

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

FIFTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT

FIRST SESSION

WRITTEN ADJOURNMENT RESPONSES

Tuesday, 14 August 2012

(Extract from book 12)

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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

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

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

Environment and Planning References 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.

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.

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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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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, 14 August 2012

Member for Altona: seniors information booklet

Raised with: Minister for Ageing
Raised by: Mr Finn
Raised on: 13 October 2011

REPLY:

The booklet referred to is distributed from the member for Altona's electoral office and I understand the Department of Health has provided the correct contact information for the Royal Women's Hospital.

Planning: urban growth boundary

Raised with: Minister for Planning
Raised by: Mr Barber
Raised on: 6 December 2011

REPLY:

On 28 July 2011, I wrote to eleven (11) non-growth area councils advising them of the government's intention to seek their views on the current urban growth boundary (UGB) in their municipality, and providing them with an opportunity to identify any UGB anomalies and to have them independently assessed and considered by an advisory committee. The letter also indicated the process is designed to deal with possible changes to the boundary and will not be open to general public submissions. Council submissions were to be forwarded to the Department of Planning and Community Development by no later than 28 November 2011.

Therefore, any submission made by Greater Dandenong council is wholly a matter for the council.

Water: northern Victoria supply

Raised with: Premier
Raised by: Mr Lenders
Raised on: 7 December 2011

REPLY:

Educating and informing the community about bushfire preparedness is a critical part of emergency management.

Empowering the individual to take action before, during and after an emergency is done through a whole of government approach — ensuring everyone is aware of the need to be prepared, to take action if necessary, and where to go if the need arises.

There was no individual letter written from me and sent to individual members of the community.

I did however deliver some published messages, throughout Fire Action Week, and at other times during the fire season; through local media outlets, for local and regional communities.

Water: northern Victoria supply

Raised with: Premier
Raised by: Ms Broad
Raised on: 28 February 2012

REPLY:

An extreme rainfall event in January 2011 led to approximately 190 landslides in the Grampians National Park, many of which were in the catchment of Lake Bellfield. As a result of these landslides, a large volume of material flowed into the reservoir, which resulted in considerable water quality impacts with regard to colour and turbidity for towns supplied by the Wimmera–Mallee pipeline. While it was originally anticipated that water quality in the reservoir would improve by mid-2011, this did not occur. Despite the efforts of the relevant water authority, Grampians Wimmera Mallee Water (GWM Water), a number of towns which rely on water from the reservoir have faced ongoing water quality issues.

On 27 February this year, the Minister for Health declared the water concerned to be ‘regulated water’ under section 6 of the *Safe Drinking Water Act 2003*, meaning the water supplied is not fit for drinking. This was done at the request of GWM Water in light of ongoing water quality issues. I am advised the only water treatment currently available in the ten towns that you refer to in your question is chlorination. Unfortunately, this process does not treat turbidity, which is the primary water quality issue facing these towns.

During the period that the declaration is in place, officials from the Department of Health will work with GWM Water to ensure water-related public health issues are managed. In addition, I am advised that GWM Water has placed tankers containing drinking water in each town so that residents can come and collect drinking water as they require. Additionally, GWM Water is working with schools and health care facilities to ensure they also have access to safe drinking water during this time. Finally, whilst the declaration is in place, GWM Water will only charge residents a non-drinking water tariff, rather than the normal drinking water tariff.

I am advised that GWM Water will receive funding through the Department of Sustainability and Environment’s Small Towns Water Quality Fund to undertake water quality improvement works in affected towns. While I understand these works are expected to address the water quality issues in Donald, Minyip and Rupanyup, returning the remaining seven towns to drinking water standard will require a longer term solution. I am advised that GWM Water will be working with the Department of Sustainability and Environment and the Department of Health to develop a longer term proposal for water supplies to these remaining towns for funding through GWM Water’s next pricing period, which will commence in July 2013.

Thank you for raising the matter with me.

Regional Rail Link Authority: West Footscray footbridges

Raised with: Minister for Public Transport
Raised by: Ms Hartland
Raised on: 28 February 2012

REPLY:

Regional rail link (RRL) works require the removal of the Rising Sun footbridge to facilitate the additional tracks that are being constructed as part of the project. Land constraints in this area will not permit the footbridge to be rebuilt in the exact same location.

As part of these works the existing footbridge at West Footscray station will also be removed, as the station is being demolished and rebuilt approximately 160 metres to the west. The Rising Sun footbridge and the West Footscray station footbridge will be replaced with a new crossing at the new West Footscray station. The new crossing will include Disability Discrimination Act-compliant ramps to facilitate cross-corridor access for cyclists and pedestrians.

Cross-corridor access will be maintained at all times during RRL's construction.

The Regional Rail Link Authority undertook a series of consultation activities in late 2011, prior to the construction contract being awarded for RRL works between Footscray and Deer Park. These activities included a briefing session at West Footscray station, where the proposed removal of the Rising Sun pedestrian bridge was discussed.

It was noted through these consultation activities that there was a need to consult further with the wider community regarding the proposed removal of the Rising Sun footbridge. This information was conveyed to the Footscray-Deer Park project team following contract award on 21 December 2011.

The Footscray-Deer Park project team commenced formal consultation with stakeholders in February 2012, sending an invitation to over 5500 residents to provide feedback on the proposed removal of the Rising Sun footbridge.

Further to this, the Footscray-Deer Park project team performed pedestrian counts on the Rising Sun footbridge and the West Footscray station footbridge in January and February 2012, and again in April 2012 to understand the usage of these bridges.

The Footscray-Deer Park project team is currently discussing its findings with Maribyrnong City Council to ensure that the outcomes are consistent with council's master planning process.

The Footscray-Deer Park project team will provide a summary of these findings to the wider community in the near future.

Wallan-Kilmore bypass: route

Raised with: Premier
Raised by: Ms Broad
Raised on: 29 February 2012

REPLY:

The Victorian coalition government is committed to the construction of the Kilmore-Wallan bypass to better manage traffic flows and improve road safety.

The bypass will connect the Northern Highway and the Hume Freeway near Kilmore to bypass traffic away from the Kilmore and Wallan townships and assist with handling local traffic growth.

Planning activities for the bypass are progressing in close consultation with the community. Various route options for the bypass are being investigated.

The Kilmore-Wallan bypass, along with the discontinuation of the previous government's solution of an internal link road, was an election commitment made by the coalition.

Thank you for raising this matter with me.

Planning: Point Cook

Raised with: Minister for Planning
Raised by: Ms Hartland
Raised on: 13 March 2012

REPLY:

The Point Cook West precinct structure plan underwent public consultation between 16 January 2012 and 16 February 2012. The Growth Areas Authority held community consultation sessions on 31 January and 1, 7 and 8 February 2012.

The Growth Areas Authority will continue to work with Wyndham City Council and the local community to resolve any submissions made during the consultation process.

Delaying the planning would therefore merely delay addressing the infrastructure and service needs of the future Point Cook community.

Planning: Point Cook

Raised with: Minister for Planning

Raised by: Mr Tee

Raised on: 13 March 2012

REPLY:

The development of the Point Cook area has largely occurred over the past decade.

The preparation of the Point Cook West precinct structure plan and development contributions plan takes into consideration the transport, education, community, open space and recreation needs of the new Point Cook West community. The precinct structure plan and development contributions plan will identify the infrastructure that is to be funded through the development of the precinct.

