

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

FIFTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT

FIRST SESSION

WRITTEN ADJOURNMENT RESPONSES

5 and 7 February 2013

(Extract from book 1)

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By authority of the Victorian Government Printer

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The Lieutenant-Governor

The Honourable Justice MARILYN WARREN, AC

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

Legislative Council standing committees

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Parliamentary Services — Secretary: Mr P. Lochert

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FIFTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT — FIRST SESSION

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WRITTEN ADJOURNMENT RESPONSES

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

Tuesday, 5 February 2013

Disability services: national insurance scheme

Raised with: Premier

Raised by: Ms Broad

Raised on: 17 August 2011

REPLY:

The Victorian coalition government has been a champion of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) for a number of years. The NDIS represents an opportunity to fundamentally reform the disability service system, which the Productivity Commission described as ‘underfunded, fragmented, unfair and inefficient’.

On 12 August 2012, I announced, together with the Minister for Community Services and the commonwealth Minister for Disability Reform, an agreement on the launch of the NDIS in the Barwon area, covering the City of Greater Geelong, the Surf Coast shire, the Borough of Queenscliffe and the Colac-Otway shire. At the Council of Australian Governments’ meeting on 7 December 2012, our government formalised this agreement, which will enable the launch to start from July 2013 and will assist around 5000 people with severe and profound disability, their families and carers.

As we move towards the Barwon area launch, the Victorian government will continue to work with the commonwealth and other state and territory governments to build the foundations of the NDIS. In doing so, our government will continue to advocate for the best outcomes for people with disability, their carers and families in Victoria.

Astor Theatre: future

Raised with: Premier

Raised by: Ms Pennicuik

Raised on: 20 June 2012

REPLY:

As one of few surviving Art Deco cinemas from the 1930s, the Astor Theatre is important architecturally, historically and socially to Victorians.

The government and community are gratified that the future of the Astor was positively resolved in late August 2012. The new owner, Mr Ralph Taranto, is an experienced cinema proprietor and we thank him for his deep interest in the heritage building and his refurbishment plans.

St Arnaud Primary School: Right Choices program**Raised with: Premier****Raised by: Ms Broad****Raised on: 14 August 2012****REPLY:**

I commend Sisters Angela and Ursula Caine for their successful coordination of the Right Choices early intervention program at St Arnaud Primary School. The extensive community support for this program reflects that the Sisters' hard work is highly valued.

The Victorian government's policy is to foster and increase school autonomy. The central tenet supporting this position is that schools are the best decision makers to determine the appropriate distribution of their funds and corresponding resources.

The funding provided by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development to schools through the Student Resource Package (SRP) includes needs-based elements. This enables schools to more flexibly adjust their budgets to support early intervention programs such as Right Choices.

Early intervention programs such as Right Choices play an important role in the delivery of additional assistance for disengaged students. Collaboration between schools, government departments, community sector organisations and volunteers in the delivery of these programs is critical.

As such, I have referred this matter to the Hon. Martin Dixon MLA, Minister for Education for further consideration of what assistance is available to support local coordination for this program.

Home and community care: City of Greater Shepparton**Raised with: Minister for Ageing****Raised by: Ms Darveniza****Raised on: 28 August 2012****REPLY:**

Victoria's contribution to the HACC program continues to grow. Over many years the Victorian government has made additional contributions to HACC services over and above the requirements of its agreement with the Commonwealth.

In light of continued growth in the HACC program in 2012–13, the state's additional contribution, in excess of its agreed level of funding to match the Commonwealth's contribution, has been adjusted to more closely align with its matching obligations.

The Greater Shepparton City Council will receive a net increase in HACC funding from \$2 794 909 in 2011–12 to \$2 819 133 in 2012–13 with further HACC growth funds for the 2012–13 financial year to flow to service providers in all Victorian local government areas from 1 January 2013. HACC growth funding to service providers is allocated by local government area based on growth in the HACC target population.

Rail: Ararat–Maryborough line

Raised with: Minister for Public Transport

Raised by: Ms Pulford

Raised on: 28 August 2012

REPLY:

The rail line between Ararat and Maryborough was converted from broad to standard gauge between 10 April 1995 and 5 March 1996.

