

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

FIFTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT

FIRST SESSION

WRITTEN ADJOURNMENT RESPONSES

21 and 22 August 2013

(Extract from book 10)

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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

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

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FIFTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT — FIRST SESSION

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¹ Resigned 26 March 2013

² Appointed 8 May 2013

³ Resigned 1 July 2013

⁴ Appointed 21 August 2013

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WRITTEN ADJOURNMENT RESPONSES

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

Wednesday, 21 August 2013

Carbon tax: schools

Raised with: Minister for Education

Raised by: Mr Finn

Raised on: 15 September 2011

REPLY:

I am informed as follows:

The Victorian Government is working to minimise the impact of price rises on schools as the result of the Commonwealth Government's carbon legislation.

On the basis of the legislated starting price of \$23 per t.CO₂-e (tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent), the cost of carbon pricing on utilities in government schools is anticipated to be \$4.2 million to \$4.7 million in the first year.

Most Victorian schools are on whole-of-government purchase contracts which have provided considerable savings in the past. The Victorian Government will continue to use these contracts to bulk purchase power for schools.

Warrnambool Alternative VCAL Education School: future

Raised with: Minister for Education

Raised by: Ms Tierney

Raised on: 21 June 2012

REPLY:

I am informed as follows:

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development undertakes a number of audit processes to ensure that all of Victoria's students, including those who are in alternative settings, are educated in facilities which are deemed appropriate for education purposes.

Audits undertaken of the WAVE program site at 72 Henna Street, Warrnambool identified a number of maintenance issues.

I am advised that the Department provided a Supplementary Maintenance grant of \$127 145 directly to Warrnambool College in October 2012 to address urgent maintenance issues.

Following significant works to the site throughout last year, the urgent issues have been rectified.

Works at the school have been finalised and building inspectors have confirmed that the maintenance improvements have made the building compliant. Once the Department receives the Essential Safety Measures Determination Certificate from the school, the necessary registration will be obtained from the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority. This will allow the VCAL program to continue at Warrnambool College.

Planning: broiler farm code

Raised with: Minister for Planning

Raised by: Mr Ramsay

Raised on: 11 October 2012

REPLY:

Broiler farms are a significant contributor to Victoria's economy. In 2009–10, the gross value of production for Victoria's poultry meat industry was \$487 million.

The Victorian Code for Broiler Farms 2009 allows consideration of separation distances around a broiler farm to extend beyond its property boundaries. The separation distances established under the Code were extensively consulted on when the Code was reviewed between 2006 and 2009.

The separation distances protect both the broiler farm industry and the development opportunities of adjacent land.

The encroachment of the separation distances over nearby land will not affect the rights to use and develop land for which no planning permit is required.

Where a planning permit is required, Councils are obliged to consider whether the site is suitable for the proposed use or development and whether the proposal is compatible with adjoining and nearby land uses. Separation distances may be used as a guide to identify locations where future sensitive uses, such as dwellings, may be adversely impacted by broiler farm emissions.

Earlier this year I released the reformed zones for consultation. No change to the planning permit requirement for broiler farms was proposed in the reformed zones released for public comment. This use will remain in Section 2 use, permit required in the farm zone.

Floods: category C recovery grants

Raised with: Minister for Police and Emergency Services

Raised by: Mr Drum

Raised on: 23 October 2012

REPLY:

This matter was directed to the previous Minister for Police and Emergency Services, the Honourable Peter Ryan MP. As I am the current Minister for Police and Emergency Services, I am responding to this Adjournment debate.

On 5 July 2013, the Commonwealth Attorney-General, the Honourable Mark Dreyfus, QC MP and the Deputy Premier of Victoria and Minister for Regional and Rural Development, the Honourable Peter Ryan MP, announced additional disaster assistance under the Category C Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements for farmers affected by severe weather events in Victoria in December 2011, February–March 2012 and June 2012. Detailed information is available at <http://www.premier.vic.gov.au/media-centre/media-releases/7269-additional-disaster-assistance-for-victorian-farmers.html>.

Thank you for your interest in this matter.

Police: stop and search receipts

Raised with: Minister for Police and Emergency Services

Raised by: Ms Pennicuik

Raised on: 14 November 2012

REPLY:

I understand that the Chief Commissioner is currently examining Victoria Police's field contacts policy. Victoria Police's field contacts policy outlines the circumstances and type of information to be recorded on police computer systems following contact with the community, including when police check a person or vehicle. The Chief Commissioner has undertaken to publish a report on the results of that examination by 31 December 2013.

I will consider whether any policy changes are necessary or desirable following publication of the Chief Commissioner's report.

Places Victoria: performance

Raised with: Minister for Planning

Raised by: Mr Tee

Raised on: 12 December 2012

REPLY:

The Government has recently taken action to improve the performance of Places Victoria by replacing the Board and will be restructuring the organisation.

There was a lapse in the response by Places Victoria to Pastor Phil Cayzer of the Turning Point Family Church but this has now been addressed and he has been contacted.

The Places Victoria contact number on the website, listed as 131 852, is now operating correctly.

On another matter, you also asked a question in Question Time on 12 December 2012 about the departure of the former Chief Executive Officer of Places Victoria, Sam Sangster.

Mr Sangster has been paid out in accordance with the conditions of his employment contract.

Right Step program: funding

Raised with: Minister for Community Services

Raised by: Ms Mikakos

Raised on: 20 February 2013

REPLY:

I acknowledge the work of all involved in Right Step and commend the initiative and interagency collaboration of the program.

I invited Youth Connect to attend a discussion on diversion, and Youth Connect submitted information about the Right Step program in a response to the government's public consultation paper *Practical Lessons, Fair Consequences — Improving Diversion for Young People in Victoria*.

The public consultation paper discussed diversion for children and young people at police and initial court contact stages of the criminal justice system. The Victorian Government sought views on possible changes to diversion options, which balanced community safety with the needs of young offenders.

The Victorian Government currently funds a number of programs aimed at diverting young people from crime. Initiatives include the Youth Support Service that works with young people at the earliest possible point, following their first contact with Victoria Police, to address the underlying causes of youth person's offending. Consistent with the objectives of Right Step program, the Youth Support Service assists young people to remain or return to school, training or gain employment, addressing drug and alcohol issues, mental health problems and engaging young people in positive activities such as sports.

The government also continues its investment in targeted programs that aim to reduce the number of young Aboriginal people in the youth justice system — notably the *Koori Intensive Bail Support Program* and *Koori Early School Leavers and Youth Employment Program*.

Other examples of the government's ongoing commitment to diverting young people away from crime include:

- Youth Justice Group Conferencing which gives young people the opportunity to make reparation for their offending;
- the Intensive Bail Supervision Program by providing intensive support and supervision to young people in the community to assist them to comply with bail conditions.
- the Youth Justice Community Support Service (YJCSS) that provides statewide targeted individualised intensive support to young people exiting custodial facilities and other high risk young people under community-based supervision. The service is designed to enhance rehabilitation and increase economic participation and social connectedness in the community for young offenders.
- the Children's Koori Court.

Planning: Magpie Street, Ballarat

Raised with: Minister for Planning

Raised by: Ms Pulford

Raised on: 21 February 2013

REPLY:

I am advised that the Golden Point Primary School site originally consisted of two parts:

- The Grant Street site, which is the location of the school buildings, now used as a community resource centre; and
- The land fronting Magpie Street, which was used by the school as an oval.

At the time of exhibition of the new format planning scheme for Ballarat the Magpie Street land was proposed to be included in a Public Park and Recreation Zone.

With the school closed and its likely sale imminent, the status of the land's ownership was discussed by the Panel in its report on the new format planning scheme for Ballarat. The Panel considered the local residents' desire to maintain the oval for public use, but recognised that this relied on a purchaser being willing to buy it for that purpose.

Ultimately the Panel considered that these were not matters that it could resolve. However given that the land was in public ownership at the time of the hearings, the Panel saw no reason to change the originally proposed Public Park and Recreation Zone.

The Panel heard submissions in November 1997. The Magpie Street site was sold to the Sovereign Hill Museums Association in December 1997. The Panel's report was completed in March 1998.

Ballarat City Council, considered the Panel report and the purchase of the Magpie Street site by the Sovereign Hill Museum Association in 19 May 1998. Council determined it would prefer that the land be zoned residential because:

- As privately owned land, the site could not be zoned Public Park and Recreation Zone, which was consistent with the Panel's discussions about not using public purpose zones on private land.
- Council was not comfortable with the land being zoned in the same way as the remainder of the Sovereign Hill tourist facility, due to concerns about residential amenity for adjoining land owners and occupiers.

Council followed the Panel's advice that if the Magpie Street oval 'was sold for development, its most appropriate zoning would be residential'. I believe that the principles expressed in the Panel's report were addressed by Council in its decision to request that the land be zoned residential.

Canning–Princes streets, Carlton: safety

Raised with: Minister for Police and Emergency Services

Raised by: Mr Barber

Raised on: 6 March 2013

REPLY:

This Adjournment Debate was directed to the previous Minister for Police and Emergency Services, the Honourable Peter Ryan MP. As I am the current Minister for Police and Emergency Services, I am responding to this adjournment debate.

Victoria's new Road Safety Strategy 2013–2022, which will drive the next decade of road safety, includes a four year action plan that identifies priorities and new measures across 14 key areas, including cyclists, and funding to \$1 billion over ten years to improve the highest risk roads and intersections. Key to the strategy is the recognition of the shared responsibility that all Victorians have in making informed road safety choices.

The strategy encourages safe road sharing by all road users and will develop a 'black spot' program to make these areas safer for cyclists and pedestrians. It will also modify the design of roundabouts to increase cyclist safety, and increase the enforcement of cyclists' compliance with road rules, especially obeying signals and helmet wearing. Road rules will be reviewed to further protect cyclists' safety and ensure cyclists do not endanger others.

Victoria Police conducts safe cycling campaigns and in partnership with VicRoads holds Safe Cycle Month every October, a statewide road safety initiative designed to increase cyclist safety and reduce the number of bicycle-related collisions and injuries on Victorian roads.

Victoria Police completed Operation Halo during February 2013. Now in its second year, Operation Halo ran over four days in the Melbourne CBD and other inner Melbourne areas focusing on road trauma involving vulnerable road users—pedestrians, cyclists and motorcyclists. As part of the operation, police highlighted the mutual benefit of all road users abiding by the road rules. During the four day operation police detected 1475 car and truck offences and 140 bicycle offences.