The development contributions plan will set out the infrastructure contributions that land developers must pay in developing the land. This includes contributions to infrastructure located outside the Point Cook West precinct structure plan area. For example, the provision of a community centre that is proposed to be constructed outside the precinct but which is expected to be used by new residents of Point Cook West and existing residents of Point Cook.

The draft Point Cook West precinct structure plan identifies the development of a new interchange at Sneydes Road. When constructed, this interchange will directly and substantially benefit the residents of Point Cook by providing more direct access to the Princes Freeway. The Growth Areas Authority, VicRoads and Wyndham City Council have been working together to identify the land required for the interchange, and land will be able to be set aside to enable construction in the future.

The draft Point Cook West precinct structure plan provides for a district level active recreation reserve on Hacketts Road and it is expected that the Point Cook West development contributions plan will require land developers of Point Cook West to contribute to the development of the sports reserve. The facilities provided on the active sports reserve will be determined by Wyndham City Council.

Planning: Point Cook

Raised with: Minister for Planning

Raised by: Mr Finn

Raised on: 13 March 2012

REPLY:

The preparation of precinct structure plans is dependent upon a number of factors, and these may alter from time to time. The timing of the adoption of any individual precinct structure plan is therefore likely to vary.

The Growth Areas Authority reports to me regularly on its planning schedule which I approve. The Growth Areas Authority publishes on its website a list and map of current and proposed precinct structure plan areas and it also provides an indication of the status of individual precinct structure plans on the program.

I will request that the Growth Areas Authority keeps this schedule up to date.

Regional Rail Link Authority: West Footscray footbridges

Raised with: Minister for Public Transport

Raised by: Ms Hartland

Raised on: 27 March 2012

REPLY:

Regional rail link (RRL) works require the removal of the Rising Sun footbridge to facilitate the additional tracks that are being constructed as part of the project. Land constraints in this area will not permit the footbridge to be rebuilt in the exact same location.

As part of these works the existing footbridge at West Footscray station will also be removed, as the station is being demolished and rebuilt approximately 160 metres to the west. The Rising Sun footbridge and the West Footscray station footbridge will be replaced with a new crossing at the new West Footscray station. The new crossing will include Disability Discrimination Act-compliant ramps to facilitate cross-corridor access for cyclists and pedestrians.

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It was noted through these consultation activities that there was a need to consult further with the wider community regarding the proposed removal of the Rising Sun footbridge. This information was conveyed to the Footscray-Deer Park project team following contract award on 21 December 2011.

The Footscray-Deer Park project team commenced formal consultation with stakeholders in February 2012, sending an invitation to over 5500 residents to provide feedback on the proposed removal of the Rising Sun footbridge.

Further to this, the Footscray-Deer Park project team performed pedestrian counts on the Rising Sun footbridge and the West Footscray station footbridge in January and February 2012, and again in April 2012 to understand the usage of these bridges.

The feedback you have collected from your constituents regarding the proposed removal of the Rising Sun footbridge was also passed on to the Footscray-Deer Park project team.

The Footscray-Deer Park project team is currently discussing its findings with Maribyrnong City Council to ensure that the outcomes are consistent with council's master planning process.

The Footscray-Deer Park project team will provide a summary of these findings to the wider community in the near future.

Project Respect: funding

Raised with: Minister for Women's Affairs

Raised by: Ms Mikakos

Raised on: 28 March 2012

REPLY:

I am aware of the work of Project Respect to support women in the sex industry, including women trafficked to Australia.

People trafficking is a complex, multifaceted crime with no single solution.

On 8 December 2011 the Victorian coalition government released its response to the Inquiry into People Trafficking for Sex Work, supporting the vast majority of the relevant recommendations. The inquiry's recommendations were carefully reviewed in tandem with implementing election commitments related to sex work.

Our dedicated responses within this context, each of which includes measures aimed at stamping out illegal and criminal behaviour in Victoria's sex work industry, include:

- the implementation of reforms to protect workers in the sex industry through the Sex Work and Other Acts Amendment Act 2011;
- the commitment of funding to provide additional support to workers in the sex industry through the Pathways to Exit program; and
- the establishment of the Victoria Sex Industry Strategic Management Group to oversee a multiagency enforcement program.

The Victorian government is currently developing a three-year action plan to address all forms of violence against women and their children.

In January 2012 we released a consultation framework setting out our proposed directions and actions in terms of prevention, early intervention and response in relation to family violence and sexual assault, as well as other forms of violence against women such as trafficking.

The feedback we received from individuals and organisations will inform the finalisation of the action plan and the government's future investment to address the trafficking of women and violence against women more broadly.

Youth: body image

Raised with: Minister for Youth Affairs

Raised by: Ms Mikakos

Raised on: 29 March 2012

REPLY:

Funding for the previous government's 'Positive Body Image' lapsed on 30 June 2010 prior to the change of government. The previous Labor government failed to provide new funding to tackle this important issue.

In contrast, the coalition government takes the issue of body image very seriously and is working closely with the sector and young Victorians to achieve positive outcomes on this issue.

Over one-third of young Victorians surveyed in 2011 rated body image in their top three issues of concern.

Body image has rated consistently as a top issue of concern for young Victorians over a number of years. However, despite there being strong social awareness of this issue, there is minimal understanding of prevention and causes.

This has informed the coalition government's commonsense approach to tackling this important issue, which is now under the responsibilities of the Department of Health.

The Minister for Mental Health has announced a \$104.8 million mental health initiative that will address issues including the rising incidence of eating disorders and body image concerns amongst young Victorians.

This includes funding for headspace eating disorders programs, an eating disorders plan, mental health workforce strategy, and a new expert taskforce on eating disorders chaired by the member for Evelyn.

The Minister for Education has also announced funding of \$300 000 to the Queen Victoria Women's Centre (QVWC) to develop the 'SeeMe online' body image program that will be rolled out to schools across the state.

After 11 years of Labor's waste and mismanagement, this government is delivering a responsible budget whilst continuing to tackle important issues for Victorians.

Shire of Melton: early childhood infrastructure

Raised with: Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development

Raised by: Ms Tierney

Raised on: 19 April 2012

REPLY:

I am informed as follows:

There was significant interest in the first round of the children's facilities capital program which included \$26 million in state and national partnership funding, \$4.4 million in internal departmental funds, as well as funds brought forward from the subsequent \$50 million grant round, which remains open.

Successful centres in the growing Melton region were:

- Botanica Springs Children's and Community Centre at Melton with a grant of \$1.5 million for a \$5.1 million project that will provide an integrated approach to service delivery that maximises opportunities, inclusion and participation of all children and families in the area.
- Parkwood Green Children's and Community Centre Hillside with a \$300 000 grant for an \$800 000 project to deliver an additional kindergarten room and foyer, adjoining the existing centre.
- Kororoit Creek Early Learning Centre Burnside Heights with a \$300 000 grant for a \$300 000 project to convert the current community room into a third kindergarten room.

This government is committed to increasing access to high-quality early childhood services throughout Melton.

Department of Premier and Cabinet: regional offices

Raised with: Premier

Raised by: Mr Lenders

Raised on: 22 May 2012

REPLY:

The government is committed to open Department of Premier and Cabinet regional offices in regional Victoria.

The existing Department of Premier and Cabinet regional offices in Ballarat and Bendigo have been extended for a further 12 months.

The government will consider the opening of additional regional offices as part of the 2013–14 budget.