The main commodity being carried over the line at that stage was grain.

The line was booked out of service on 17 December 2004 due to a lack of traffic on account of the prolonged drought that was being experienced at this time.

Currently, there is no traffic available that warrants the restoration of the line. However, the rail corridor is being retained to ensure it can be re-opened if required.

East Meets West Lunar New Year Festival

Raised with: Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship

Raised by: Mr Finn

Raised on: 12 September 2012

REPLY:

The East Meets West Lunar New Year Festival is a significant social and cultural event that is enjoyed by the broad Victorian community.

I understand the Festival has received support of \$40 000 since 2005 from the community grants program.

I am advised that the Footscray Asian Business Association has recently applied to the Office of Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship for a festival and events grant to fund the East Meets West Lunar New Year Festival under the 2012–13 community grants program.

I am advised that the application is currently being considered and that the Association will be advised accordingly.

Ambulance services: Mooroolbark

Raised with: Minister for Mental Health

Raised by: Mr Leane

Raised on: 12 September 2012

REPLY:

Suitable land has been acquired at the former Mooroolbark Primary School site which will enable the future development of an Ambulance Station to service Mooroolbark and the surrounding area.

Vocational education and training: reforms

Raised with: Minister for Higher Education and Skills

Raised by: Mr Ramsay

Raised on: 13 September 2012

REPLY:

I am informed as follows:

The Victorian government is providing funding for vocational training at the highest levels ever, with \$1.2 billion a year budgeted for training subsidies alone for the next four years.

Strong and viable TAFE providers are an essential part of the system and Victoria has some of the best TAFE providers in Australia. Uniquely, some of our TAFE providers such as the University of Ballarat, are also part of universities, which provide opportunities for integrated and connected education provision.

The government has maintained or increased support for apprenticeships, and training in areas where there are skills shortages such as aged care, health care, nursing, advanced manufacturing, a range of agricultural courses, telecommunications and renewable energy, and entry-level courses for learners with low literacy, numeracy and English language skills. The government has decreased subsidies in areas where there is evidence of oversupply of training or substitution from the private market.

Recognising the vital role vocational training plays in regional Victoria Extra funding applies to courses delivered outside the metropolitan area including Ballarat.

In the current economic climate, it is more important than ever that communities support their local TAFE providers and dual-sector Universities as they transition to more sustainable business models. Negative portrayals of the funding changes and their impact on the viability of TAFE providers are not helpful and will only make it harder for TAFE providers to attract new enrolments.

I would encourage everyone in Ballarat to give their full support to the University of Ballarat as it moves into an exciting next phase of its long history, which will include the establishment of an Industry Skills Centre.

Diabetes: funding

Raised with: Minister for Health

Raised by: Ms Tierney

Raised on: 10 October 2012

REPLY:

The Life! Diabetes and Cardiovascular Disease Prevention Program provides Victorians at high risk with the skills and motivation to adopt a healthier lifestyle and reduce their risk of type 2 diabetes, heart disease and stroke.

The Life! program has established links with the National Centre for Farmer Health to improve the reach of the program into Victorian farming communities. Activities include promoting the Life! telephone health coaching service as an accessible alternative to the group-based course; and promoting diabetes awareness at the community level at annual rural health exhibitions and conferences.

The partnership between the Life! program and the National Centre for Farmer Health was established and is maintained without specific funding allocation.

I am advised that one of the Life! program's priorities is to increase participant uptake among rural and regional communities, particularly telephone health coaching, through social marketing and community engagement activities.

Ambulance Victoria: referral service

Raised with: Minister for Health

Raised by: Ms Darveniza

Raised on: 24 October 2012

REPLY:

I am advised that the expansion of Ambulance Victoria's telephone referral service—'RefComm' into regional and rural Victoria is planned for completion by the end of 2013. I understand that a phased roll-out of the service will commence with the Barwon South West region in November 2012.

I would like to reassure Mrs Darveniza that Northern Victoria is most definitely an important part of regional Victoria and is not excluded from the planned expansion of the service. Naturally, it is prudent for Ambulance Victoria to consider how best to introduce this type of service across the breadth of Victoria, given its reliance on the availability of alternative service providers across the health system.