Victoria Police recognises the impact of blocked intersections around the Melbourne Central Business District (CBD), particularly on traffic flows and vulnerable road users. I am advised that Victoria Police's Operation Hoddle, which is an intelligence led traffic operation, focuses on identifying high risk traffic areas during peak times.

In line with this intelligence led process, police have identified intersections that require police attention and enforcement activity. I am advised that Victoria Police will ensure that an assessment of the intersection will be conducted, and following this any appropriate enforcement action will also be undertaken.

Kindergartens: funding

Raised with: Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development

Raised by: Ms Mikakos

Raised on: 21 March 2013

REPLY:

I am informed as follows:

The Government provides a second year of funded kindergarten when kindergarten will provide a more appropriate environment to address delays in a child's development and the child will achieve better outcomes at kindergarten than at school.

Since 2006 eligibility for a second year of kindergarten has been determined by the child's early childhood teacher. In 2013, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development published updated guidelines to further assist teachers in assessing the eligibility of a child for a second year of funded kindergarten.

There has been no change to the eligibility criteria for a second year of funded kindergarten. The updated guidelines were developed to:

- establish clearer definitions and directions for assisting families and early childhood teachers to determine when a second year of kindergarten is the best option for the child;
- align the second year guidelines with the Transition Learning and Development Statement and the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework; and
- reinforce the intention that one extra year of kindergarten only be granted to children who are assessed as having a developmental delay in two or more areas and who will benefit from an additional kindergarten year rather than transitioning directly to school.

The guidelines, which were tested with a range of stakeholders during development, incorporate contemporary best practice to support early childhood teachers in making the best decision for the child and do not reflect a significant change in expectations in the process and associated workload for seeking an additional year of kindergarten funding.

The processes outlined in the guidelines provide better structure for documenting the discussions and planning with families that is part of the professional practice of early childhood teachers when developmental delays become apparent. The guidelines include provision for noting advice received by a Preschool Field Officer, other early childhood professionals and any outcomes of parent discussions with the child's prospective school to support the early childhood teacher's decision making. These are not intended as mandatory, but reflect common practice.

The normal requirement is for a declaration of eligibility for a second year of funded kindergarten to be completed by the end of term three to assist the child's funded service in determining enrolment numbers for the following year. However, there is flexibility for later completion to accommodate late enrolments of children whose development would best be supported by a second year of kindergarten.

Road safety: speed camera revenue

Raised with: Minister for Police and Emergency Services

Raised by: Ms Pulford

Raised on: 21 March 2013

REPLY:

Prior to the Coalition Government coming into office, there was a lack of evidence providing assurance to the Victorian public on the performance of road safety cameras. For that reason, since coming into office the Coalition Government has implemented a number of initiatives to improve the operation and public confidence in the camera system.

This action includes:

- requesting the Auditor-General to undertake a comprehensive performance audit of Victoria’s road safety camera program
- introducing Australia’s first Road Safety Camera Commissioner, to provide an additional layer of integrity and assurance to the system
- launching the Cameras Save Lives website and undertaking the “See the Bigger Picture: Cameras Save Lives” media campaign to greater inform and educate the public on the operation of the system.

Following the Auditor-General’s report and the findings of the Road Safety Camera Commissioner in his first year in office, there is now conclusive evidence that road safety cameras are accurate, reliable and effective in saving lives. The Victorian Auditor-General’s 2011 report concluded that speed cameras improve road safety and reduce road trauma.

To ensure accuracy and reliability, all road safety cameras are subject to rigorous maintenance and testing requirements, which exceed those required by law. The Auditor-General found these maintenance and testing processes to be sound.

Likewise, in his 2011–12 Annual Report, the Road Safety Camera Commissioner said “... the checks and balances implemented in respect of road safety cameras should reassure the motoring public about their fairness and accuracy.”

Furthermore, the Auditor-General found that the camera system is not focussed on revenue raising. Road Safety Cameras have a legitimate role in lowering average speeds and reducing the number and severity of crashes. They are an integral part of this government’s road safety strategy. Road safety cameras complement enforcement activities by Victoria Police, and this joint approach allows for greater speed detection coverage across the state.

Speeding motorists put themselves and other Victorians at risk of injury and death. Speeding motorists are breaking the law. All of the money from camera fines goes into the Better Roads Victoria Trust Account and is used in measures to improve road safety.

Manufacturing: government procurement

Raised with: Minister for Manufacturing

Raised by: Mr Somyurek

Raised on: 21 March 2013

REPLY:

Thank you for your question regarding responsibility for the Victorian Industry Participation Policy Act 2003.

On 13 March 2013, the General Orders were updated to say “*this General Order dated 13 March 2013 is subject to change and supplementation, consequent on machinery of government or administrative change.*”

On 20 March 2013, the Premier issued a General Order regarding the administrative arrangements for responsibility for Acts of Parliament. The General Order states that the Victorian Industry Participation Policy Act 2003 is to be jointly administered by the Minister for State Development and the Minister for Manufacturing.

It would appear that this was not noted prior to the adjournment being raised.

Electricity: retail prices

Raised with: Minister for Energy and Resources

Raised by: Mr Scheffer

Raised on: 16 April 2013

REPLY:

In October 2012, ESCOSA released a draft determination to reduce retail prices charged by the incumbent retailer in South Australia, AGL Energy, by 8.1 per cent. In December 2012, the South Australian Government announced that it would remove direct retail electricity price regulation from 1 February 2013 and, effectively, that ESCOSA would no longer have a direct role in determining prices. This decision follows in the footsteps of Victoria where retail prices were deregulated in 2009.

This is a significant endorsement of the benefits of deregulated pricing arrangements in retail energy markets. In Victoria, full retail energy competition commenced in 2002 and deregulated retail energy pricing for households came into effect in 2010. This means that actual wholesale costs are already reflected relatively closely in Victorian retail energy pricing.

The Victorian Government recognises and understands the concerns about energy price increases experienced over recent years, and we are committed to easing the growing pressures on household budgets. Wholesale electricity prices are relatively contained at present. This is mainly because Victorian consumers continue to benefit from the provision of low cost brown coal generation, and because previous growth in electricity consumption by households and businesses has flattened.

The most significant recent contributor to retail electricity prices is the Federal Labor’s carbon tax which has increased bills by 10 per cent since 1 July 2012. The Victorian Government has consistently argued that any price on carbon must ensure Victorian families and businesses are not financially affected.

The largest single component of household energy bills is network charges which include the transmission and distribution of gas and electricity to customers. These charges are regulated independently by the Federal Australian Energy Regulator (AER), part of the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission.

The Victorian Coalition Government has been a leader in advocating for changes to the regulatory regime for network charges. Our goals are to deliver better results for households and businesses who are facing rising energy prices and ensure that consumers are paying no more than necessary to maintain a reliable and secure power system.

The Government has:

- Introduced legislation to close a legal loop hole that would have cost Victorians up to \$94 million in additional electricity supply charges and delivered electricity distribution businesses a huge windfall gain. Closing this loop hole means businesses will face appropriate revenue cuts for not meeting their reliability performance targets and should protect Victorian households and families from increases in regulated electricity charges of up to \$13.50 in 2013.

- Made submissions to the Australian Energy Market Commission supporting major reforms proposed by the AER to assist it in reviewing the budgets and cost forecasts of network businesses.
- Advocated for the reform of the framework under which electricity and gas network businesses can appeal AER rulings to the Australian Competition Tribunal. This framework works against the interests of consumers by allowing network businesses to cherry pick issues for appeal with limited down side risk.
- Changed cost recovery rules around the former government's smart meter program after carefully considering the results of an extensive review. The program is now focusing on delivering consumer benefits, while reining in costs.
- Continued support for appropriate and fair feed-in tariffs by winding back the Premium Feed-in Tariff, which was increasing the electricity bills of struggling households to provide over-generous subsidies to those that could afford to install solar panels.
- To help households take charge of their power bills and keep informed about changes and improvements to Victoria's energy system the Government has created the Switch On website. Switch On is a comprehensive source of information and is packed with easy to follow tips and tools.

Energy Concessions

To further assist low income households with the cost of electricity, the Victorian Government increased the electricity pricing concession from six months to year-round. This entitles eligible concession card holders to a discount of up to 17.5 per cent off their electricity.

Flexible Pricing

The Government will give consumers more opportunities to save on their electricity bills through the introduction of flexible pricing. The availability of peak, off-peak and shoulder rates is designed to provide consumers with more options to reduce their own electricity bill, while also taking the pressure off everyone's bill by reducing the need for expensive network upgrades and new generating plants.

Flexible pricing is expected to be available on an optional basis from later in 2013. There will also be a 'safe try' period up until March 2015 during which households will be able to move to a new flexible price offer with their current retailer with the confidence that they can switch back to their previous tariff without incurring an administrative fee, if they are uncomfortable with the change.

The Government with the Advanced Metering Infrastructure Ministerial Advisory Council is currently working with industry and consumer and welfare organisations to ensure flexible pricing is introduced in an orderly and effective manner to benefit consumers.

Getting the Best Deal

Finally, given that Victoria has a strong competitive environment in the retail energy sector, households and small business are encouraged to shop around for the best energy pricing offer. The Government is supporting competition amongst Victorian energy retailers and supporting enhanced price disclosure arrangements to enable consumers to choose the best retail deal.

Thank you for raising this matter with me during the Adjournment date.

Casey central east primary school: construction**Raised with: Minister for Education****Raised by: Mr Tarlamis****Raised on: 16 April 2013****REPLY:**

I am informed as follows:

The Victorian Coalition Government is committed to providing every Victorian with access to a world-class education. Central to this is ensuring that essential infrastructure is provided to meet the needs of growing communities.

Over the last three Budgets, the Government has invested almost \$80 million to purchase land for new schools and over \$125 million for the construction of new schools across Victoria. This has included funding to purchase sites for several new schools in Casey and Cardinia, including Casey Central East Primary School, Officer Special School, Officer Secondary College, Heather Grove Primary School and Cranbourne South West Primary School.