Wallan-Kilmore bypass: route

Raised with: Minister for Roads

Raised by: Ms Broad

Raised on: 22 May 2012

REPLY:

The coalition government is delivering on its promise for a bypass between the Hume Freeway and a connection to the Northern Highway at a point to the north of the Kilmore township.

The community consultation group is providing assistance and support to VicRoads by presenting community views and feedback through the planning investigation stage.

At times, VicRoads will present information to the community consultation group that is of a draft or preliminary nature, so that valuable feedback can be gained from the group prior to finalising or verifying the information. Whilst this information is being finalised, it is sometimes necessary to request temporary confidentiality from the group members on matters of a sensitive nature.

VicRoads has requested this confidentiality to enable further refinement of the information and to allow consultation in the first instance with affected landowners, prior to details being released to the broader community. I understand that there are concerns amongst those residents potentially affected by the options being considered, however it is important that correct information is provided to these residents to limit any further unwarranted or unnecessary concern.

All information presented to the group will be made available to affected landowners and the broader community.

I understand that the reasoning for this confidentiality has been discussed and understood by the group members and was part of the terms of reference, to which each of the group members agreed.

The formal planning approval process required for the bypass has not yet been determined. I understand that VicRoads has sought advice from the Department of Planning and Community Development and that the final approval process will be determined following the department's consideration of the findings of the current planning investigations.

Although the formal planning approval process has not been determined or agreed at this time, the approval process will provide for review by an independent planning panel or advisory committee and the opportunity for the community to make submissions.

Pioneer Road, Waurin Ponds: upgrade

Raised with: Minister for Roads

Raised by: Ms Tierney

Raised on: 23 May 2012

REPLY:

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

The Victorian coalition government committed \$5 million as part of the 2011–12 and 2012–13 budgets to fund stage 1 of the upgrading of Pioneer Road from the Princes Highway to the southern access point to the Waurin Ponds shopping centre. The stage 1 works will address the major community concern of congestion, through the upgrading of the intersection of Pioneer Road with the Princes Highway and the carriageway duplication of the section of Pioneer Road. These works will increase road capacity, relieve congestion and improve access to the Waurin Ponds shopping centre and the Leisurelink Aquatic Centre. The project will improve road safety, enhance pedestrian movements and assist economic development in the area.

Some service relocation works have commenced on site and road construction works will be commencing soon and the project will be completed in early 2013.

Cooper Street–Yale Drive, Epping: traffic lights

Raised with: Minister for Roads

Raised by: Mr Elasmar

Raised on: 23 May 2012

REPLY:

The intersection of Cooper Street/Yale Drive has had seven reported casualty crashes in the five-year period ending December 2011. Analysis shows that the predominant crash trend involves right turning movements entering and exiting Yale Drive. VicRoads has been investigating treatment options to address the safety issue, which include full or partial closure of the median opening or the installation of traffic signals.

VicRoads' SmartRoads road use hierarchy identifies Cooper Street as a both a preferred traffic route and a bus priority route. In considering improvements to the Cooper Street/Yale Drive intersection, VicRoads is guided by its SmartRoads principles and design tools such as the Austroads' access management principles. These principles seek to provide a balance between the needs of through traffic and local traffic. Any improvements to the intersection, including traffic signals, will need to be considered in the above context.

VicRoads has worked with the City of Whittlesea on developing council's *Cooper Street Employment Area Development Plan*, which proposes a connected network of arterial and local roads to support the development. This plan includes local east–west roads to connect Yale Drive with Willandra Drive and the future Edgars Road extension. VicRoads considers these northern links as essential to the function of Yale Drive and will be seeking to work with the City of Whittlesea to further review the plans for the area.

VicRoads will also liaise with the council as it further develops its road safety proposal for Yale Drive and intends to seek feedback from the local community and businesses on its preferred option.

Potato growers: contract negotiations

Raised with: Minister for Agriculture and Food Security

Raised by: Mr Ramsay

Raised on: 24 May 2012

REPLY:

I refer to the matter you raised in the Legislative Council during the adjournment debate on 24 May 2012 regarding potato farmers in Ballarat.

The McCain Foods factory at Ballarat, and its supporting agricultural industries, area significant generator of economic activity, wealth and employment for Victoria. Like others in the food processing sector in Australia, ensuring that the Ballarat processing potato sector remains competitive and viable in the future is an ongoing challenge for all players in the supply chain.

The coalition government is committed to supporting food and fibre production in Victoria. In mid-2011, I requested my department to work with relevant industry stakeholders to identify key competitiveness factors affecting potato growers in the Ballarat region, and how these might be addressed. This project was agreed coming out of discussions with both McCain's and local potato growers last year.

The resulting 'Ballarat Processing Potato Growers Competitiveness Project' is now well under way. I will ask the Department of Primary Industries to discuss the outcomes of the project with both McCain's and potato growers.

Thank you for raising this matter with me.

Disability services: Ballarat student

Raised with: Minister for Community Services

Raised by: Ms Pulford

Raised on: 24 May 2012

REPLY:

I would like to thank Ms Pulford for representing the concerns and aspirations of her constituent. With the support of her mother, this young woman has obviously worked hard to achieve excellent academic results to enable her to continue her studies at university.

I am informed that the young woman has recently indicated she will use her individualised support funding to explore education, transport and alternate living arrangements within Melbourne. A case manager is supporting the family to explore the young woman's goal to enrol in one university subject from June 2012.

Departmental staff have requested that the case manager liaise with the university about its capacity to extend on-campus support to the young woman in addition to the scribe you referred to when you raised this issue in early May 2012.

The Victorian government is committed to supporting Victorians to participate economically and socially in the community. The government's Futures for Young Adults (FFYA) program provides support to young people with a disability to make the transition from school to adult life through employment, education and further training assistance. The DHS regional office and a local case management service are working with the young woman to explore the optimal use of her support package funding.

Despite the continued investment in disability services the demand for disability supports remains very high. This is why the government is continuing to support work on the establishment of a national disability insurance scheme.

Mental health: advice line

Raised with: Minister for Mental Health

Raised by: Mr Eideh

Raised on: 24 May 2012

REPLY:

The government is committed to providing a quality response to people in the community who are seeking mental health advice.

There are a number of ways that people can seek advice, information and referral for general and mental health issues in Victoria. These include immediate, expert health advice from NURSE-ON-CALL, contacting a local hospital or mental health service, calling a telephone assistance line, or calling triple zero in case of an emergency. Each of these options can now be accessed via a single web page at <http://www.health.vic.gov.au/mentalhealthadvice/>. People who might continue to contact the Mental Health Advice Line will have access to several options, including the option to transfer to NURSE-ON-CALL for health advice.

The Victorian government has also committed an additional \$1m to expand existing telephone lines, including Lifeline and Griefline, and continues to fund a number of advice lines such as SANE, beyondblue and mental health triage services to which you refer. This also includes the ARAFEMI Carer Helpline, which provides free, confidential information, support and referral for family, carers, and friends of people with a mental illness. The service operates on weekdays from 9.00 a.m.–5.00 p.m., and can be accessed on 1300 550 265 or via the web at <http://www.arafemi.org.au/family-support/telephone-helpline.html>.

Area mental health services have a responsibility to provide mental health information and advice, and they will continue to respond to calls from Victorians and to recognise the services provided by SANE and beyondblue. The

government has provided an additional \$2.5 million to enhance triage in recognition of this important role in responding to people who require a mental health service.