I note that under the previous government, RefComm was not provided in country Victoria at all over 11 years.

Footscray Community Legal Centre: taxidriver legal clinic

Raised with: Attorney-General

Raised by: Hon. M. P. Pakula

Raised on: 24 October 2012

REPLY:

In late 2010, the Legal Services Board (the Board) awarded a project grant of \$50 000 to the Federation of Community Legal Centres and Footscray Community Legal Centre, to establish a Taxi Driver Legal Clinic (the Clinic).

The project ran for 12 months from December 2010 to December 2011, and during that time 169 clients were assisted.

The Board has awarded a further project grant of \$57 327 to Footscray Community Legal Centre to continue the Taxi Driver Legal Clinic for the next 12 months.

Higher education and skills: federal funding

Raised with: Minister for Higher Education and Skills

Raised by: Mr Ramsay

Raised on: 24 October 2012

REPLY:

I am informed as follows:

As part of its Mid-year Economic and Fiscal Outlook Statement the commonwealth government has made a number of funding decisions which will impact on Victoria's universities and students.

The commonwealth government is responsible for the student income support system which provides financial assistance to support students meet living costs while they study. Key funding cuts are being made to student income support arrangements. They are:

- Masters by Coursework students will need to wait until 2017 before they become eligible to access Youth Allowance, Austudy or ABSTUDY. This is an issue given that, increasingly, a number of graduates entering specific professions must now undertake a masters-level course before they can commence work.
- The Student Start-up scholarships which provide modest financial support to students to meet the upfront costs of books and equipment when they commence studying will not keep up with inflation for at least the next three years.

The commonwealth government is also delaying investment in university research infrastructure and removing \$270 million worth of funding nationally to support universities to meet the specific performance targets they have negotiated with the Commonwealth.

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development will continue to monitor the impact that these Commonwealth funding changes will have on Victoria's university sector.

In relation to the National Partnership Agreement on Skills Reform, the commonwealth government has not yet signed Victoria's proposed Implementation Plan (IP). The Victorian government continues to be committed to the National Partnership Agreement, as a leader on the centrepiece reforms of the COAG Skills Agenda, which are: a minimum national entitlement to government subsidised training, a more open and competitive training market, and increased participation in training.

City of Kingston: councillor conduct

Raised with: Minister for Local Government

Raised by: Hon. M. P. Pakula

Raised on: 25 October 2012

REPLY:

I refer to the adjournment debate matter raised by the Hon. Martin Pakula MLC, Member for Western Metropolitan, in relation to an allegation against a fellow Kingston City councillor made by Cr Rosemary West in a sworn statutory declaration which had been provided to Mr Pakula.

I am advised that no complaint has been received by my office regarding this matter. However, I am advised a complaint was received by the Local Government Investigations and Compliance Inspectorate and that matter has concluded. The relevant parties have been advised of that outcome.

In responding, I take heed of the comments by the President in relation to the proper process for raising complaints of this nature with ministers during Adjournment debates, when the matter had not previously been raised with ministers by the complainant in question.

At a general level, councillors are able to deal with concerns regarding the conduct of fellow councillors in accordance with dispute resolution procedures adopted as part of each Council's Councillor Code of Conduct.

If a matter cannot be resolved by the Council internally, an individual Councillor, a group of Councillors or the Council by resolution, may apply for an independent Councillor Conduct Panel where it is believed that a Councillor's conduct is in breach of the Code and therefore constitutes misconduct under the *Local Government Act 1989*. A Panel has powers to discipline a councillor for misconduct or require remedial action to be undertaken.

Allegations of bullying behaviour by one Councillor against another may be directed to Worksafe Victoria for advice or potential action under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004*.

Evidence of an alleged breach of the Local Government Act by any person should be directed to the Local Government Investigations and Compliance Inspectorate.

Elwood Secondary College: learning hub

Raised with: Minister for Education

Raised by: Ms Crozier

Raised on: 14 November 2012

REPLY:

I am informed as follows:

The Elwood Learning Hub is based on research that tells us that the benefits to students (aged 0 to 18) in being educated in their local communities include increased resilience, school and community connectedness, and improved transitions between settings.