Funding for the construction of new schools in Officer over the last three Budgets has included:

- \$15 million announced in the 2011–12 Budget for the construction of Officer Special School;
- \$2 million announced in the 2012–13 Budget for the planning of Officer Secondary College; and
- \$11.5 million announced in the 2013–14 Budget for the construction of the first stage of Officer Secondary College.

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development continues to work with the Department of Planning, Transport and Local Infrastructure, the Growth Areas Authority and local Councils to identify and prioritise demand. This planning ensures that all Victorians, particularly those in Melbourne's newest communities, continue to have access to high quality, local public education.

Country Fire Authority: funding**Raised with: Minister for Police and Emergency Services****Raised by: Ms Tierney****Raised on: 16 April 2013****REPLY:**

It is important to understand that the 2012–13 Budget for the Country Fire Authority (CFA) and the Metropolitan Fire Brigade (MFB) was the second largest in history and only exceeded by the 2011–12 Budget, which in CFA's case included funding associated with implementation of the recommendations of the Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission (VBRC).

The government's contribution to the CFA for the 2013–14 year is \$446.2 million.

This represents an increase of \$30.4 million on the 2012–13 Budget.

Victoria's fire agencies were well resourced to manage the 2012–13 fire season and other emergencies, and as publicly stated by this government, there will be no reduction in the capacity of CFA and MFB to meet their frontline obligations. In its first term, the government has committed to 250 new and upgraded rural CFA stations across Victoria.

A \$65 million investment was made under the 2011–12 Budget to fast track the delivery of 60 new and upgraded CFA stations and roll out 101 new firefighting vehicles. A further \$22.9 million was included in the 2012–13 Budget to deliver 48 new and upgraded CFA stations. In addition, the 2013–14 Budget included \$61 million for 142 fire stations to deliver on the government's commitment of 250 new and upgraded rural CFA stations. Furthermore, record funding of \$8.66 million for 166 Volunteer Emergency Services Equipment Program grants went towards operational equipment, vehicles and appliances and amenities.

The government has also announced the new \$109 million MFB training facility in Craigieburn that will give firefighters one of the best emergency services training facilities in Australia.

This past fire season Victoria experienced significant grassland and forest fires and, as stated by you, there have been significant fires in the Barwon south-west area and around Portland and the Grampians.

The government is implementing the recommendations of the Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission to ensure that Victoria is better prepared to respond to bushfires. The Bushfire Royal Commission Implementation Monitor, Mr Neil Comrie's Final Report July 2012 confirmed this 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*".

The government has adopted a comprehensive approach to improving preparedness for fire response that has included significant investment in capital works, training, exercises, organisational structures, policies and procedures.

Regarding fuel reduction, as at 30 June 2013, the Department of Environment and Primary Industries has carried out 255 227 hectares of planned burns and will continue to carry out planned burns subject to weather conditions. This is the largest planned burning program in over 30 years and exceeded the target of 250 000 hectares for 2012–13.

The government has provided an additional \$33.7 million in 2013–14 to increase the planned burning program to treat 260 000 hectares of public land.

This government will continue to invest significant resources into building Victoria's fire fighting capability and supporting firefighters and the fire agencies.

Mental health: Seymour services

Raised with: Minister for Mental Health

Raised by: Ms Broad

Raised on: 17 April 2013

REPLY:

The Victorian Coalition Government is investing record funding of \$1.2 billion in mental health services across the state to support Victoria's mental health services to grow and provide better access and support to consumers and their families.

To this end the government has invested close to \$1 million over two years to support a whole-of-region after-hours mental health triage service in the Hume region. This service is auspiced by Goulburn Valley Health and commenced operation in February 2013.

Providing a crisis mental health response is core business for area mental health services. Consistent with a commitment to efficiency in service delivery, Goulburn Valley Health is assessing its after-hours crisis mental health services based at Seymour. A local consultation process is underway.

Rail: Lynbrook station

Raised with: Minister for Police and Emergency Services

Raised by: Mr Somyurek

Raised on: 17 April 2013

REPLY:

The government is committed to making communities such as Lynbrook safer, so families can feel safe on our streets, on and around public transport and in their homes. The government is providing \$602 million to deliver 1700 extra frontline police members by November 2014. Of these additional officers, 90 have been allocated to Division 3 of the Southern Region which includes the Casey Police Service Area.

To improve safety for commuters across Victoria's public transport system, the government has committed to deploying 940 Protective Service Officers (PSOs) to patrol railway stations across the metropolitan rail network, and at four major regional centres, from 6.00 p.m. to the last train every night.

As at 16 July 2013, PSOs are working at 63 railway stations, including at nearby stations such as Dandenong and Cranbourne. As PSO recruits continue to enter the academy and graduate, they will be progressively rolled out across the system, including to Lynbrook Railway Station.

The deployment of PSOs has been highly effective and well received by the community. Between February 2012 and the end of March 2013, PSOs issued more than 12 000 infringement notices. There is also evidence that people are feeling safer as a consequence of the presence of PSOs on stations, and that crime is being reduced at these locations.

Any information regarding unlawful or antisocial behaviour around the Lynbrook Railway Station should be reported to local police at Cranbourne, or via '000' where urgent police attendance is required.

Social housing advocacy and support program: funding

Raised with: Minister for Housing

Raised by: Mr Lenders

Raised on: 18 April 2013

REPLY:

The Social Housing Advocacy and Support Program (SHASP) will continue to support people to establish and maintain their tenancies through a new case management approach which was implemented in October 2012.

This new model targets support to improve client outcomes across economic, social and personal domains.

The new integrated case management will ease the burden on SHASP providers as the department has assumed responsibilities for managing community facilities.

The Victorian Government has allocated more than \$80 million in 2013–14 to manage and support tenancies.

We are spending this on innovative programs and models, as well as core day-to-day tenancy management, including:

- New work and learning centres implemented by this government and the public tenant employment program to get tenants into employment and education/training;
- Initiatives such as the keeping in touch program to ensure we are linking with older persons living in public housing;

- An innovative concierge service model on some of our inner city high rise estates.
- Funding the Tenants' Union of Victoria, the Victorian Public Tenants' Association and Tenant groups to support tenants with information and advice.

Creswick Bowling Club: flood relief funding

Raised with: Minister for Police and Emergency Services

Raised by: Mr O'Brien

Raised on: 18 April 2013

REPLY:

As stated by you, the Creswick Bowling Club sustained damage during the floods between September 2010 and February 2011. The Victorian Government has committed \$900 000 from the Department of Planning and Community Development consisting of \$300 000 from the Community Infrastructure Fund administered by Regional Development Victoria and \$300 000 from Sport and Recreation Victoria.

While the Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements (NDRRA), as a Commonwealth determination, supports state expenditure on the restoration or replacement of essential public assets, the definition of these assets is gradually being tightened. Under the latest determination, issued in December 2012, the definition specifically excludes repairs to sporting and community facilities directly damaged by a natural disaster.

The broader definition, in force for the floods in 2010 and 2011, generally meant that local government roads and bridge infrastructure as well as football, netball and tennis facilities, walking tracks and playgrounds were eligible for costs associated with repairs. However, repairs to privately operated bowling clubs were considered not to fit within this definition.

Nonetheless, in August 2012, the Victorian Government provided information to the Federal Attorney-General's Department in relation to the Creswick Bowling Club, in support of its bid for additional funds. The Federal Attorney-General's response concludes that the club 'does not appear to meet the requirements of an eligible undertaking' because it charges fees to cover operating costs.

As stated before, the State Government has already provided financial assistance to the club through the Community Infrastructure Fund, established to assist those community assets not considered to be eligible as an essential public asset under the NDRRA, for the September 2010 and the subsequent flood events later in 2010 and early 2011. I understand that the Community Infrastructure Fund has so far committed funding to restore damage to a further four bowling clubs, as well as croquet facilities and caravan parks. This indicates that the State Government, at that time, considered the club not to be an eligible undertaking or the bowling greens an essential public asset, under the NDRRA.

Further to this, while the Commonwealth Attorney-General's response does not provide his assessment of whether the bowling greens are essential public assets under the NDRRA, both the Victorian Government and his department have a common understanding that bowling greens are not considered to be an essential public asset.

We are advised that even if the Victorian Government presents further evidence of special circumstances arising for the Creswick Bowling Club, approval for funding would need to be considered and approved by the Attorney-General causing further delays to the restoration of the bowling greens. The Victorian Government recently tried to use this clause for the restoration of roads which were damaged in the 2009 Black Saturday bushfires however that request was subsequently rejected by the Attorney-General's Department.

It should be noted that the Hepburn Shire Council, the owner of the bowling club, has received commitments of approximately \$30 million from the Commonwealth and State Government under the NDRRA towards reinstatement of 2010–11 flood-damaged infrastructure, including local roads and bridges. In addition both governments are contributing towards flood mitigation works in Creswick.

Under the circumstances, it would appear that there is nothing to be gained by the Victorian Government once again raising the matter of the Creswick Bowling Club with the Federal Attorney General.

As stated by you, volunteers and staff of Victoria's emergency services agencies continue to do an outstanding job in assisting the community during such emergency events.

Regional and rural Victoria: mobile communications

Raised with: Premier

Raised by: Mr Ramsay

Raised on: 18 April 2013

REPLY:

Telecommunications black spots in rural and remote areas are a significant public safety issue. This issue was recently raised by members of the community at Dereel, who expressed concerns regarding their inability to receive emergency text messages, following the March 2013 bushfire.

Following this community meeting, I wrote to the Prime Minister and Chief Executive Officer of Telstra on 14 April 2013 urging the Commonwealth and Telstra to work together with the State to minimise mobile black spots in Victoria.

On 19 April 2013, I brought this issue to the attention of the Prime Minister and other First Ministers at a meeting of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG). COAG noted the risks to public safety that arise in emergency situations as a result of inadequate mobile coverage, particularly in rural and remote communities. COAG agreed that the Commonwealth, States and Territories would work collaboratively with the telecommunications industry to reduce mobile phone and internet black spots.

In addition to the recent discussion at COAG, Victorian Ministers, including the Minister for Technology, The Hon Gordon Rich-Phillips MLC and the Deputy Premier, the Hon Peter Ryan MLA, in his former role as Minister for Police and Emergency Services, have raised the issue of telecommunications black spots with the Commonwealth on a number of separate occasions over the past year. Despite this, to date, the Commonwealth has no dedicated program in place to improve mobile coverage.

