCEC) final report into distributed generation and feed-in tariffs and will introduce a new, fairer feed-in tariff for rooftop solar. The new arrangements recommended by VCEC, and adopted by the Victorian Government, will establish a feed-in tariff that is sustainable, predictable and free from cross-subsidies.

VCEC considered the significant fall in the price of solar panels as well as the costs imposed on the wider community of supporting feed-in tariffs, and concluded that the fairest outcome going forward would be to base feed-in tariff rates on the adjusted wholesale price for power.

This adjusted wholesale price, initially set at 8 cents per kilowatt-hour and introduced from 2013, broadly reflects the price at which electricity retailers purchase power from generators through the National Electricity Market.

Solar systems are now more affordable than ever, with the cost having fallen by around two-thirds since 2009 and continuing to fall. Victoria saw a 33 per cent increase in solar connections for the first six months of 2012 compared to the same period in 2011, despite the feed-in tariff stepping down from 60 cents per kilowatt hour to 25 cents per kilowatt hour in that time. In addition, strong consumer demand has seen the number of people employed in the solar industry in Victoria increased by 1400, even while feed-in tariff rates have stepped down.

This is further evidence that it is the falling cost of solar and the rising price of electricity that is primarily driving the take up of solar, rather than feed-in tariffs. Continuing with excessive tariffs is both unnecessary to maintain a vibrant solar industry and imposes significant costs on consumers.

Thank you for raising these matters with me.

Respite care: West Sunshine accommodation

Raised with: Minister for Community Services

Raised by: Mr Eideh

Raised on: 23 October 2012

REPLY:

The health and safety of people with a disability in the care of the Department of Human Services is the Victorian Government's first priority.

I was saddened to learn about the self-inflicted injuries of the young person following an incident with a co-resident.

The young person received immediate first aid and subsequent medical attention for his injury and continues to be supported by Departmental staff. Previously any broken glass had been replaced by safety glass and all glass at this respite facility is now in the process of being replaced by safety glass.

I am advised further respite care has been arranged that is tailored to meet the family's needs.

I have personally written to the family about their concerns.

Country Fire Authority: Macedon Ranges

Raised with: Minister for Police and Emergency Services

Raised by: Mrs Petrovich

Raised on: 23 October 2012

REPLY:

Whilst the 2012-13 Budget for the Country Fire Authority (CFA) does involve reductions, it is important to understand that this year's budget for CFA is still the second largest in history, and was only exceeded by last year's budget, which included funding associated with implementation of the Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission (VBRC) recommendations. CFA has identified reasonable efficiencies that will not affect its firefighting capability or frontline services. CFA is also exempt from the Sustainable Government Initiative for staff reductions, in recognition that it delivers frontline services.

The Coalition Government is implementing the VBRC recommendations to ensure that Victoria is better prepared to respond to bushfires. In fact the Bushfire Royal Commission Implementation Monitor, Neil Comrie's Final Report confirmed this on Page 67 of his report by stating, "*there is clear evidence that Victoria is now substantially better prepared on a regular basis to respond to bushfire risk than at the time of Black Saturday*".

In its first term, the government will invest in 250 new and upgraded CFA stations across Victoria. \$65 million was invested in the 2011-12 Budget to fast track the delivery of 60 new or upgraded CFA stations and roll out 101 new firefighting vehicles. A further \$22.9 million was included in the 2012-13 Budget to continue delivering on our CFA station commitment.

As part of the government's commitment to build and upgrade CFA stations, funding was made available to replace the current Lancefield and Newham fire stations and progress the replacement of Toolern Vale fire station. In addition, a number of Neighbourhood Safer Places have been established in the Macedon Ranges:

- Buffalo Stadium, Woodend
- Lancefield Mechanics Institute

- Riddells Creek Leisure Centre Stadium
- Tony Clarke Reserve and Macedon Community Centre, Macedon

Additionally, in 2012–2013 record funding of \$8.6 million for 166 Volunteer Emergency Services Equipment Program (VESEP) grants has been provided to CFA for operational equipment, vehicles and appliances, and amenities. Included in this program are new Field Command Vehicles for Newstead and Romsey fire stations and a new Big Fill Pump for Malmsbury fire station. The Lancefield fire station received a new Field Command Vehicle under the 2011–12 VESEP program.

The government appreciates the sentiments you have expressed on behalf of the communities of the Macedon Ranges and will continue to support our communities in regional Victoria.

Thank you for raising this matter with me.