The vision of the Hub is 'to provide our children with the very best educational opportunities and build a sense of belonging and connectedness within the local community.'

A number of linkages between the project partners have already been established, including:

- Prep and Year 5 visits to the Poets Grove Children's Centre for shared reading;
- An 'investigations' buddies program established between the Poets Grove Children's Centre and Year 2 Elwood Primary School students; and
- Year 9 students working with Year 5 students on a student community engagement project.

I would be delighted to visit Elwood Secondary College to witness the achievements of the Elwood Learning Hub firsthand and to learn about the next stage of the project.

Students: education conveyance allowance

Raised with: Minister for Education

Raised by: Ms Darveniza

Raised on: 14 November 2012

REPLY:

I am informed as follows:

Changes to the conveyance allowance program were first announced in the 2011–12 Victorian budget. Following the budget announcement, a departmental review of the metropolitan boundary, which is used to determine eligibility for the conveyance allowance, was undertaken. The last review had been conducted in 1983.

On 30 October 2012, the Victorian government announced that the current Urban Growth Boundary would be used to determine eligibility for the conveyance allowance from 2013. In addition, means testing was to be introduced for new applicants in 2013, who had not previously claimed in 2012.

A generous six year grandfathering period was also announced to assist schools and families currently receiving the conveyance allowance to deal with the transition to the new metropolitan boundary and means testing requirements.

Exemptions for a large number of postcodes within the Urban Growth Boundary have been granted in recognition of the limited access to public transport services in those areas. Specialist and alternative setting schools within the Urban Growth Boundary have also been exempted from the changes.

In the weeks following the October 2012 announcement, I received feedback from schools, families, and Members of Parliament located in rural and regional Victoria regarding their concerns with the proposed move to introduce means testing in 2013.

After listening to this feedback, it was understood there were unintended consequences for schools and local bus services arising from the introduction of means testing. On 29 November 2012, I announced that means testing would no longer be applied from 2013. This means that in 2013 students in rural and regional Victoria will be able to apply for the conveyance allowance under the 2012 eligibility criteria.

The announced change to the new metropolitan boundary came into effect on 1 January 2013 as well as the six year grandfathering period and exemptions to postcodes within the UGB with limited access to public transport.

Please note, the free school bus services provided through Public Transport Victoria are not affected by the changes to the conveyance allowance.

Mental health: emergency beds

Raised with: Minister for Mental Health

Raised by: Mr Eideh

Raised on: 14 November 2012

I respond to Mr Eideh's concern regarding the importance of mental health specialist treatment beds.

As noted by the President of the Legislative Council, Mr Eideh delivered a speech which did not make it clear what action he seeks.

The information provided by Mr Eideh in his speech is misleading on two counts. First, people with mental health concerns are assessed on entry to an emergency department (if not before) by emergency department triage and receive mental health treatment by trained mental health clinicians immediately if required.

Second, the percentage of those who are then assessed and admitted to an acute mental health bed within eight hours has remained relatively stable statewide across 2009–10 to 2011–12.

Since coming to office this government has provided \$168 million (over four years) to improve access to, expand and streamline community and bed-based mental health care.

I also note that the commonwealth government's funding cuts announced in the midyear economic outlook statement total over \$100 million before 30 June 2013. Of this amount, an estimated \$12.6 million cut is attributable to mental health services.

Greek community: migrant services

Raised with: Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship

Raised by: Ms Mikakos

Raised on: 14 November 2012

REPLY:

The Australian Greek Welfare Society is one of the many community organisations that underpin our cohesive, multicultural society and I commend them for their valuable work in supporting the Greek community in Victoria.

As indicated in the matter raised by Ms Mikakos, primary responsibility for settlement rests with the commonwealth government. Through the Select Council on Immigration and Settlement, and on behalf of all newly arrived migrants and refugees, the Victorian government will continue to advocate to the commonwealth government on the development of a needs-based outcome driven National Settlement Framework.

I have asked the Office of Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship to contact the Society and discuss further strategies and appropriate funding sources.