Information collected by the Mental Health Advice Line and knowledge gained through the operation of this service will be used to inform future planning and service improvement work to improve responses to people experiencing a psychiatric crisis.

Wattletree Road bridge: rebuilding

Raised with: Minister for Roads

Raised by: Mrs Kronberg

Raised on: 24 May 2012

REPLY:

VicRoads considered six alignment options during the development stage of the project. The alignment options are restricted by the highly constrained environment including the rail crossing, side roads and significant vegetation. The approved alignment adopted has the least impact on the environment, while complying with current road safety standards and minimises the removal of significant trees as agreed by the Nillumbik Shire Council.

The contractor engaged to complete the construction of the new Wattletree Road Bridge is required to submit an environmental and tree management plan detailing measures to be undertaken by the contractor to protect and re-establish vegetation during and post completion of the works. These requirements have been stipulated and agreed by VicRoads and the Nillumbik Shire Council.

VicRoads will also offset vegetation loss through a combination of measures agreed with the Nillumbik Shire Council, which include replanting, revegetation and protection of significant large trees.

Wattletree Road will be realigned from 75m north of Progress Road to the new bridge. This will enable the nature strip to be widened from the start of the realignment to Progress Road and will provide additional space between users of the footpath and the road.

The new alignment will allow for improvements at the Progress Road intersection, which include improved sight lines for motorists exiting Progress Road, the installation of additional pedestrian refuge islands, new pram crossings and pedestrian fencing along a section of the footpath just north of the intersection.

VicRoads has undertaken ongoing consultation with the Nillumbik Shire Council and local community groups throughout the detailed design phase of the project. VicRoads has given consideration to the natural surroundings of the bridge, the finished colour, and structural elements including piers, abutments and earth retaining walls. VicRoads has also considered the development of the landscape and site rehabilitation plan during the detailed design phase of the project.

VicRoads has amended the pier design from square column to the more slender round column to reduce the visual impact on the surrounding environment following consultation with the council and community groups.

VicRoads has recently received correspondence from the Nillumbik Shire Council and Eltham Gateway Action Group accepting the proposed colours to be used on the bridge. The proposed colours have been specified from the Dulux colour palette and comprise of Brood, Aumbry and Linnet and are generally in muted tones that allow the bridge to blend into the surrounding environment.

Construction of the new bridge is expected to commence in the coming months.

Food and fibre production: western Victoria

Raised with: Minister for Agriculture and Food Security

Raised by: Mr O'Brien

Raised on: 24 May 2012

REPLY:

I refer to the matter you raised during the adjournment debate in the Legislative Council on 24 May 2012 relating to food and fibre producers in Western Victoria.

The agricultural sector and in particular the red meat sector is critical to the economies of regional and rural Victoria. The red meat sector and in particular the lamb industry is a significant generator of economic activity, wealth and employment for Victoria's south-west region and there is an outstanding opportunity to grow production of lamb in this region over the next 20 years.

The Department of Primary Industries (DPI) implements a number of research programs and provides a range of services to the beef and sheep industries to support their development and provide support for an internationally competitive red meat sector to thrive in Victoria.

In fact, a substantial component of the \$61.4 million Growing Food and Fibre initiative announced in the 2012–13 budget has been allocated to improving the productivity and profitability of the Victorian red meat (lamb and beef) sector. Growing Food and Fibre invests \$8.95 million in targeted red meat research and development and extension or service delivery over the next four years. One of the key deliverables in this investment package is the establishment of a new National (Southern) Red Meat Innovation Centre in Hamilton which will help support the sector in increasing productivity and profitability for the lamb industry in particular.

Growing Food and Fibre further seeks to boost productivity and profitability in Victoria's red meat industries by improving livestock fertility and lamb survival rates, increasing the adoption of traceability and improved feedback systems, and establishing on-farm participatory research and demonstration trials to apply research findings in a commercial environment in collaboration with leading producers.

I welcome your invitation to meet with local lamb producers to discuss the issues relevant to sheep and lamb producers in the south-west and the ways in which the Victorian coalition government through DPI is assisting sheep producers to increase productivity and profitability.

Thank you for raising this matter with me.

St Kilda pier: upgrade

Raised with: Minister for Ports

Raised by: Mrs Coote

Raised on: 5 June 2012

REPLY:

As Ms Coote noted, I have met with her, the member for Albert Park and representatives from Parks Victoria and the City of Port Phillip regarding St Kilda pier. I will continue to work closely with the City of Port Phillip to ensure that the proposed works progress as efficiently and quickly as possible.

Mount Rowan Equestrian Centre: training courses

Raised with: Minister for Racing

Raised by: Hon. M. P. Pakula

Raised on: 5 June 2012

REPLY:

The provision of training for participants in the racing industry, across all three codes, is vital to the growth of the industry.

Discussions between training providers, including the University of Ballarat, and the three codes to bring about the best possible outcomes for the provision of industry training into the future are continuing.

I was pleased to recently join with representatives of Harness Racing Victoria and the Bendigo Harness Racing Training Centre to announce nearly \$100 000 in funding for the construction of new infrastructure at Tabcorp Park Melton to cater for the growth the training centre.

The Bendigo Harness Racing Training Centre is becoming increasingly popular, attracting students from right across Victoria. It has proven to be a successful institution for developing quality people for the harness racing and breeding industry.

Currently it mostly operates out of Bendigo, however, this new infrastructure will allow it to create a satellite campus at Melton and also give students from around the state the opportunity to get hands-on experience dealing with horses at the state's premier racing venue.

Aboriginals: juvenile justice system

Raised with: Minister for Community Services

Raised by: Ms Mikakos

Raised on: 5 June 2012

REPLY:

Young Aboriginal people are overrepresented in the juvenile justice system, in all states and territories. In Victoria, an Aboriginal young person aged 10–17 years is 12 times as likely to be under community-based supervision on an average day and 22 times more likely to be in detention than a non-Aboriginal person.

This government is investing \$2.6m annually, to tackle the overrepresentation of Aboriginal people in Victoria's youth justice system.

Up to 460 young people on youth justice orders or at risk of entering the youth justice system will have access to a range of diversion and rehabilitation programs including:

- Koori Youth Justice Program — assists Aboriginal people involved with the youth justice system to meet the conditions of these orders and is delivered by community organisations;
- Koori Intensive Bail Support Program — aims to reduce the number of Aboriginal offenders who are detained prior to sentencing and is delivered by youth justice case workers;
- Koori Intensive Pre and Post Release Support Program — assists Aboriginal detainees to reintegrate back into their communities and is delivered by youth justice case workers;
- Koori Early School Leavers and Youth Employment Program — delivered by community organisations and designed to divert young people from the youth justice system by focusing on the key risk factors for young offenders, particularly lack of engagement with school;

- Youth Justice Mental Health Initiative — aims to improve access by young offenders to an appropriate level of mental health treatment and care. The initiative comprises six youth mental health clinicians, co-located with youth justice community units and Parkville youth justice precinct, including one Aboriginal clinician.

It is important that Aboriginal people involved with the youth justice system are provided with culturally specific and accessible rehabilitation programs that target offending. Programs that reconnect Aboriginal people to culture, identity and country are also critically important to reduce offending.

Young Aboriginal people in custody will also benefit from the new interim school that commenced in term one 2012 at the Parkville precinct. The introduction of the school, complemented by the continuation of TAFE and programs provision, has greatly expanded education opportunities for young people at Parkville, who are now completing 25 hours per week in an enhanced curriculum.