The Commonwealth has Constitutional responsibility for telecommunications and controls the policy and regulatory levers needed to ensure that all Australians have access to telecommunications services. The Victorian Government has asked that the Commonwealth improve mobile coverage funding through States and Territories, as States are best placed to understand the immediate needs of the affected communities and to identify economically viable sites to build infrastructure to provide the necessary coverage.

The Victorian Government is committed to working with the Commonwealth and the telecommunications industry toward a situation where there are few, if any, mobile black spots in Victoria.

Wallan-Kilmore bypass: route

Raised with: Minister for Planning

Raised by: Ms Broad

Raised on: 7 May 2013

REPLY:

On 15 April 2013 I decided an Environment Effects Statement (EES) is required after VicRoads referred the Kilmore-Wallan Bypass project to me under the *Environment Effects Act 1978*.

An EES process will provide a rigorous assessment of the project route alternatives and respond to community interest in the project by providing appropriate opportunities for public input.

The next stage of the process is to prepare 'scoping requirements' which will set out the matters to be investigated and documented in the EES. These will be released for public comment prior to finalisation.

It is not appropriate to dismiss any of the options, including Quinns Road/Monument Hill, before the EES process is completed.

Planning: city of Maribyrnong

Raised with: Minister for Planning

Raised by: Mr Finn

Raised on: 8 May 2013

REPLY:

I met with the Mayor and Chief Executive Officer of Maribyrnong City Council on Thursday 13 May 2013 to discuss opportunities for positive change in the suburb of Braybrook.

They advised me of the high percentage of social housing and an extremely low level of internet take up in Braybrook.

I have committed to meeting with the Hon. Wendy Lovell MLC, Minister for Housing, to discuss opportunities for the revitalisation of the suburb, including opportunities for private sector investment.

Planning: radio broadcast towers

Raised with: Minister for Planning

Raised by: Mr Tee

Raised on: 8 May 2013

REPLY:

During 2003, Mr Howard objected to a planning permit application lodged with Moyne Shire Council by ACE Radio Broadcasters Pty Ltd to erect two radio towers on land opposite his property and existing dwelling at 133 Blighs Road, Purnim (north east of Warrnambool). Mr Howard was further consulted and he withdrew his objection in 2005.

A planning permit was issued by the council in June 2005 and the towers were erected. Arising from Mr Howard's concerns about the location of the constructed towers, ACE Radio Broadcasters Pty Ltd applied to amend the permit in 2006. In January 2007, Mr Howard applied to the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) to review council's decision to grant an amended permit. The permit was subsequently amended by VCAT in June 2009. The VCAT review accepted the towers were sited in a location at variance to the location shown on the plans endorsed under the permit and were closer to Mr Howard's residence. VCAT directed that an amended permit be issued.

Mr Howard has since had his complaint about the actions of the council reviewed by the Victorian Ombudsman who found no impropriety.

In 2010, Mr Howard also sought leave from the Supreme Court to appeal the VCAT decision on a point of law. The Supreme Court found that VCAT had reached a conclusion that was open to it on the evidence and refused leave to appeal.

Mr Howard recently sought a further VCAT review regarding alleged non-compliance with a condition of the permit (electromagnetic interference at Mr Howard's property). However, in April 2013, VCAT determined that compliance with the permit condition had been met.

VCAT and the Supreme Court operate independently from the Victorian Government and I have no legislative power to require a review of their decisions.

I acknowledge that Mr Howard's dispute with ACE Radio Broadcasters Pty Ltd and the council has been a protracted and difficult experience for him, and I have previously communicated with him about the issue.

In conclusion, I consider that Mr Howard's concerns regarding the permitted radio towers have been comprehensively adjudicated by the relevant independent bodies and there are no outstanding matters of planning merit or process to be resolved.

Drought: western Victoria

Raised with: Premier

Raised by: Mr Lenders

Raised on: 9 May 2013

REPLY:

I refer to the matter you raised during the Adjournment Debate in the Legislative Council on 9 May 2013 about dry conditions in Western Victoria, and the potential impacts on farmers.

The Victorian Government is aware that over the summer and autumn period, dry conditions have been experienced in regional and rural Victoria. The Government recognises that these conditions place pressure on many farmers, who are also affected by other economic factors. Government programs assisting farmers in difficulty include the Rural Financial Counselling service, which provides free financial counselling, and the Farm Debt Mediation scheme, which requires banks to offer mediation with farmers before commencing enforcement action on farm mortgages.

In July 2013 the Victorian Government reached an agreement with the Commonwealth which enables Victorian farmers to access Farm Finance. Eligible farmers will have access to lower interest loans through the Farm Finance concessional loans scheme, which provides \$60 million over two years to support Victorian farmers struggling with debt. Other Farm Finance measures include three new fully funded Rural Financial Counselling Service positions.

The Victorian Government will continue to monitor seasonal conditions, and consult with industry and the community over the coming months.

Derrinallum Recreation Reserve: lighting

Raised with: Minister for Sport and Recreation

Raised by: Mr O'Brien

Raised on: 9 May 2013

REPLY:

I refer to the Adjournment Debate question you raised on the 8 May 2013 in the Legislative Council seeking funding support for lighting upgrades to training standard at the Derrinallum Recreation Reserve and lighting upgrades to Stawell Swifts Football and Netball Club ground at North Park.

I recently approved funding to Corangamite Shire Council for their application of \$70 000 for the Derrinallum Recreation Reserve Lighting project from the Country Football and Netball Program (CFNP).

On Friday 17 May 2013, I was also pleased to announce funding to Northern Grampians Shire Council of \$80 000 to the oval lighting upgrade for the Stawell Swifts Football and Netball Club through the CFNP.

Fruit growers: Goulburn Valley

Raised with: Minister for Regional and Rural Development

Raised by: Ms Darveniza

Raised on: 28 May 2013

REPLY:

I am informed that:

During recent years, SPC Ardmona's market share of the domestic canned fruit market has been eroded by cheaper imported private label products. Compounding this, SPC Ardmona's export market volumes have also declined.

SPC Ardmona is forecasting further reduced demand for canning fruit. Consequently, the company announced on 10 April that only 53 out of the current 114 fruit growers in northern Victoria will have contracts renewed for the coming season.

The State Government has responded in the following ways:

- The development of a long-term community driven Goulburn Valley Industry and Employment Plan.
- A \$5 million Goulburn Valley Industry and Infrastructure Fund to leverage new industry, investment and employment opportunities and support a strategic long-term plan for the region.
- The hosting of employment forums in Cobram on 9 May and Shepparton on 20 May. These forums provided information from government agencies and the relevant service providers as important first steps to support people in finding alternative employment or retraining opportunities.
- The provision of a \$100 000 Support Services Package to immediately assist with financial counselling, health and social services, group workshops and farm information sessions.
- The establishment of a Goulburn Valley Fruit Growers Strategic Stakeholder Group which will be part of the development of an industry-led roadmap to ensure the region remains viable and productive.
- The establishment of a \$2 million Fruit Industry Employment Program. This will provide paid work and training for fruit growers to work on environmental restoration and protection projects such as weed and pest management, fencing and erosion control. This will be a 12 month program similar to previous schemes that provided temporary income for food and fibre producers affected by drought, floods and bushfires.
- The provision of resources from the Industry Transition and Specialist Training Initiative to the Hume region. This initiative is designed to provide expert assistance and advice on Government-subsidised training for people to transition to new employment.
- Collaboration with the Federal Government to finalise arrangements for the Farm Finance concessional loan scheme.
- Continued discussion with businesses and investors in the region regarding new opportunities to value add fruit that may lead to new business ventures being established.

Consumer affairs: incorporated association model rules

Raised with: Minister for Consumer Affairs

Raised by: Ms Mikakos

Raised on: 28 May 2013

REPLY:

As you are aware, on 26 November 2012, the *Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012* repealed and replaced the *Associations Incorporation Act 1981*. The commencement of the new Act was accompanied by the introduction of the Associations Incorporation Reform Regulations 2012, which include new Model Rules for an Incorporated Association.

The Government recognises the importance of multiculturalism and ensuring that incorporated association members from non-English speaking backgrounds are able to understand and adapt to the changes to the Act and the new Model Rules.

Accordingly, the new Model Rules were translated into Vietnamese, Mandarin Chinese and Arabic. These languages were chosen after consultation with the Victorian Multicultural Commission and analysis of Consumer Affairs Victoria telephone enquiries and web traffic data. It should be noted that this marks the first time the Model Rules have ever been officially translated into languages other than English.

Additionally, Consumer Affairs Victoria conducted a comprehensive awareness and information campaign across the state. This included a mail-out to all incorporated associations and 193 face-to-face information sessions in metropolitan Melbourne and all Victorian regional areas from October 2012 to March 2013. The information sessions were attended by a total of around 5800 people.

In developing the information and awareness campaign, Consumer Affairs Victoria consulted with the Victorian Multicultural Commission to ensure that appropriate consultation and support was provided to incorporated associations from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

In conjunction with the Victorian Multicultural Commission, Consumer Affairs Victoria sent 4700 letters to incorporated associations from non-English speaking backgrounds.

A series of detailed factsheets covering all aspects of the new Act were also developed and these are available on the Consumer Affairs Victoria website.

A key factsheet deals with the transition to the new Act, including the new Model Rules. This four-page factsheet was translated into 17 languages and copies of the translated documents are available for download from the Consumer Affairs Victoria website.

The languages into which the factsheet has been translated are:

1. Amharic
2. Arabic
3. Burmese
4. Mandarin Chinese
5. Croatian
6. Dari
7. Greek

8. Hindi
9. Italian
10. Macedonian
11. Maltese
12. Russian
13. Somali
14. Spanish
15. Swahili
16. Turkish
17. Vietnamese

Copies of all translated factsheets are also being made available by Consumer Affairs Victoria to all Local Government Councils.

These activities and resources demonstrate the Government's commitment to providing practical assistance to Victorians from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds to understand and work with the new incorporated association legislation and Model Rules.

SP AusNet: Millgrove works

Raised with: Minister for Energy and Resources

Raised by: Mr Scheffer

Raised on: 28 May 2013

REPLY:

I refer to the matter you raised for my attention during the Adjournment debate on 28 May 2013.