Stanley Road, Vermont South: safety

Raised with: Minister for Roads

Raised by: Mr Leane

Raised on: 15 November 2012

REPLY:

VicRoads is developing a structure plan to provide a clear vision for the future use of the land within the Healesville Freeway reservation that demonstrates an appropriate balance of all stakeholders' interests.

VicRoads has gained an in-depth understanding of the community's concerns and interests in the reservation through meetings with local stakeholders and user groups. One of the interests expressed at the initial meetings has been the potential creation of additional roads through the reservation.

VicRoads advises me that there are no firm proposals for additional through roads.

Part of the process of developing a structure plan for the future use of the Healesville Freeway Reservation will involve a traffic management study. The possibility of including additional through roads will need to be considered as part of the traffic management study.

Community services: juvenile incarceration

Raised with: Minister for Community Services

Raised by: Ms Mikakos

Raised on: 15 November 2012

REPLY:

Section 467 of the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* authorises the Youth Parole Board, an independent statutory authority chaired by a County Court Judge, to transfer young people aged 16 or more to adult prison in particular circumstances.

Once a young person transfers to an adult prison they come under the jurisdiction of the Adult Parole Board, with Corrections Victoria responsible for their sentence management.

The government has addressed all action areas identified by Neil Comrie AO in his report on the Melbourne Youth Justice Precinct at Parkville conducted in May 2012 after 11 years of Labor management. Mr Comrie identified multiple deficiencies and eight areas for action. These included the need to update security measures, improve maintenance, and build capacity to meet both growing demand and the need to respond to rehabilitation of vulnerable clients and an emerging trend of others committed for violence related offences.

The government has also implemented each of the Victorian Ombudsman's 27 recommendations from his October 2010 whistleblowers 'Investigation into Conditions at the Melbourne Youth Justice Precinct'. After 11 years of Labor management, the Ombudsman described the conditions at the Precinct as 'disgraceful' and 'unsafe' and in breach of:

- UN Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of their Liberty;
- Australasian Juvenile Justice Administration Standards for Juvenile Custodial Facilities;
- recommendations arising from the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody; and
- government health regulations.

In the 2012–13 budget, the coalition government allocated an additional \$54.5 million over three years to create additional capacity at the Malmsbury Youth Justice Centre which will provide greater flexibility to manage young people within the youth justice system.

Students: education conveyance allowance

Raised with: Minister for Education

Raised by: Mr Ramsay

Raised on: 15 November 2012

REPLY:

I am informed as follows:

Changes to the conveyance allowance program were first announced in the 2011–12 Victorian budget. Following the budget announcement, a departmental review of the metropolitan boundary, which is used to determine eligibility for the conveyance allowance, was undertaken. The last review had been conducted in 1983.

On 30 October 2012, the Victorian government announced that the current Urban Growth Boundary would be used to determine eligibility for the conveyance allowance from 2013. In addition, means testing was to be introduced for new applicants in 2013, who had not previously claimed in 2012.

A generous six year grandfathering period was also announced to assist schools and families currently receiving the conveyance allowance to deal with the transition to the new metropolitan boundary and means testing requirements.

Exemptions for a large number of postcodes within the Urban Growth Boundary have been granted in recognition of the limited access to public transport services in those areas. Specialist and alternative setting schools within the Urban Growth Boundary have also been exempted from the changes.

In the weeks following the October 2012 announcement, I received feedback from schools, families, and Members of Parliament located in rural and regional Victoria regarding their concerns with the proposed move to introduce means testing in 2013.

After listening to this feedback, it was understood there were unintended consequences for schools and local bus services arising from the introduction of means testing. On 29 November 2012, I announced that means testing would no longer be applied from 2013. This means that in 2013 students in rural and regional Victoria will be able to apply for the conveyance allowance under the 2012 eligibility criteria.

The announced change to the new metropolitan boundary came into effect on 1 January 2013 as well as the six year grandfathering period and exemptions to postcodes within the UGB with limited access to public transport.

Please note, the free school bus services provided through Public Transport Victoria are not affected by the changes to the conveyance allowance.

Students: education conveyance allowance**Raised with: Minister for Education****Raised by: Ms Broad****Raised on: 27 November 2012****REPLY:**

I am informed as follows:

Changes to the conveyance allowance program were first announced in the 2011–12 Victorian budget. Following the budget announcement, a departmental review of the metropolitan boundary, which is used to determine eligibility for the conveyance allowance, was undertaken. The last review had been conducted in 1983.