This government's investment aligns with the directions of the Aboriginal justice agreement. All ministers with justice portfolios have attended the Aboriginal Justice Forum (AJF). I attended the AJF in Healesville in March this year and reinforced the government's commitment to Aboriginal justice initiatives.

Bannockburn: K–12 school

Raised with: Minister for Education

Raised by: Ms Tierney

Raised on: 6 June 2012

REPLY:

I am informed as follows:

The Victorian coalition government is committed to upgrading government primary and secondary schools across the state.

The government must responsibly balance and prioritise the capital needs of over 1500 government schools across the State.

The *Victorian Liberal Nationals Coalition Plan for Education* identifies a number of priority capital works projects to be funded and commenced in the first term of government. Additional schools identified for capital funding are announced in the Victorian budget.

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development has identified the long-term need for a new P–9 school in Bannockburn. Funding for planning for a new school on the recently acquired site at Bannockburn will be considered alongside the Victorian government's state capital program priorities throughout the budget planning process.

In its first two budgets, the Victorian coalition government has invested \$408 million into school capital, with an additional \$120 million going into school maintenance. This includes:

- investing \$20 million into the School Improvement Fund;
- injecting \$100 million in additional spending towards school maintenance, including \$37 million to cover maintenance and utilities costs associated with the Building the Education Revolution;
- a condition assessment audit of all government primary and secondary schools to assist with planning for future capital work and maintenance;
- record investment of over \$56 million in land acquisition to build new schools in population growth areas; and
- the single largest capital investment in special and autism schools across metropolitan and regional Victoria in over a decade.

Housing: tenant survey

Raised with: Minister for Housing

Raised by: Ms Hartland

Raised on: 6 June 2012

REPLY:

Every effort is being made to provide public housing tenants and interested members of the community with both opportunities and support to participate in the public consultation process. To this end:

- the director of housing wrote to all public housing tenants about the consultation process, how to access the discussion papers and how to provide feedback. This letter was available on the DHS website and through DHS housing offices in nine languages other than English;
- the summary of the discussion papers and feedback form have been translated into 11 languages. The translated versions of the summary papers and feedback forms are available on the Housing Framework webpage at (www.dhs.vic.gov.au or by contacting the department, or my office directly;
- eleven consultation sessions for public housing tenants and interested community members were held in metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria through June and July 2012. Information about these sessions have been advertised in local newspapers and distributed to tenant groups and the community. The dates and venues for consultation sessions have also been available on the DHS website. Interpreters have been provided where requested by tenants;
- three round table discussions with key housing stakeholders and eight consultation sessions for local service providers have been held;
- copies of a summary discussion paper and feedback forms, which included post-paid envelopes, have been available through the Housing Framework information line (the information line) — toll free 1800 148 617 — that was established to assist people who have queries regarding the discussion papers;
- to date approximately 2000 copies of each discussion paper has been sent out to interested tenants;
- tenants who require assistance to understand the content of the discussion papers and feedback form in languages other than English have been encouraged to contact the Information Line so that an interpreter can be arranged;
- tenants who are deaf or who have a speech or hearing impairment have been able to contact the National Relay Service to seek assistance (TTY/voice calls on 133 677, and the Speak & Listen service on 1300 555 727);
- tenants who have literacy barriers have been advised to contact the information line if they require assistance to understand the discussion papers;
- hard copies of the feedback forms are available for people who do not have access to the internet. These have been made available along with reply paid envelopes at all public consultation forums;
- over 1000 submissions have been received in response to the discussion papers and over 90 per cent of these are from public housing tenants.

I am confident that the consultation process has been thorough and reject the assertions made by Ms Hartland.

Breastfeeding: research program

Raised with: Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development

Raised by: Mrs Coote

Raised on: 6 June 2012

REPLY:

I am informed as follows:

Breastfeeding rates vary across Victoria and are lower amongst women from lower socioeconomic groups; with lower education and incomes; and from specific cultural groups.

In response to the National Breastfeeding Strategy endorsed by all Australian health ministers at the Australian Health Minister's Conference in November 2009, the Victorian government has funded La Trobe University \$648 000 over four years to conduct a cluster-randomised control trial to address breastfeeding rates.

The trial, called Supporting breastfeeding in Local Communities (SILC), will rigorously test community interventions to improve the maintenance of breastfeeding. The research aims to develop and evaluate two new evidence-based strategies for increasing breastfeeding maintenance in local government areas (LGAs) with breastfeeding rates lower than the Victorian state average.

For the purposes of this trial, LGAs that had breastfeeding rates, at discharge from maternity services, below the state average were invited to participate in SILC. Of the 21 eligible LGAs, 10 have now signed written agreements and been randomised into one of three arms: standard care; standard care plus additional home-based breastfeeding support visits; or additional home visits plus a drop-in centre.

Breastfeeding rates in most inner-metropolitan LGAs are generally above the state average. When the study was being designed the state average for babies either partly or fully breastfed on discharge from hospital was 86.6 per cent (DEECD MCH data 2009–10). The rate for the city of Port Phillip in the same year was 90.1 per cent. Where breastfeeding rates are already high, it would be difficult to detect any change to the rate as a result of the trial interventions.

Local government areas experiencing significant population growth such as Cardinia, Whittlesea and Wyndham have been included in the trial, and will provide valuable information regarding the impact of the interventions where there are growing numbers of new mothers.

The intervention period will run for nine months to April 2013. Once the results of the research trial are known, consideration will be given to the benefits of rolling out the two interventions across the state, including in the City of Port Phillip.

Planning: wildfire management overlays

Raised with: Minister for Planning

Raised by: Mr Lenders

Raised on: 6 June 2012

REPLY:

A question was raised with the Minister for Planning on 6 June 2012 in regard to wildfire management overlays. This matter raises issues relating to road closure and discontinuance by local councils, and as such falls within my responsibility as Minister for Local Government. I therefore provide this response to the question asked.

As a separate tier of government, councils are responsible for various matters, including the power to close or discontinue roads within the municipal district.

Such decisions of councils are subject to a public submission process, where persons may make a submission within 28 days and be heard in person in support of their written submission.

When considering whether to exercise such powers, councils are reasonably expected to consider all relevant considerations relating to the proposal.

I understand that, in this case, the Yarra Ranges Shire Council has advised my department that it has undertaken extensive consultation in conjunction with the mandated submission process, including with the Country Fire Authority, before resolving to discontinue a portion of Scott Road, Yarra Glen.

I also note that legal action has since been brought against the council in relation to this decision and, as such, the council has not proceeded to discontinue the road pending the outcome of the legal proceedings.

Given that this matter is currently the subject of legal proceedings, it would not be appropriate for me to comment further.

Higher education: Auslan programs

Raised with: Minister for Higher Education and Skills

Raised by: Ms Mikakos

Raised on: 6 June 2012

REPLY:

I am informed as follows:

Training providers, including TAFE institutes, are responsible for decisions regarding course offerings. Decisions by providers to commence or terminate courses are made on the basis of a number of factors.

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development is undertaking discussions with training providers about the continuation of Auslan courses in Victoria.

Northern Victoria Region: TAFE funding

Raised with: Minister for Higher Education and Skills

Raised by: Ms Darveniza

Raised on: 6 June 2012

REPLY:

I am informed as follows:

The government holds the TAFE sector in high regard and recognises that TAFE institutes and dual-sector universities are highly valued by learners, businesses and their communities.