The legislative and regulatory framework that governs the operation of the Victorian electricity distribution network, places a range of rights and obligations on electricity distribution businesses. In particular, the Victorian Electricity Distribution Code (the Code) regulates the distribution, connection and transfer of electricity with a view to ensuring these activities are undertaken in a safe, efficient and reliable manner.

The Code provides rights to distributors to interrupt supply in a number of specified instances, both planned and unplanned. These rights are complemented, however, by a range of network reliability incentives and targets that are overseen by the Australian Energy Regulator, an arm of the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission. Under these arrangements distribution businesses can be financially penalised for poor network reliability performance.

In certain circumstances if electricity supply reliability does not meet the relevant standard, distributors are obliged to make a payment to customers, known as a Guaranteed Service Level payment. This framework has achieved sustained reliability of electricity supply whilst keeping distribution costs, which comprise a significant proportion of electricity bills, relatively low in comparison to other jurisdictions.

I am advised that SP Ausnet has provided assurances that they recognise the importance of notifying consumers of power outages in their area. I am also satisfied that in this instance, SP Ausnet has abided by the requirements of the Code to provide at least four business days written notice of the interruption.

Electricity distribution businesses seek to balance the mitigation of technical and safety risks and the impacts on their customers of the suspension of supply. SP Ausnet has advised that while they endeavour to minimise inconvenience to their customers, in this instance there were good reasons for the extended outage times. SP Ausnet emphasise that they took care to contact consumers who had provided their mobile contact details to their retailer.

In relation to the concerns raised regarding customer notification of outages spanning an extended time period, a representative from SP Ausnet has advised that they are unable to send one letter to customers with all outage dates spanning weeks and months, as these dates can change, therefore creating customer confusion.

If an individual consumer has concerns regarding supply reliability, I would encourage them in the first instance to contact their energy distributor regarding their concerns. If they continue to remain dissatisfied, they are able to contact the Energy and Water Ombudsman Victoria, an industry based external dispute resolution scheme.

Timboon P-12 School: funding

Raised with: Minister for Education

Raised by: Ms Tierney

Raised on: 28 May 2013

REPLY:

I am informed as follows:

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

I am aware that a number of schools like Timboon P-12 were involved in the previous government's school capital program. Many of those schools received planning money from the government prior to the 2010 state election, but never any money for the delivery of those building programs.

A condition assessment of all Victorian government schools has been undertaken to establish a clear and consistent picture of schools' maintenance needs. As an initial response, \$51.5 million has been allocated to 250 schools with school buildings identified as having the greatest maintenance needs. Schools now have access to their individual assessment audits reports and the information in those reports will assist schools to better manage their maintenance needs and spending on maintenance priorities.

The independent assessment of Timboon P-12 found that it has buildings below the acceptable standard; however all buildings are safe. The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development has spoken to the principal and is meeting with the school in the coming weeks to discuss buildings required to meet local educational needs. The outcome of these discussions will help inform future funding requirements for the school.

The 2013-14 Victorian Budget provides \$203 million for school capital projects. Information on individual schools and projects funded in the State Budget has now been released.

I can assure you that the needs of all schools across the state, including Timboon P-12, will be considered in future budget processes.

Wodonga West Primary School: funding

Raised with: Minister for Education

Raised by: Ms Darveniza

Raised on: 29 May 2013

REPLY:

I am informed as follows:

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

I am aware that a number of schools, like Wodonga West Primary, were involved in the previous government's school capital program. Many of those schools received planning money from the government, prior to the 2010 state election, but never any money for the delivery of those building programs.

The Government is developing a new infrastructure and asset management model, which will be used to guide long-term asset planning. There will be more certainty and transparency around capital funding allocation for schools.

Schools are directly allocated funding for maintenance annually through the Student Resource Package, and are encouraged to use this funding to address maintenance issues as they arise. Schools now have access to their individual assessment audit reports, following an independent, system-wide maintenance audit of all Victorian government schools. The information in those reports will assist schools to better manage their maintenance needs and spending on maintenance priorities.

The Victorian Government is proud to have increased schools maintenance funding by 40 per cent in its first term of government to assist schools to address the \$420 million maintenance backlog left by the previous government.

If a school has emergency maintenance or repair issues beyond its budget capacity, it is encouraged to contact its relevant regional Department office for further assistance or advice.

Rail: St Albans level crossing

Raised with: Minister for Roads

Raised by: Mr Finn

Raised on: 30 May 2013

REPLY:

I am pleased to confirm that the Victorian Government has recently provided a \$52.3 million funding boost under the Metro Level Crossing Removal Blitz program, for seven dangerous level crossings, including the level crossing on Main Road in St Albans.

This funding boost will now allow essential preconstruction activities to be undertaken at Main Road, St Albans, which are essential to clear the way for major construction works.

I would certainly welcome Commonwealth funding for this important project. However, I have been concerned that a recent offer from the Federal Government was limited to reallocating possible Nation Building Program savings, which are as yet unrealised. This offer from the Federal Government does not provide certainty to the people of St Albans or to the State Government.

I confirm that the Victorian Government remains committed to this project commencing preconstruction activities in the first term of Government, with or without Commonwealth funding support.

The recent funding boost to progress important preconstruction works demonstrates the Victorian Government's commitment to this project and to the people of St Albans.

Feral goats: control

Raised with: Minister for State Development

Raised by: Mr Lenders

Raised on: 30 May 2013

REPLY:

The Victorian Industry Participation Policy (VIPP) is applied and a VIPP Plan required for all Victorian Government procurement activities when the following three criteria have been met:

1. the procurement activity is wholly or partially funded by the State Government
2. the procurement activity meets or exceeds either:
 - \$1 million in regional Victoria
 - \$3 million in metropolitan Melbourne or for statewide activities
3. the procurement activity contains contestable goods or services.

Consequently, VIPP did not apply to this procurement activity.

Volunteers: community service awards

Raised with: Minister for Community Services

Raised by: Mrs Peulich

Raised on: 30 May 2013

REPLY:

The Coalition Government appreciates the vital role played by volunteers in the delivery of important services and in strengthening Victorian communities.

In the 2011–12 State Budget the Coalition announced \$5.2 million over four years for strategies to strengthen volunteering in Victoria including through the development of a range of online resources and programs.

In addition, the Government provides funding to Volunteering Victoria, the peak agency for volunteering in the state, to support organisations recruit, retain and recognise volunteers.

Resources and tools on practical ways organisations, including local government, can support and recognise their volunteers are available free of charge on the Victorian Government's volunteering portal www.volunteer.vic.gov.au.

In addition to online resources Volunteering Victoria delivers programs for local government volunteer managers to support best practice volunteer management.

Ford Australia: plant closures

Raised with: Minister for Manufacturing

Raised by: Mr Somyurek

Raised on: 30 May 2013

REPLY:

I refer to the matter raised by Mr Adem Somyurek, Member for South Eastern Metropolitan, on 30 May 2013 regarding Ford.

As part of the Government's ongoing business engagement activities, my Department has long engaged with Ford on its operations in this State. These discussions included identifying any potential business case for Ford to continue manufacturing in Australia beyond 2016, but Ford advised the Commonwealth and Victorian governments that it faced significant challenges to remain viable in Australia.

As a result, Ford Australia did not approach the Commonwealth or Victorian governments for any additional support to keep its Australian manufacturing operations going. Furthermore Ford advised the federal Labor Government and the Victorian Coalition Government that there was nothing that could be done to reverse its decision to cease manufacturing in Australia.

Consequently my discussions with Ford in Detroit centred around a range of issues including Ford's commitment to provide assistance to their workers, Victorian companies that supply Ford and the Geelong and Northern Melbourne communities in an effort to minimise the effects of its pending closure.

I am therefore pleased to inform you that following my meeting in Detroit Ford committed \$10 million towards a structural adjustment initiative established by the Commonwealth and Victorian Governments.

Merbein P-10 College: funding

Raised with: Minister for Education

Raised by: Ms Broad

Raised on: 11 June 2013

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 also responsibly balance and prioritise the capital needs of over 1500 government schools in Victoria.

The *Victorian Liberal Nationals Coalition Plan for Education* identified a number of priority capital 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 2013-14 Budget provides \$203 million for school capital projects. Information on individual schools and projects funded in the State Budget has now been released.

I am aware that many schools like Merbein P-12 College were involved in planning for building projects under the previous Government's capital works program.

The stage 1 rebuilding works at Merbein P-12 College were completed in August 2012 at a total cost of \$10.5 million. Of this amount, \$2 million of capital funding was provided by the Victorian Government, with the remaining \$8.5 million funded by the Commonwealth Government under *Building the Education Revolution*. The estimated cost for the remainder of the project is approximately \$15 million.

I can assure you that the needs of all schools across the state, including Merbein P-12, will be considered in future budget processes.

In relation to the matter of traffic lights at the front of the school, I am advised that the road is the responsibility of the Mildura Rural City Council.

Ringwood Trade Training Facility: funding**Raised with: Minister for Education****Raised by: Mr Leane****Raised on: 11 June 2013****REPLY:**

I am informed as follows:

At the end of 2009, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development provided one-off transitional funding of up to \$1 million across 2010 and 2011 to each of the four Australian Technical Colleges (ATC) to support a move to self-sustainability.

The intention of the transitional funding was for each school to ensure the self-sustainability of the ATCs from 2012 onwards through measures such as partnerships with local Registered Training Organisations or increased participation and usage. The schools were encouraged to work with the Department's regional offices and local stakeholders on a sustainability plan.

The Department is aware of the difficulty experienced by Ringwood Secondary College in achieving self-sustainability for its ATC facility. I am advised that the Department has actively engaged with the school to assist in resolving its operational funding requirements. This has included supporting the school to run a tender to partner with a training organisation, engaging a contractor to draft a business plan and identifying other potential funding sources.

I am further advised that despite this continued assistance from the Department, the College has been unsuccessful in achieving a move to self-sustainability.

In response to the concerns of Ringwood Secondary College, and at my request the Department is investigating additional funding options. I am advised that this work is currently underway and I have asked that the College be kept informed throughout this process.

Department of Environment and Primary Industries: jobs**Raised with: Minister for Agriculture and Food Security****Raised by: Mr Lenders****Raised on: 11 June 2013****REPLY:**

I refer to the matter you raised during the Adjournment debate in the Legislative Council on 11 June 2013 regarding the closure of Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) and Department of Primary Industries (DPI) offices in Camperdown.