Alfred hospital: bed numbers

Raised with: Minister for Health

Raised by: Mr Lenders

Raised on: 24 October 2012

REPLY:

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare reports average available bed numbers annually in the Australian Hospital Statistics report. The final 2011–12 average available bed numbers for Victoria will be published in April 2013.

Increasing demand and an ageing population are continuing sources of pressure on Victoria's public hospitals. Despite increasing demand I am advised that in 2011–12 Alfred Health achieved its emergency access, elective surgery waiting list and elective surgery treat in time targets.

BreastScreen Victoria: government support

Raised with: Minister for Health

Raised by: Mrs Petrovich

Raised on: 24 October 2012

REPLY:

The Baillieu Government is committed to reducing the burden of breast cancer on Victorian women and provides over \$36 million in annual recurrent funding to BreastScreen Victoria to co-ordinate and deliver the BreastScreen program, including undertaking activities to raise awareness and participation.

Breast cancer is the most common cancer in Victorian women and the most fatal cancer in women. In Victoria, around 3500 women are diagnosed with breast cancer annually and over 750 Victorian women will die from the disease.

Thanks to improvements in treatment and early detection, five-year survival rates have increased from 73 per cent in 1986–1990, to 89 per cent in 2006–2010.

In Victoria, nearly two-thirds of breast cancers detected by the BreastScreen program are found early while the cancers are small, offering women the best chance of successful treatment and recovery.

BreastScreen Victoria provides an important service to women through its eight Screening and Assessment Services, 34 permanent screening clinics and two Mobile Screening Service vans that visit 28 rural and urban communities on a regular basis.

Whilst over 200 000 women have a free mammogram each year through the BreastScreen program, participation figures suggest that a number of women in Victoria aged 50 to 69 years are not taking up the opportunity to have this important test to detect breast cancer early.

As highlighted by Mrs Petrovich, breast cancer awareness month provides a good opportunity to remind women that breast screening can save lives through early detection of breast cancer — the Baillieu Government was pleased to support the recent launch of BreastScreen Victoria's advertising campaign with this aim.

Another event that I was pleased to launch recently was BreastScreen Victoria's digital upgrade of their second mobile screening service that provides thousands of women across rural and regional Victoria with access to state of the art screening technology.

Victoria, in partnership with the Commonwealth, is in the final year of the four year upgrade of analogue mammography technology with digital technology across Victorian public breast screening services.

The Commonwealth has provided \$120 million nationally to support this roll out which represents the largest capital investment in breast screening services since establishment of the program in 1991. This funding builds on the \$10 million the Victorian Government has provided to roll out digital mammography technology to public breast screening services state-wide.

This investment aims to improve sustainability and capacity of the BreastScreen program and to best equip Victoria to meet the needs of a growing target population of women aged 50–69 years.

I would like to take this opportunity to reinforce the message to all Victorian women aged 50–69 that a BreastScreen appointment every two years is the best way to find breast cancer early.

Acacia College: future

Raised with: Minister for Education

Raised by: Mr Ondarchie

Raised on: 24 October 2012

REPLY:

I am informed as follows:

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development's Northern Metropolitan Region arranged a public meeting for parents of current and future Acacia College students.

This meeting was held during the evening of Thursday, 1 November 2012, at the College.

Principals and other senior representatives from six local government primary schools and four secondary schools were in attendance to provide parents with information about their schools.

Senior regional office staff outlined the Department's student enrolment policy and parents had the opportunity to ask questions of concern to them.

The Department will ensure there is capacity to accommodate all former Acacia College students seeking to enrol in local government schools and will continue to work closely with the community.

Health: federal funding**Raised with: Minister for Health****Raised by: Mr O'Donohue****Raised on: 24 October 2012****REPLY:**

As raised by Mr O'Donohue on 24 October, the Commonwealth will be reducing payments to the Victorian health system by \$106.8 million in 2012–13. This figure is based on a reduction in the indexation on the Specific Purpose Payments (2011–12) and the Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook, which was released on 22 October, through which the Commonwealth revised National Health Reform payments for 2012–13 and beyond.

The Commonwealth is reducing its payments to Victoria by:

- \$39.7 million in 2011–12;
- \$67.1 million in 2012–13; and
- \$475.4 million over five years 2011–12 to 2015–16.

The Commonwealth revisions claim to be due to a change in the indexation rate for the health reform/specific purpose payment. Schedule D of the Intergovernmental Agreement on Federal Financial Relations (IGA FFR) sets out the formula for calculating the indexation rate. The growth factor is a product of:

- A health specific cost index (a five year average of the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare health price index);
- Growth in population estimates weighted for hospital utilisation; and
- A technology factor (Productivity Commission derived index of technology growth).