The 2012–13 budget continues a high level of public investment in training and ensures funding returns to a sustainable level, providing a fairer outcome for present and future Victorian taxpayers.

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.

From 1 January 2013, all providers, whether TAFEs or privately owned, will receive the same training subsidy rates. This will create a more level playing field in VET between TAFEs and non-TAFE training providers.

It is important to note that areas of TAFE delivery strength, including trades training and training in many specialised/in shortage occupations, remain strongly supported under the revised subsidy arrangements. In 2011, 82 per cent of all training delivery in the new highest subsidy level was provided by TAFEs.

Sustainability requires some tough decisions. Some students and employers will be asked to contribute more towards the cost of training and all training providers, including the publicly owned TAFE institutes, will need to continue to innovate and be more efficient and responsive to industry training needs.

The government is working with TAFE institutes, including those within the Northern Victoria Region electorate, to adjust to the new funding arrangements.

In responding to these changes, TAFE institutes and dual sector universities are now being supported to prepare business transition plans. A TAFE transitions panel will consider these plans and prepare a roadmap that shows how TAFE providers are adapting their activities to meet the new focus of the VET sector.

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development will work with providers on options to secure ongoing delivery to meet skills needs across the state.

Kindergartens: funding

Raised with: Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development

Raised by: Mrs Petrovich

Raised on: 6 June 2012

REPLY:

I am informed as follows:

The following centres, as acknowledged by Mrs Petrovich, will receive an early facility upgrade grant as part of the 2011–12 children's facilities capital program:

Macedon Ranges Shire Council

Lady Brooks Kindergarten — \$300 000

Macedon Kindergarten — \$100 000

Woodend Kindergarten — \$300 000

Hume City Council

Sunningdale Avenue Children's Centre — \$300 000

I look forward to viewing the extensions to each of these facilities once they are completed.

Regional and rural Victoria: jobs

Raised with: Minister for Regional and Rural Development

Raised by: Mr Lenders

Raised on: 7 June 2012

REPLY:

- Economic development through the facilitation of projects and job creation is a key priority of the coalition government.
- It is entirely consistent with our focus on running the state well, which includes maintaining a budget surplus and an efficient, streamlined public service.
- The Victorian coalition government has announced a record \$5.8 billion state infrastructure spend in this year's budget to boost productivity and generate jobs across Victoria.
- The regions play a key role in the coalition government's vision to achieve balanced growth across the state.
- This was highlighted in the 2012–13 state budget with initiatives such as the \$221 million investment in regional health services estimated to generate 562 regional construction jobs (Premier, 11 May 2012).
- The government is also investing in regional Victoria through the Regional Growth Fund and a range of other programs all designed to stimulate population growth and economic activities in regional Victoria.
- Since coming into office, the coalition government has facilitated regional investment projects valued at approximately \$1.3 billion, resulting in the creation of 1394 new jobs.
- Key new facilitated jobs announcements in regional Victoria have included:
 - 45 jobs at SPC Ardmona, Shepparton facilitated by a \$4.4 million government grant to support the company's \$90 million package of improvement projects (Minister Ryan & Minister Dalla-Riva, 13 June 2012);
 - 98 direct jobs, 35 indirect jobs and 18 construction jobs are expected to be facilitated by a grant to the Central Goldfields Council to develop two new industrial sites in Carisbrook (Damian Drum, 25 May 2012);
 - 40 jobs at Parker Hannifin's consolidated hydraulic hose and fitting manufacturing operations in Wodonga (Minister Dalla-Riva, 30 March 2012);
 - 105 jobs as a result of an expansion of Hazeldene's chicken processing plant at Lockwood (Damian Drum, 10 February 2012);
 - 40 jobs at four manufacturing companies (Manna Farms, Seven Fields, Zilzie Wines, Global Rotomoulding) in Loddon Mallee funded from the Business Flood Recovery Fund (*Sunraysia Daily*, 5 May 2012).
- Other recent media announcements of regional jobs and investment include:
 - 735 jobs will be created as a result of the construction of the new \$630 million Bendigo Hospital (Minister Davis, 31 May 2012);
 - 330 construction jobs in Geelong from infrastructure projects funding in the 2012–13 state budget:
 - 211 jobs in the expansion of Geelong Hospital;
 - 45 jobs in constructing a new 24-hour police and SES station;
 - 45 jobs in planning and establishing a new train station at Grovedale;
 - up to 20 jobs in redeveloping Northern Bay College;
 - up to 8 jobs in work on the Geelong Performing Arts Centre (Minister Wells, 10 May 2012).

- Up to 1000 jobs during construction of the University of Ballarat Technology Park expansion, and 1600 jobs on site once completed (Minister Guy, Minister Rich-Phillips, 4 May 2012);
- 5600 jobs will be created directly or indirectly as a result of the regional rail link project (Premier, 8 June 2012);
- The effect of these measures is reflected in the regional unemployment rate, which, according to the ABS, declined from 6.3 per cent in March to 4.9 per cent in May 2012.
- Nonetheless, the Baillieu government also takes all job losses seriously across the state. When job losses occur, the Department of Business and Innovation works closely with companies and with local councils to ensure a coordinated approach to ensure that retrenched employees are aware of available assistance.
- The instances of public sector job losses in regional Victoria are dramatically overstated by the opposition. For example, the decision to close seven small Department of Primary Industries (DPI) offices will not result in any job losses and the savings from these office consolidations are being reinvested back into research and development and extension, employing skilled DPI staff and delivering services to agriculture to keep the sector strong.

War memorabilia: conservation

Raised with: Minister for Veterans' Affairs

Raised by: Mrs Coote

Raised on: 7 June 2012

REPLY:

The Victorian government is committed to honouring the service of our veterans by ensuring that the state's war-related heritage collections are appropriately preserved. As Victoria's veteran population ages, it is more important than ever to look after this heritage for future generations.

Our veterans heritage workshops provide community volunteers with practical skills and knowledge to preserve their war-related heritage. These workshops are free one-day events designed to strengthen the skills of collection custodians, such as RSL memorabilia officers and volunteers from local historical societies.

Since 2010 there have been three workshops in Melbourne and two in regional Victoria (in Sale and Mildura). To date over 250 community volunteers have participated. This demonstrates the strong interest and growing concern about the condition of local war memorabilia collections, especially as we approach the Anzac Centenary 2014–18.

A diverse range of participants attend these workshops. They are open to representatives from ex-service organisations and volunteers from community museums and military heritage groups. Volunteers from the Shrine of Remembrance are welcome to attend these workshops to benefit from this important training to protect Victoria's war-related heritage.

The Victorian government is proud to continue this initiative that delivers important skills and supports the efforts of enthusiastic communities across the state to learn more about preserving the legacy of our veterans and passing on their history to a new generation. It is anticipated that another regional workshop will be held later in 2012.

School buses: Rupanyup–Murtoa–Minyip service

Raised with: Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development

Raised by: Ms Mikakos

Raised on: 7 June 2012

REPLY:

I am informed as follows:

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) funded the Wimmera early years transport support project report. The report has been referred to the Department of Transport (DoT) and will be used by both DEECD and DoT to inform future planning for the delivery of transport for children and young people in rural regions.

Responsibilities for bus services do not fall within the portfolio of early childhood development.

Mildura Base Hospital: services

Raised with: Minister for Health

Raised by: Mr Drum

Raised on: 7 June 2012

REPLY:

Mildura Base Hospital operates as public-private partnership. Under the terms of the services agreement with the hospital operator, a community advisory board, appointed by state, provides a mechanism for local community members to have input to hospital management.