Last year the former DPI conducted a review that found consolidating some office and depot sites would achieve significant budget savings, improve working conditions and professional development for staff, while continuing to provide a high standard of service delivery. The assessment of site consolidations involved consideration of several factors, including: business needs, savings and team performance.

The review found that the Department could more effectively service its clients from fewer sites given changes to service delivery, new technology and increasing private sector involvement. It also found that site consolidation would provide substantial savings through reduced lease payments, maintenance costs, utility expenses and other overheads. Furthermore, it found that consolidating staff at larger offices typically improved support, resilience, program delivery and efficiencies. These outcomes have already been demonstrated through previous site consolidations such as the relocation from Kyabram to Tatura and Ellinbank.

While the former DPI Camperdown office is now closed, the new Department of Environment and Primary Industries (DEPI) office can most effectively deliver services from neighbouring sites at Warrnambool and Colac.

DEPI has an increased focus on regional service delivery and decision making at the local level. The new regional model will provide increased support and professional development for staff at all regional offices and lead to more effective and efficient regional service delivery spanning both food and fibre production and land and water management.

Thank you for raising this matter with me.

Western suburbs: truck action plan

Raised with: Minister for Roads

Raised by: Ms Hartland

Raised on: 11 June 2013

REPLY:

In line with the *Moving More With Less* policy, High Productivity Freight Vehicles will be limited to high standard duplicated highways and 'Last Mile' roads that can safely accommodate these longer vehicles. VicRoads position is that combinations in excess of 30.0 metres and up to 36.5 metres, such as B-Triples, will not have access to built-up residential streets, such as Francis Street.

The *Moving More With Less* policy specifically limits mass on these longer High Productivity Freight Vehicles to 68.5 tonnes, the current legal mass for a standard B-double. This allows operators to transport more light freight on longer trucks without any additional impact on roads and bridges.

Youth services: program funding

Raised with: Minister for Community Services

Raised by: Ms Mikakos

Raised on: 11 June 2013

REPLY:

The Victorian Government's public consultation paper *Practical Lessons, Fair Consequences — Improving Diversion for Young People in Victoria* discussed diversion for children and young people at police and initial court contact stages of the criminal justice system.

This consultation is evidence of our Government's commitment to work collaboratively with the community sector and youth justice providers to prevent young people from participating in criminal activities and entering the youth justice system.

The Government's response to the consultation will consider the current continuum of diversion responses available to children and young people and other initiatives to improve diversion outcomes for those early in their contact with police and courts.

Youth employment programs are the responsibility of the Minister for Innovation, Services and Small Business who has previously responded to questions related to funding.

Local government: federal referendum

Raised with: Minister for Local Government

Raised by: Mrs Peulich

Raised on: 11 June 2013

REPLY:

The *Municipal Association Act 1907* establishes the Municipal Association of Victoria as a body corporate and provides for councils to join as members, but does not require them to do so. Membership entails payment of an annual subscription fee by councils set by the board of the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV).

With regard to the Federal Labor Government's proposed local government referendum, the membership of the Municipal Association of Victoria at their 2012 State Council resolved to issue a voluntary levy on members to fund a national campaign for constitutional recognition. The national campaign is being conducted by the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA).

Councils are not required to contribute to the ALGA campaign, either by statute or by resolution of the MAV. Councils do however have the flexibility under the *Local Government Act 1989* to be able to allocate funding towards such a campaign. Councils will be held accountable via their communities for any such expenditure.

As Minister, I have determined that it is in the public interest for councils to disclose any expenditure or resource allocation in support of the 'yes' or 'no' cases at the referendum. I have written to all 79 councils in accordance with section 135 of the Act requesting relevant financial records outlining any such proposed expenditure. This information will be made available to the public.

The Victorian Government opposes the proposed local government referendum because there is a great risk Victoria's local government sector will be worse off.

The referendum is unnecessary, risks blurring responsibilities between the three tiers of government and is a waste of \$55 million in taxpayers funds, plus a further \$10 million in ratepayers funds allocated by the ALGA towards the sector's marketing campaign.

Target Australia: job losses

Raised with: Premier

Raised by: Ms Tierney

Raised on: 12 June 2013

REPLY:

The Victorian Government recognises the importance of Target, headquartered in Geelong, as a significant employer in the region. Assisting workers that have lost jobs is a key priority for the Government.

Through the dedicated business engagement model the Victorian Government maintains strong ties with businesses in Geelong. The Government has discussed with Target the support services that it can provide through the *Business in Transition Support* service, and retraining assistance through the *Workers in Transition* program. The Department of State Development, Business and Innovation has an open dialogue with Target and will facilitate access to these programs and services as part of the *Employment Response Plan* for affected workers. The Department has also met with Cotton On, which the Government understands is actively recruiting workers with a similar skill set to the displaced Target workers in Geelong, to discuss employment opportunities.

The Victorian Government is focused on promoting longer term job creation in Geelong by developing an action plan. The Government has committed \$1.8 million to fund the *Skilling the Bay* project, which is a three year project led by the Gordon Institute of TAFE and delivered in partnership with Deakin University and the Victorian

Government. This project is designed to grow existing and emerging industries by linking future job creation to skill development in the Geelong region. As a part of the project, community leaders in the region took part in the Geelong Jobs Summit to discuss the challenges and opportunities for new jobs and investment.

The *Skilling the Bay* project will build on other Victorian Government initiatives that promote job creation in Geelong, including the new Geelong Epworth Hospital development that will create 780 new healthcare jobs, the new DisabilityCare headquarters that will create 450 new jobs, and the Cotton On global headquarters that will create 500 new jobs. The Government's \$4 million Greater Geelong Industry Fund is also supporting new job creation in the region, with projects by IXL Metal Castings, Farm Foods and AKD Softwoods recently announced.

Buses: Sanctuary Lakes

Raised with: Minister for Public Transport

Raised by: Mr Finn

Raised on: 13 June 2013

REPLY:

The new bus network increases service to the Sanctuary Lakes Shopping Centre on Point Cook Road, with the number of routes increasing from one to two. New routes 496 and 497 give passengers the option of connection to trains (and other buses) at either Laverton or Williams Landing stations.

Instead of one route every 40 minutes, the revised network features two routes operating every 22 minutes during peak times, more than tripling the existing service and providing improved train connections. At other times (including weekends) service levels are doubled, with both routes operating every 40 minutes. These changes benefit residents within walking or cycling distance of the Sanctuary Lakes Shopping Centre.

Public Transport Victoria's service planners carefully considered the merits of operating a route into the Sanctuary Lakes estate, looping via Sanctuary Lakes Boulevard, to serve more residents. However, the extra distance would have required an additional bus plus allowances for extra driver hours, fuel and maintenance. For this to occur, given the available resources, the wider Point Cook network would have operated to reduced frequency, coverage or directness. As Sanctuary Lakes lacks a number of factors which determine the success of a bus route, improvements to the wider Point Cook network were prioritised.

Factors that determine the success (i.e. patronage) of a bus route include its directness and the population density along the length of the route. Direct routes are only possible in areas with straight road networks, preferably forming a grid-style network. Population density means having a continuous line of shops, schools and homes 400 to 800 metres either side of the route.

Most of Point Cook is fortunate to have a road network that allowed the planning and implementation of more direct routes. Development has also been planned to be reasonably continuous along these routes. This has allowed the implementation of efficient and direct routes.

Sanctuary Lakes is planned entirely differently. Its main internal road (Sanctuary Lakes Boulevard) forms a circuitous loop with one entrance off Point Cook Road. Much of the land either side of Sanctuary Lakes Boulevard is either a golf course or lake. This layout poses three serious problems for efficient bus services, as follows:

- Loop streets are indirect, making travel unnecessarily slow
- The estate has only one entrance, making it impossible to plan fast through routes that go on to serve other areas
- The low population density reduces the number of people available to use the bus.

There are significant differences between the suitability of Point Cook and Sanctuary Lakes for effective bus routes. This is why Point Cook has benefited substantially from the new network.

Foxes: control

Raised with: Minister for Agriculture and Food Security

Raised by: Mr Lenders

Raised on: 13 June 2013

REPLY:

I refer to the Adjournment debate matter raised in the Legislative Council on 13 June 2013 regarding unprovoked fox attacks and what advice to give members of the public if they see a fox.

Foxes are declared established pest animals under the Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994 (CaLP Act) and are widespread throughout metropolitan and regional Victoria. Under the CaLP Act all land owners must take all reasonable steps to prevent the spread of, and as far as possible eradicate, foxes that are on their land.

An unprovoked attack by a fox on a human is extremely rare. Foxes are shy, timid animals that are extremely wary of contact with people and likely to avoid or flee from human interaction. However people should always be mindful that foxes are wild animals and should not be approached.

Foxes are highly mobile, so what a person observes as occurring one minute may not be the case in another hour or the next day when a licensed pest controller is able to respond to the issue. Contacting the resident or council stating a fox has been spotted at a given point in time at a given location is unlikely to yield significant benefits as foxes normally seek to avoid human contact and therefore are likely to exit the area to avoid further contact making locating the fox at a later time extremely difficult. However if a person spots a fox entering or leaving a fox den that can be reported with confidence, as the fox would likely be returning to that site so it is recommended to inform the private resident or council of the fox.

If a member of the public locates an aggressive fox on council land they should not approach the fox but contact the council so that a licensed pest controller can respond to the issue. Similarly, if a member of the public locates an aggressive fox on their own property they should not approach the fox, but contact a local licensed pest controller.

Foxes are highly adaptable and opportunistic scavengers that eat a wide range of meat, insect and plant material. Residents who have poultry should keep them in a fox-proof enclosure. Residents can also make their property fox 'unfriendly' by ensuring that any food scraps and pet food are removed from their yards, and rubbish and compost bins are securely closed so as not to encourage foxes onto the property.

Thank you for raising this matter with me.

Disability services: Western Victoria Region constituent

Raised with: Minister for Community Services

Raised by: Ms Pulford

Raised on: 13 June 2013

REPLY:

- I understand the opportunity for Ms Kambouridis to live with other people of a similar age would greatly increase her participation and quality of life.
- My department has been working with Ms Kambouridis and her family to identify suitable accommodation that meets her needs. I am advised that Ms Kambouridis was offered an independent living unit with a local community services organisation, which she declined. My department will continue to work with Ms Kambouridis and her family until a satisfactory outcome is found. I understand this has been a distressing time for her and her family.