Across the country, the Commonwealth Government is stripping around \$1.6 billion in funding over five years from much needed health services. For Victoria, part of the 2011–12 reduction is based on a Commonwealth Treasury assumption of 0.03 per cent population growth in 2011 across Australia; and a population decline of 11 111 in Victoria in 2011. The ABS estimates actual population growth was 1.4 per cent or an additional 75 400 Victorians. The 2012–13 to 2014–15 reductions are based on the flow through of 2011–12 population figures and a change to the five-year average of the health price index (to 2.27 per cent, which is significantly lower than the trend (3.06 per cent)).

The Victorian government rejects absolutely the Commonwealth Treasurer's determination for 2011–12, which flies in the face of the experience of every Victorian and is also at odds with the Australian statistician's population growth figure. Victorians know that birth rates are increasing, immigration is increasing, and Victoria is home to many of the fastest growing Local Government Areas in the nation. Indeed, rather than recording a fall in Victoria's population, the Australian statistician has revealed that our population actually grew by 75 400 in the 12 months to December 2011.

The reduced health specific cost index also appears reliant on a potentially one-off 2011–12 rate of 0.9 per cent following a prior year rate of 3 per cent

What does this mean for Victorian Health Services?

These reductions to the committed payments made to Victorian Health Services by the Commonwealth Government are unexpected and unprecedented. If the Commonwealth does not reverse this decision, there will be a negative impact all 86 health services with a likely consequent Victoria-wide reduction in services, an increase in waiting lists and risk to the viability of a number of small health services.

Health service budgets are negotiated each year through Statements of Priorities (SOPs). The 2012–13 SOPs have recently been finalised using the funding parameters in the Commonwealth's 2012–13 Budget. These SOPs may need to be renegotiated with Health Service Chairs.

Acacia College: future

Raised with: Minister for Education

Raised by: Ms Mikakos

Raised on: 24 October 2012

REPLY:

I am informed as follows:

In the area of education provision planning, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development plans for new schools through the regular monitoring of residential growth, demographic change and enrolment trends.

There has been substantial growth in and around the Doreen/Mernda area and it is projected that two new secondary schools will be required within the Whittlesea North Ward area in the longer term to accommodate the forecasted population growth.

In response to this planning projection, the Department is in the process of purchasing land for a proposed Doreen Secondary School in Cookes Road, Doreen. This land supplements the site that has been set aside for the proposed Mernda Secondary College on Renaissance Drive, Mernda.

The Department is currently in the process of developing the new Doreen South Primary School on Cookes Road, to alleviate growth pressures on Laurimar Primary School. This development was provided with \$10 million in the last state budget and is scheduled to open in 2014. It is a development that has been warmly welcomed by the local community.

A meeting for parents to discuss future schooling options for their children was organised by the Department at Acacia College on 1 November 2012.

The Department will continue its work with the local school communities to ensure there is capacity in the neighbouring government schools to accommodate the enrolment of former Acacia College students.

Sneydes Road–Princes Highway, Point Cook: interchange

Raised with: Minister for Roads

Raised by: Mr Elsbury

Raised on: 25 October 2012

REPLY:

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

The Growth Areas Authority and VicRoads are currently awaiting a response to the application for funding under the Commonwealth Suburban Jobs program for the proposed Sneydes Road interchange.

Women: health services

Raised with: Minister for Health

Raised by: Ms Hartland

Raised on: 25 October 2012

REPLY:

The government is pleased to have been able to provide \$600 000 to Women's Health West as part of the more than \$90 million allocated in 2012–13 to prevent and respond effectively to violence and sexual assault against women and children. A number of other women's health services have also been successful in receiving additional funding as part of this investment.

The Community and Women's Health Integrated Health Promotion (IHP) Program budgets have been set within the context of a challenging fiscal environment in Victoria, noting the need for efficient and effective programs and the receipt of other funding sources that agencies receive from government.

The government is working with agencies, including women's health services, to support the longer term, efficient delivery of preventive health programs that are effective, evidence-based and integrated.

The government remains committed to best-practice preventive health approaches, as evidenced by a range of initiatives, including; the development and implementation of the *Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2011–2015*, the new Victorian Prevention and Health Promotion Achievement Program and significant investment made through the National Partnership Agreement on Preventive Health.

Koo Wee Rup bypass: progress

Raised with: Minister for Roads

Raised by: Mr O'Donohue

Raised on: 25 October 2012

REPLY:

The Victorian Coalition Government has committed \$66 million for the Koo Wee Rup Bypass to link the Healesville-Koo Wee Rup Road with the South Gippsland Highway.