The board comprises the hospital CEO and seven to nine community members, including one place designated for a health professional and one for a member of the Koori community.

The Department of Health recently called for applications from community members who are interested in appointment to the board. Advertisements appeared in the *Sunraysia Daily* on 26 May and 2 June 2012.

Applications close on Friday 22 June 2012.

Teachers: enterprise bargaining

Raised with: Minister for Education

Raised by: Mr Eideh

Raised on: 7 June 2012

REPLY:

I am informed as follows:

The Victorian government is addressing the population growth in Melbourne's west. The 2011–12 Victorian budget invested \$10 million for the new Point Cook South East P–9 College and \$10 million for the new Tarnet Central P–9 College as part of the Victorian government's state capital program in Melbourne's western metropolitan growth areas.

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development is working closely with the Growth Areas Authority and the municipalities of Melton and Wyndham to ensure sufficient new school sites are set aside for education provision purposes within precinct structure plans to cater for the projected growth in these areas.

Department of Primary Industries: regional offices

Raised with: Minister for Agriculture and Food Security

Raised by: Ms Tierney

Raised on: 7 June 2012

REPLY:

I refer to the matter you raised in the Legislative Council during the adjournment debate on 7 June 2012 in relation to the consolidation of Department of Primary Industries (DPI) work sites.

The May 2012 budget invested a total of \$61.4 million over four years for the Growing Food and Fibre initiative, which is being invested in research and development and extension priorities and into biosecurity capacity to build the productivity and profitability of Victoria's agricultural sector.

What you request would require a consequent reduction in funds that have been budgeted towards research and development priorities supporting the dairy, grains, red meat and horticulture sectors.

Thank you for raising this matter with me.

Libraries: The Fall of Singapore

Raised with: Minister for Local Government

Raised by: Mrs Coote

Raised on: 19 June 2012

REPLY:

I thank the member for Southern Metropolitan for raising this matter, and for bringing my attention to this particular book, *The Fall of Singapore — 90 Days — November 1941–February 1942*, by Robin and Justin Corfield.

Public libraries across the state offer Victorians a wide range of services, including access to book collections for academic research or informal reading. The provision and delivery of library services, including the management of collections and the acquisition of materials, is the responsibility of individual councils and regional library corporations.

For its part, the Victorian government is committed to supporting local government in providing high-quality public library services. In 2012–13, more than \$36.8 million will be provided to councils and regional library corporations to support the operation of library services as part of the public libraries funding program. This is in addition to \$17.2 million being provided over four years under the Living Libraries Infrastructure program to modernise existing buildings and build new libraries across Victoria.

I commend you for bringing my attention to this book, and for demonstrating your enthusiasm and support for the array of resources and services available to all Victorians through our public libraries.

Higher education: TAFE information session

Raised with: Minister for Higher Education and Skills

Raised by: Mrs Peulich

Raised on: 19 June 2012

REPLY:

I am informed as follows:

The quality of the VET sector and the professionalism of its training workforce is an area of priority for this government.

I would be willing to give further consideration to the experience of the councillor that you have brought to my attention. I invite you to provide me with more information regarding this matter and the details of the relevant TAFE so that I may consider the most appropriate course of action.

Schools: education maintenance allowance**Raised with: Minister for Education****Raised by: Ms Darveniza****Raised on: 19 June 2012****REPLY:**

I am informed as follows:

The education maintenance allowance (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 school children.

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 commonwealth 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.

Schools: Officer**Raised with: Minister for Education****Raised by: Mr O'Donohue****Raised on: 19 June 2012****REPLY:**

I am informed as follows:

I am pleased to note you have organised a community information session with our parliamentary colleagues Mr Brad Battin, member for Gembrook, and Mr Ken Smith, member for Bass, on Thursday, 26 July 2012 at the Cardinia Cultural Centre, Lakeside Boulevard, Pakenham, from 6.30 p.m. to 8.00 p.m.

I understand the forum is intended to provide the local community with an update regarding the Officer specialist school including tendering process, program and construction timeline as well as information regarding the planning process for the Officer Secondary College.

I am advised Peter Greenwell, regional director, southern metropolitan region, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, and Wayne Stephens, principal architect, ClarkeHopkinsClarke.

Industry training advisory boards: funding

Raised with: Minister for Higher Education and Skills

Raised by: Ms Tierney

Raised on: 19 June 2012

REPLY:

I am informed as follows:

The Boston Consulting Group undertook an independent review of Victoria's existing industry advisory arrangements. It found that industry training advisory bodies (ITABs) and the Victorian Skills Commission were no longer fit for purpose and that a new model was required to support industry to drive the training market to meet industry needs.

The Victorian government's new model will increase industry's voice in the training market by strengthening direct consultation between industry and government, and fostering direct relationships between businesses and training providers.

At least six ITABs have indicated that they will continue with industry support. These industry sectors will be in a strong position to articulate industry skill needs, facilitate career paths for all employees and support industry in its engagement with the training market. The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development is working directly with other industry sectors to establish similar arrangements.

The department will consult with stakeholders identified by industry through employer consultation, portfolio industry consultation, and desktop research using a range of sources and internal departmental data. This consultation will occur in metropolitan areas and regionally through joint work with Department of Business and Innovation.

The government is establishing an Industry Skills Consultative Committee consisting of 12 industry leaders. It will auspice working groups with representatives from industry with specific knowledge, and host an annual Industry Skills Conference that will engage representatives from industry, enterprises, unions, training providers and interested community leaders.

Penshurst Football Netball Club: funding

Raised with: Minister for Sport and Recreation

Raised by: Mr O'Brien

Raised on: 19 June 2012

REPLY:

I refer to your adjournment debate question raised on 19 June 2012 in the Legislative Council seeking funding for the Penshurst Football Netball Club to upgrade the netball courts to Netball Australia standards.

On Friday 27 June 2012, I announced that Southern Grampians Shire Council has been successful in their application to secure \$70 000 for the project from the country football netball program.

Cycling: Federation Trail

Raised with: Minister for Roads

Raised by: Ms Hartland

Raised on: 19 June 2012

REPLY:

VicRoads has investigated alternative route options to provide a link from the existing path east of Millers Road to Hyde Street/Douglas Parade. VicRoads has sought feedback for these options from stakeholders and is currently assessing the options.

Girl Guides Victoria: academy

Raised with: Minister for Youth Affairs

Raised by: Mrs Coote

Raised on: 20 June 2012

REPLY:

I am writing in response to the adjournment debate action item you raised in the Legislative Council on 20 June 2012 regarding the Girl Guides Victoria Academy.

The Victorian government's vision is for all young Victorians to experience healthy, active and fulfilling lives and have the opportunity to achieve their full potential, participate in the workforce and be involved in their community.

For this reason we are pleased to provide funding of \$280 000 to Girl Guides Victoria to support the development and implementation of a volunteer training and multicultural inclusion program.

As an organisation, girl guides has always opened its doors to young people from all across Victoria, regardless of socioeconomic or cultural background. This funding will build upon the organisation's inclusive approach.

Volunteers, including those from Southern Metropolitan Region, will have the opportunity to participate in nationally accredited training programs delivered through the Girl Guides Academy. Successful completion of this training will provide volunteers with recognition through certificates as well as valuable skills to assist girl guides programs today and into the future.

In addition, graduate volunteers of the academy will also receive recognition for their achievements through Youth Central, the Victorian government's website for young people.