GlaxoSmithKline: job losses

Raised with: Minister for Technology

Raised by: Mr Somyurek

Raised on: 13 June 2013

REPLY:

Dear Mr Somyurek,

On 22 May 2013, GSK announced the intended closure of its tablet packing business at its Boronia site. The other GSK locations in Abbotsford and Port Fairy are not affected by this announcement.

The catalyst for this is the transfer of tablets packaging activities to other GSK Sites and third party partners. The company has said that this is part of the business transformation the company is undertaking which will enable it to focus on expanding its high-value manufacturing. The Boronia manufacturing facility is GSK's global centre for excellence in the blow fill seal and dry powder inhalation medicines. GSK makes a significant contribution to Victoria where the company expends more than \$30 million on R&D each year and exports around \$300 million worth of pharmaceutical products from Victoria.

As part of continued investment and growth in life sciences in Victoria, the Victorian Government had agreed to provide financial support to GSK for the expansion of the blow-fill seal capability at the Boronia facility. The Victorian Government does not disclose the level of assistance offered to secure investments as it undermines our position when competing with other jurisdictions to attract opportunities to the State.

GSK confirmed that whilst the expansion project will continue with no change in the amount of capital expenditure, the overall long term staffing reductions across the site would have impacted the grant agreement. A mutual termination of the grant has been requested.

The Government has not provided any funding towards the expansion of this facility.

Disability services: supported accommodation fees

Raised with: Minister for Community Services

Raised by: Mr Tarlamis

Raised on: 13 June 2013

REPLY:

The Victorian Government is undertaking reforms with respect to Department of Human Services managed supported accommodation services for people with a disability. This will include the introduction of a standardised board and lodging fee model for residents which will take effect 1 December 2013.

The new fee model will make consistent the amount residents in Department of Human Services managed group homes pay and will standardise the inclusions they receive.

The new Board and Lodging fee will be equivalent to 75% of the Disability Support Pension rate and the full Commonwealth Rent Assistance. A person who receives a lower pension amount as a result of age eligibility will be charged a proportionately lower fee.

The *Disability Act 2006* and *Disability Regulations 2007* specify that charging for supported accommodation at a rate of 75% of the DSP and 100% CRA is not to be considered excessive.

The Department of Human Services has a plan in place to ensure the resident's situation is considered in applying the new board and lodging fee. Each resident will have a new financial plan developed in consultation with their House Supervisor and administrator.

If a resident or their administrator believes that they will experience undue financial hardship as a result of the board and lodging fee, they can apply for consideration under the department's Undue Financial Hardship policy.

The outcome of the Undue Financial Hardship policy may be a reduction in rent for the individual.

Victorian Disability Sector Awards: recipients

Raised with: Minister for Community Services

Raised by: Mrs Coote

Raised on: 25 June 2013

REPLY:

I would like to thank Mrs Coote for her enthusiastic support of the Victorian Disability Sector Awards. The awards are a partnership between National Disability Services Victoria, Disability Professionals Victoria and the Victorian Department of Human Services. The awards recognise individuals, teams, disability service providers, businesses and other members of the Victorian community who make a significant contribution to improving the lives of people with disabilities.

The results and case studies of the Victorian Disability Sector Awards have been widely publicised by the Department of Human Services online and in print media, including:

- A news item of award winners and finalists published on the DHS internet and intranet sites.
- The June edition of *Human Services In focus* published a story about the Awards to the department's funded community service agencies and stakeholders — with a link to the website and winners.
- YouTube videos are available from the Department of Human Services internet page and through internet search engines.
- A general media release of winners was circulated on the day of the event.
- Individual media releases of award winners and finalists were circulated to local media outlets.

All winners and finalists were provided with images of themselves with me as Minister for Disability Services and Reform, Mrs Andrea Coote MLC, Parliamentary Secretary for Families and Community Services, and the two sector partners involved in the Awards.

Organisations involved in the awards have promoted the outcomes in the following media:

- An article in the online newspaper: *Rangers Trader Mail* about the Excellence in Improving Health Winner: One person — One plan — Disability Sector Epilepsy Management Plan Development Group.
- An article in *Sunraysia Daily* on 15 June about two residents listed as finalists for the awards.
- One of the award partners, Disability Professionals Victoria, has listed the award winners and finalists on their website.
- Scope's July newsletter included articles on award finalists and winners and organisational partners.
- The Araluen Centre plan to feature Lara Hynes, a finalist in the category for Excellence in Improving Participation Award in the next issue of their newsletter.

I share Mrs Coote's commitment to the awards which celebrate the outstanding work of staff and volunteers supporting people with disabilities.

Werribee Football Club: facilities

Raised with: Minister for Sport and Recreation

Raised by: Mr Elsbury

Raised on: 25 June 2013

REPLY:

I refer to the Adjournment Debate question you raised on the 25 June 2013 in relation to Werribee Football Club and its proposal to redevelop the facilities at Chirnside Park.

On the 14 May 2013 the Member for the Western Metropolitan Region, Andrew Elsbury MLC and I attended a meeting with Mr Mark Penaluna, CEO and Mr John Nicol, President of the Werribee Football Club (WFC).

The purpose of this meeting was to discuss plans to redevelop Chirnside Park, Werribee and included a presentation on the preliminary plans, costings and timelines of the proposed project.

The WFC currently owns a licence to operate electronic gaming machines at its Tigers Clubhouse facility and therefore this project is not eligible to receive funding under the Community Facility Funding Program.

As with other Clubs who directly benefit from electronic gaming machines, I encourage the WFC to work closely with their Council to source other funding opportunities.

Bedford Road–Great Ryrie Street, Ringwood: traffic lights

Raised with: Minister for Roads

Raised by: Mr Leane

Raised on: 25 June 2013

REPLY:

As previously advised in a reply to this matter, which you raised in an Adjournment Debate on 9 October 2012, Bedford Road and Great Ryrie Street are local roads managed by the Maroondah City Council. Local governments in Victoria share funding responsibility for local roads with the Commonwealth. This has been the case since 1991. Councils receive Financial Assistance Grants from the Federal Government, taking into consideration the Council's local road responsibilities. The Federal Government provides additional funding for road safety projects through the Nation Building Black Spot program, and for road maintenance-related projects through the Roads to Recovery program.

It is the responsibility of the Maroondah City Council to investigate and determine the most appropriate safety treatment for the intersection of Bedford Road and Great Ryrie Street, and to assess whether such a treatment meets the criteria for funding under one of the abovementioned Federal Government grants or programs. As part of its investigation, the Council may seek advice from VicRoads about treatment options for the intersection.

Geelong: regional migration agreement

Raised with: Premier

Raised by: Ms Tierney

Raised on: 25 June 2013

REPLY:

Regional Migration Agreements (RMAs) were announced in the 2011–12 Commonwealth Budget with the aim of allowing regional communities to fill chronic skills shortages through migration. Two years later, the program has not been formally established, the eligibility criteria are not yet known and the final guidelines still to be released by the Commonwealth Minister for Immigration and Citizenship.

Immigration remains the responsibility of the Commonwealth. Until guidelines are released, no region is able to formally submit a proposal to the Commonwealth on eligibility for the program.

Geelong has a diverse and resilient economy that positions it well to meet the ongoing challenges presented by a changing economy, including the shift away from manufacturing towards a range of service sectors.

The Victorian Government will continue to back Geelong through the opportunities presented by structural change. This includes:

- \$9 million as part of a \$49 million Industry and Innovation Fund to support the economic development and diversification of the Geelong and northern Melbourne regions;
- \$15 million for the Geelong Development Fund, which consists of \$11 million for the Geelong Advancement Fund to build jobs and economic opportunities in Geelong, and \$4 million for the Greater Geelong Industry Fund, which encourages businesses to diversify or expand;
- \$1.8 million for Skilling the Bay to directly support transitioning workers and to more generally build new skills, support emerging and growing industries, and translate research and innovation into new business opportunities across the region;
- working with Cotton On to secure a further 500 jobs, and with the Commonwealth to establish the DisabilityCare national headquarters, creating 450 jobs; and
- investment in health infrastructure, including \$93 million for a major upgrade to Geelong Hospital and \$50 million for a new community hospital at Waurm Ponds.

Fruit growers: Goulburn Valley

Raised with: Minister for Agriculture and Food Security

Raised by: Ms Darveniza

Raised on: 26 June 2013

REPLY:

I refer to the matter you raised during the Adjournment debate in the Legislative Council on 26 June 2013 regarding fruit growers in the Goulburn Valley and the potential biosecurity risk associated with trees that are not managed appropriately.

Under Victoria's Plant Biosecurity Act 2010 and the associated Plant Biosecurity Regulations 2012, landholders are required to take responsibility for the monitoring and management of biosecurity issues affecting their property. This applies irrespective of the commercial status of the plants grown on the property.

It is Victorian Government policy not to subsidise the provision of biosecurity control measures for redundant orchards. However, in recognition of the serious nature of the situation in the Goulburn Valley, the Department of Environment and Primary Industries (DEPI) in partnership with the Rural Financial Counselling Service (RFCS) and social support agencies is providing the following assistance measures:

- (a) financial counselling and social support;
- (b) referrals to other support agencies that can provide specific individual assistance;

- (c) horticultural technical and marketing advice; and
- (d) targeted and timely group workshops and information sessions.

On 14 June 2013 the Victorian Government also announced \$2 million of funding for an employment program to be delivered by the Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority (GBCMA) and the Department of Environment and Primary Industries. Between 20 and 40 workers affected by the Shepparton Preserving Company Ardmona (SPCA) announcement are expected to be employed through the Fruit Industry Employment Program. The program participants are to be offered work on conservation management projects and is expected to be operational by August 2013.

The Victorian Government has also established the Goulburn Valley Fruit Growers Strategic Stakeholder Group. The group met for the first time on 1 July and is developing a comprehensive approach to ensure the Goulburn Valley region maintains viable and productive farms.

Thank you for raising this matter with me.

Housing: carbon tax compensation

Raised with: Minister for Housing

Raised by: Mr Melhem

Raised on: 26 June 2013

REPLY:

The Commonwealth Department of Human Services describes the Clean Energy Supplement as an ongoing payment to help eligible households with any impact from the carbon price on everyday expenses. Rent is an everyday expense.