The timeframe for construction is dependent on when the land required for the project can be obtained. The planning process that is first required to reserve this land through a Planning Scheme Amendment is nearing completion and is expected to allow the land acquisition process to commence in early 2013. This process has also required an extensive investigation of fauna species listed under the Commonwealth's Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act, in order to obtain environmental approvals for this important project.

I am pleased to advise that VicRoads is currently conducting an Expression of Interest process, designed to shortlist tenderers for the detailed design and construction of the main works. Tendering for this contract for the main works will then run concurrently with the land acquisition process in the first half of next year, and these are expected to allow for the construction works to commence on site in late 2013.

Boronia K–12 College: stage 2 development**Raised with: Minister for Education****Raised by: Mr O'Donohue****Raised on: 14 November 2012****REPLY:**

I am informed as follows:

The tenders for this project closed on Tuesday, 20 November 2012. The bids were all well within budget and the architects are currently finalising a recommendation to allow this project to proceed to contract.

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development will continue to work with the architects to ensure the selection and approval of the successful contractor is completed as soon as possible, to ensure the appointment of the builder before Christmas 2012.

It is proposed that construction will occur during 2013 for completion and handover of the building to the school early in 2014.

WRITTEN ADJOURNMENT RESPONSES

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

Thursday, 29 November 2012

Hampton Park: botanic garden proposal

Raised with: Minister for Environment and Climate Change

Raised by: Mrs Peulich

Raised on: 12 September 2012

REPLY:

The Hampton Park site is located on Hallam Road, Hampton Park.

The land is owned in freehold title by PWM (Lyndhurst) Pty Ltd. Sita Australia Pty Ltd operates a landfill site on the land.

The City of Casey as the local planning authority issued a planning permit for the operation of a landfill on the site. The planning permit has been approved for the period to 31 December 2040.

PWM has entered into a section 173 agreement, under the Planning and Environment Act 1987 with the City of Casey, which provides for the progressive transfer of the land to the City of Casey free of charge for development and use as open space.

The City of Casey has developed a 'Hampton Park Development Plan', which lists as a public open space objective, the progressive rehabilitation and development of the land upon the cessation of the current operations, for the purposes of public open space.

As Minister Environment and Climate Change I have responsibility for Crown land, its management, use and development.

The subject land is owned in freehold title and it is therefore a matter for the City of Casey to determine how the land should be used into the future. I understand the City of Casey is undertaking a public consultation process to guide the future development of the land as a regional park for the benefit of the broader community.

Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne: plant selection

Raised with: Minister for Environment and Climate Change

Raised by: Mrs Coote

Raised on: 23 October 2012

REPLY:

The Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne is a world renowned, heritage-listed garden that contains historical and contemporary living plant collections and landscaping. The Royal Botanic Gardens collections are consistent with changing environmental conditions and philosophies on horticulture and landscape design, and comply with heritage conservation principles. Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne maintains the historical landscape character as introduced by Director William Guilfoyle between 1873 and 1909, and ensures that any future plant palette choices both complement and enhance this character.

The current strategy for planting at the Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne is to use the full range of plant types available, including succulents, cacti, native plants and traditional flowering trees and shrubs. The planting strategy

and planting program is guided by the Royal Botanic Gardens Master Plan (revised 2008) and heritage conservation principles.

Given changing climatic conditions, the challenge is to integrate the aesthetics of the 19th century landscape with the current issues of water conservation, visitor amenity and environmental sustainability. Guilfoyle's Volcano (reservoir) planting design is a fine example of meeting this challenge. William Guilfoyle, as the then Royal Botanic Gardens Director, built the reservoir in 1876. It is a common misconception that William Guilfoyle did not use succulent or bold foliage plants. It is very clear from historical documentation that Guilfoyle did use this type of planting extensively throughout the Gardens, including around the Volcano.

The restoration of Guilfoyle's Volcano is an innovative, modern landscaped feature in the Gardens. It is a critical component of the Working Wetlands project, which has a number of water conservation and education goals.

The Gardens at Cranbourne are not suitable to plant exotic cacti, succulent or arid plant material. Royal Botanic Gardens Cranbourne, with its recently completed Australian Garden, is a site exclusively used for growing Australian plants. Cacti, apart from one African species, are exclusively native to North and South America.

The Cranbourne Gardens site also includes significant remnant bush land that has a high conservation value. To introduce exotic plants into this environment could be catastrophic for the ecology and species diversity on the site.