I look forward to continuing to work with Girl Guides Victoria on this very important initiative.

Frankston Primary School: refurbishment

Raised with: Minister for Education

Raised by: Mr Tarlamis

Raised on: 20 June 2012

REPLY:

I am informed as follows:

The Victorian coalition government is committed to upgrading government primary and secondary schools across the state. However, the government must responsibly balance and prioritise the capital needs of over 1500 government schools in Victoria.

The capital needs of all schools will be considered throughout state budget processes and when determining future priorities for the state government's capital works program.

If the principal of Frankston Primary School believes that the school has urgent maintenance or safety issues requiring rectification works the cost of which exceeds the school's available funds, he should contact the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development's southern metropolitan regional office to have the matter investigated.

The department will continue to work closely with Frankston Primary School on its future plans for capital improvements.

Horsham College: redevelopment

Raised with: Minister for Education

Raised by: Ms Tierney

Raised on: 20 June 2012

REPLY:

I am informed as follows:

The Victorian coalition government is committed to upgrading government primary and secondary schools across the state.

The government must responsibly balance and prioritise the capital needs of over 1500 government schools across the state.

The *Victorian Liberal Nationals Coalition Plan for Education* identifies a number of priority capital works projects to be funded and commenced in the first term of government. Additional schools identified for capital funding are announced in the Victorian budget.

I am pleased to have visited Horsham College on 22 February 2012 with our parliamentary colleague the Hon. Hugh Delahunty, MP, Member for Lowan, at his invitation, to meet with school representatives to discuss the school's capital needs.

The department will continue to work closely with Horsham College on its planning for future capital improvements.

Woodend Primary School: maintenance

Raised with: Minister for Education

Raised by: Mrs Petrovich

Raised on: 20 June 2012

REPLY:

I am informed as follows:

The Victorian coalition government has increased funding for school maintenance by \$100 million over four years. The new funding will go towards much needed maintenance works including fixing floors, roofs, grounds and painting. This funding will also support schools with the running costs of buildings built under the commonwealth government's Building the Education Revolution and Trade Training Centres in Schools programs.

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development is finalising a complete audit of the maintenance needs of all Victorian government schools, which will assist schools in managing their buildings and prioritising maintenance issues. This information will be available to schools in the coming months.

Once these audit results are available I am advised that the department will be providing advice to schools on their audit results and staff will work with schools to assist them in addressing the issues raised.

Funding for planned and unplanned maintenance works is distributed directly to schools via the student resource package. If a school has urgent maintenance or repair issues, beyond their budget capacity, they are encouraged to contact their departmental regional office for assistance or advice.

High Street, Northcote: tram zone signage

Raised with: Minister for Roads

Raised by: Mr Elasmarr

Raised on: 20 June 2012

REPLY:

VicRoads has been monitoring tram and traffic operations at the new tram stops on High Street, Northcote. Additional line marking and pavement reflectors have been installed by VicRoads at the two tram stops, between Separation Street and Clarke Street, to improve delineation.

VicRoads and the Darebin City Council officers recently inspected the tram stops.

VicRoads and the council have agreed to the installation of flexible bollards and additional pavement chevron markings at the tram stops to further improve delineation. These improvement works will be carried out by VicRoads in July 2012.

I am advised that that the council will attend to the trees that are obscuring traffic signs. VicRoads and the council do not consider the installation of additional traffic signs to be necessary.

Roads: Western Victoria Region

Raised with: Minister for Roads

Raised by: Mr Ramsay

Raised on: 21 June 2012

REPLY:

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

The duplication of the Princes Highway between Winchelsea and Colac is a project that is currently in the planning stages, which includes environmental studies, property surveys and concept designs.

Community consultation with property owners potentially affected by land acquisition has also commenced. Information from this consultation is being considered in the development of concept designs for the project.

This project, in combination with the Princes Highway duplication from Waurn Ponds to Winchelsea, will significantly improve access for road freight, tourism and farming and improve regional development from Geelong to the South Australian border.

VicRoads met with the local community and key stakeholders during May 2012, to obtain feedback on the possible options for new access into Bacchus Marsh from the Western Freeway. The consultation period closed on 8 June 2012.

VicRoads is currently undertaking a comprehensive assessment of all options against a set of criteria, including long term planning needs for the future development of Bacchus Marsh, transport efficiency, road safety and environmental considerations.

VicRoads representatives met with Mr Frank Ruffo and Mr Jay Beshara of Tripod Farmers on 3 May 2012, to discuss their issues and concerns on possible options.

AED Legal Centre: funding

Raised with: Minister for Community Services

Raised by: Ms Pulford

Raised on: 21 June 2012

REPLY:

The Association of Employees with Disability's Legal Centre is funded by the Australian government.

I encourage you to raise this matter with the Honourable Jenny Macklin, MP, Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and Minister for Disability Reform.

City of Kingston: councillor conduct

Raised with: Minister for Local Government

Raised by: Mrs Peulich

Raised on: 21 June 2012

REPLY:

I thank the member for South Eastern Metropolitan for her question.

The Kingston City Council has written to my department requesting clarification on whether notices produced by Cr Rosemary West and Cr Trevor Shewan from the Kingston City Council advising of ward meetings were authorised in accordance with the Local Government Act 1989.

I am advised that local government investigations and compliance inspectorate (the inspectorate) is investigating this matter and I will be advised of the outcome in due course.

The member raised the issues of an apprehension of bias and a possible conflict of interest at the council. On the first issue, a person who considers they have been denied procedural fairness in relation to a council decision affecting their rights and interests, on the basis that a councillor had prejudged the issue, may be able to bring legal proceedings against the council. The court may subsequently render the council's decision on the issue unlawful.

Secondly, if someone has evidence of a breach of the Local Government Act by a councillor or any other person, they are encouraged to write to the inspectorate about their allegation.

I also encourage any council to take appropriate measures, where necessary, to improve their governance arrangements and assist councillors in carrying out their duties.

International Student Legal Advice Clinic: funding

Raised with: Attorney-General

Raised by: Hon. M. P. Pakula

Raised on: 21 June 2012

REPLY:

The International Student Legal Advice Clinic (ISLAC) was established in 2009 and first received government funding in 2010–11. The service is specifically designed for international students and run by the Western Suburbs Legal Service.

Funding of approximately \$250 000 for the service was initially provided by the previous government through the Department of Justice (DOJ) for one year only on a pilot basis in 2010–11.

As you will be aware, funding for community legal centres (CLCs) is administered by Victoria Legal Aid (VLA), which operates independently of government. I am pleased to be able to inform you that the VLA provided additional funding to ISLAC until 30 June 2012, and that the service will be supported for a further six months with funding from both the VLA and the Department of Business and Innovation (DBI).

DBI's involvement recognises the value and importance of student support services to the Victorian international education industry.

This six-month extension will now allow both DBI and VLA to work closely with ISLAC to undertake a broader review to identify the best nature and form for providing legal assistance for international students into the future.

It is important to consider whether opportunities exist to enhance collaboration with other student support services, and identify whether ISLAC's experience provides new ways for students to avoid legal disputes and migration issues through improved early intervention and prevention activities. Program governance arrangements for services that support international students will also be examined.

As part of the 2012 state budget, the government provided more than \$26 million per annum in additional budget funding to VLA. This came on top of the commitment of more than \$2.2 million per annum in additional funding for CLCs made in the 2011 state budget.