Households in public housing in Victoria pay no more than 25 per cent of their income in rent. The subsidy associated with this policy equates to around \$400 million per year. We have also decided not to backdate any increases associated with the inclusion of the Clean Energy Supplement so no changes will occur until mid-August this year.

The carbon tax does impose additional costs on the operations of the public housing system through the construction and maintenance of our properties.

The decision to include the Clean Energy Supplement in rent calculations is line with what is happening in other states. Queensland and New South Wales are also including the supplement when assessing rents because of the increased costs on the running of their portfolios.

Volunteer West: funding

Raised with: Minister for Community Services

Raised by: Mr Finn

Raised on: 27 June 2013

REPLY:

The Coalition Government appreciates the vital role of volunteers in the delivery of important services to Victorian communities.

In the 2011–12 State Budget, government announced \$5.2 million over four years for strategies to strengthen volunteering in Victoria including through the development of a range of online resources and programs.

The Victorian Government also provides ongoing support to Volunteering Victoria — the peak agency for volunteering in the state — to support organisations to recruit, retain and support volunteers.

Volunteer Resource Centres such as Volunteer West also provide an important intermediary service to connect volunteers with the not-for-profit community sector. The Department of Human Services works with these organisations to address issues in volunteering through its involvement in the Victorian Volunteer Resource Centre Network.

My department met with the Managing Director Volunteer West on 31 July 2013 and discussed a range of ways that the organisation could diversify its funding and resources.

Local government: federal referendum

Raised with: Minister for Local Government

Raised by: Mr Ramsay

Raised on: 27 June 2013

REPLY:

The Victorian Government has made its views known on the Federal Labor Government's proposed local government referendum.

The referendum is unnecessary and represents a waste of public funds.

For the reasons articulated in the Adjournment debate contribution and others, the Victorian Government believes the Federal Government should withdraw the referendum. If the referendum is to proceed, the Government urges the Victorian public to vote 'no'.

The Victorian Government opposes the proposed local government referendum because there is a great risk Victorian councils could be left worse off.

The Government could not support a change to the Constitution to recognise local government unless it provided legal certainty and greater financial security for the sector and ensured better outcomes for Victorian communities.

Constitutional recognition of local government has the capacity to further blur the roles and responsibilities between the three tiers of government — potentially leading to poorer overall outcomes. The Commonwealth Government has rushed this proposal and has not convincingly ruled out unintended consequences.

The Referendum is the result of negotiations between former Prime Minister Julia Gillard, the Greens and the independent members for Labor to cling to government following the 2013 federal election.

The Victorian Government has expressed its opposition to the referendum proposal to the Commonwealth Government and will continue to do so.

Automotive industry: future

Raised with: Minister for Manufacturing

Raised by: Ms Tierney

Raised on: 27 June 2013

REPLY:

I refer to the matter raised by Ms Gayle Tierney, Member for Western Victoria, on 27 June 2013 regarding the Automotive Industry.

The Department of State Development, Business and Innovation is working closely with the industry and relevant agencies from the Commonwealth and South Australian Governments to maintain vehicle manufacturing in Australia.

The issue of Ford's closure is being dealt with at the highest level. The Premier has led action to generate new jobs and opportunities for workers and communities affected by the Ford announcement with the establishment of the Premier's Ford Taskforce.

I am also pleased to advise that my discussions with Ford during my visit to Detroit in May 2013 led to the company committing \$10 million towards the Economic Development and Diversification Fund jointly established by the Commonwealth and Victorian Governments. This has resulted in a fund totalling \$49 million to create job and investment opportunities in Geelong and Northern Metropolitan Melbourne.

The Victorian Government's contribution of an additional \$2 million towards the Automotive New Markets Program to assist companies to diversify into new products and new markets is another measure that the Coalition Government has taken to assist businesses in creating employment opportunities for those affected.

The recent automotive missions to the United States and South East Asia which introduced Victorian businesses to overseas opportunities are further examples of the Government's support for the automotive industry. I have been advised that these missions have generated good business leads for a number of participants.

I have also recently met with key industry bodies such as the Federation of Automotive Products Manufacturers (FAPM) and the Australian Automotive Aftermarket Association (AAAA).

In relation to the specific query on the future of Holden's Engine Plant at Fishermans Bend, I can confirm that my discussions with Holden centred around its commitment to retain its manufacturing capabilities in Australia for its next generation of vehicles. The future of Holden's Engine Plant centres around its parent company's global strategy and Holden will discuss its future plans with the Victorian Government in due course. This is standard procedure for any subsidiary of a large global company.

While I am not in a position to go into details, I can confirm that I have also been in very positive discussions with both the Commonwealth and Toyota regarding its ongoing manufacturing in Victoria.

There is still a bright future for Victoria's manufacturing industry, including our automotive industry, and this Government remains committed to its sustainable future.

WRITTEN ADJOURNMENT RESPONSES

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

Thursday, 22 August 2013

Crown land: management

Raised with: Minister for Environment and Climate Change

Raised by: Mr Barber

Raised on: 30 May 2013

REPLY:

The Victorian Auditor-General's Office (VAGO) has commenced an audit of the Department of Environment and Primary Industries' (DEPI) oversight, and accountability of Committees of Management (CoMs).

The audit will review DEPI's use of CoMs to manage Crown land reserves and determine whether the governance and support that DEPI provides to CoMs enables them to effectively and efficiently manage Crown land reserves.

To address this objective, the audit will examine whether DEPI:

- effectively establishes CoMs and associated governance arrangements;
- provides the guidance and support that CoMs need to carry out their responsibilities and meet their obligations; and
- monitors the effectiveness of CoMs in meeting their obligations and responsibilities, and ensures transparency and accountability in the operations of CoMs.

While CoMs will not be directly audited, a number of CoMs have had an opportunity to provide feedback to VAGO as part of the development of the audit specification process and a selection of the different types of CoMs will participate as part of this audit as case studies.

Lower Murray Water: board representation

Raised with: Minister for Water

Raised by: Ms Broad

Raised on: 30 May 2013

REPLY:

The Victorian Coalition Government is committed to ensuring that customers and members of regional communities are represented on the boards of the Victorian water corporations.

For three years there have been discussions about a proposal to introduce 50 per cent elected boards to the four rural water corporations.

The genesis of this proposal was the frustration at the lack of customer representation, and apparent disconnection between the decisions and services provided by rural water authority boards and rural communities.

Following extensive consultation I have found little consensus among stakeholders on a suitable and fair alternative to the board appointment process.

Given the diversity of views and lack of consensus as to an appropriate path forward, I have decided not to go ahead with implementing the arrangement for electing board members. The Victorian Farmers Federation support this position.

To ensure rural representation on rural water corporations, I have added the Victorian Farmers Federation President to the selection panel to ensure rural representation on rural water corporations are recommended to me as Minister.

As a result of my appointment of directors in 2011 and 2012 to the boards of the four rural water corporations, 63 per cent of directors are now customers of the water corporation. In the case of Lower Murray Water, five of the seven directors are customers of the corporation.

I appreciate that the decision not to proceed with the original proposal will please some and disappoint others. However, I believe very strongly that this is the right decision.

Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne: vandalism

Raised with: Minister for Environment and Climate Change

Raised by: Mrs Coote

Raised on: 11 June 2013

REPLY:

As a result of the recent vandalism attack in the Arid Garden, the Royal Botanic Gardens (RBG) is taking steps to improve the security and protection of the valuable assets within the gardens.

Following discussions with Victoria Police, the local branch has increased night patrols around the perimeter of the gardens. The RBG now has a direct Victoria Police contact should such a situation arise in the future. The RBG's security patrols have also been made aware of the recent incident and will ensure increased vigilance during lock-up procedures.

The RBG will consider whether the iron fencing surrounding the gardens, dating back to 1858, still provides adequate security.

Surveillance camera options are also being investigated for key areas of the gardens, such as Guilfoyle's Volcano, the Separation Tree and the Arid Garden.

Prior to the recent vandalism, the RBG had been planning the redevelopment of the Arid Garden, to open up the area to better link with Guilfoyle's Volcano and the nearby California Collection. This redesign will result in an Arid Garden with a more open aspect, improved accessibility and increased visibility, which will help reduce the potential for future acts of vandalism and plant theft in this area.

Melbourne Water: Gardiners Creek Trail closure

Raised with: Minister for Water

Raised by: Mr Lenders

Raised on: 12 June 2013

REPLY:

Melbourne Water (MW) has investigated a number of possible detour routes for the Gardiners Creek Trail, while it conducts flood mitigation works along Gardiners Creek. The proposed detour route selected was identified as the best route in a traffic management plan completed by GHD, and later audited by O'Brien Traffic. The cities of Boroondara and Stonnington, and Bicycle Network Victoria were consulted as part of the traffic management planning process.

The suggestion to use a detour through the Coles car park was considered in the early planning stages of the project but not pursued as it was considered less safe and less feasible than other options. Safety was a concern with this option as it would not completely separate bicycle and foot traffic from construction machinery due to the position of the site compound. Coles also indicated it was unlikely to agree to a detour on its land.

MW recognises the significance of the disruption to the local community, commuter and recreational cyclists who use the Gardiners Creek shared path, and aims to complete the works as quickly as practicable in order to minimise disruption to the community including shared path users.

Western Victoria Region: ministerial visit

Raised with: Minister for Corrections

Raised by: Mr O'Brien

Raised on: 13 June 2013

REPLY:

This Adjournment Debate was raised for both the Minister for Corrections and the Minister for Crime Prevention. This matter falls under the responsibility of the Minister for Corrections.

I am pleased to advise the House that I visited the Western Victoria Region on 18 July 2013. While I was there I met with representatives of the Ararat Council and the Community Advisory Group and was able to see firsthand the significant progress that has been made on site at the Hopkins Correctional Centre Expansion Project. I am delighted to confirm that full scale works are proceeding on this rescued project with the workforce reaching its target of over 500 per day in July.

I was also pleased to visit a site of the popular Landmate Program earlier this month. The Landmate Program sees teams of prisoners going out into the community carrying out environmental and agricultural work. I also met with the Chairperson of Parklands Albury Wodonga, Mr Dennis Toohey, and heard directly from him about the significant contribution this program makes to regional Victorian communities.