On 30 October 2012, the Victorian government announced that the current Urban Growth Boundary would be used to determine eligibility for the conveyance allowance from 2013. In addition, means testing was to be introduced for new applicants in 2013, who had not previously claimed in 2012.

A generous six year grandfathering period was also announced to assist schools and families currently receiving the conveyance allowance to deal with the transition to the new metropolitan boundary and means testing requirements.

Exemptions for a large number of postcodes within the Urban Growth Boundary have been granted in recognition of the limited access to public transport services in those areas. Specialist and alternative setting schools within the Urban Growth Boundary have also been exempted from the changes.

In the weeks following the October 2012 announcement, I received feedback from schools, families, and Members of Parliament located in rural and regional Victoria regarding their concerns with the proposed move to introduce means testing in 2013.

After listening to this feedback, it was understood there were unintended consequences for schools and local bus services arising from the introduction of means testing. On 29 November 2012, I announced that means testing would no longer be applied from 2013. This means that in 2013 students in rural and regional Victoria will be able to apply for the conveyance allowance under the 2012 eligibility criteria.

The announced change to the new metropolitan boundary came into effect on 1 January 2013 as well as the six year grandfathering period and exemptions to postcodes within the UGB with limited access to public transport.

Please note, the free school bus services provided through Public Transport Victoria are not affected by the changes to the conveyance allowance.

Higher education: Auslan programs**Raised with: Minister for Higher Education and Skills****Raised by: Mrs Coote****Raised on: 27 November 2012****REPLY:**

I am informed as follows:

Training people to communicate using Auslan is an important aspect of supporting deaf people in their educational, occupational and social lives.

The government has initiated a competitive tender for delivery of a capped number of Auslan places for commencement during the first half of 2013. The tender specifications draw on the findings of the report of the review of Auslan training, conducted by the Centre of Excellence for Deaf and Hard of Hearing in partnership with Grant Thornton Australia and the *Report of the Auslan Training and Delivery Consultation: 2013 and Beyond*.

An expression of interest recently released to the training market closed on 1 November. Those providers assessed as eligible will be invited to submit a proposal in response to a Request for Tender in December 2012.

As you have identified, issues raised in the report included timetabling of courses and classes, poor teacher/student engagement and a lack of student support and mentoring services. The tender specifications will require applicants to respond to the issues raised in the report through their proposals.

Sri Durga Temple: bus services

Raised with: Minister for Public Transport

Raised by: Mr Elsbury

Raised on: 27 November 2012

REPLY:

Public Transport Victoria (PTV) has undertaken preliminary investigations into providing bus services which would link the Sri Durga Centre in Rockbank to the public transport network.

Neale Road is an unsealed rural road unsuitable for buses. There are no constructed bus stops on or nearby this section of road. Without using Neale Road, the closest bus route, Route 456, would be required to deviate significantly from its existing alignment for the purposes of serving the Centre.

PTV understands that the Shire of Melton is planning to undertake works on Neale Road. PTV will continue to monitor the situation once construction has been completed. Bus improvements in the area will be considered for funding alongside other competing initiatives at this time.

Nadrasca community farm: future

Raised with: Minister for Roads

Raised by: Mr Leane

Raised on: 27 November 2012

REPLY:

VicRoads is developing a Structure Plan to provide a clear vision for the future use of the land within the Healesville Freeway Reservation that demonstrates an appropriate balance of all stakeholders' interests.

Nadrasca is a not-for-profit business that is recognised by VicRoads and the community as providing a valuable community service for people with disabilities.

VicRoads has been consulting with Nadrasca to understand its needs and I can assure you that due consideration is being given to the operation of Nadrasca Farm in the development of the Structure Plan.

Students: education conveyance allowance**Raised with: Minister for Education****Raised by: Ms Tierney****Raised on: 27 November 2012****REPLY:**

I am informed as follows:

Changes to the conveyance allowance program were first announced in the 2011–12 Victorian budget. Following the budget announcement, a departmental review of the metropolitan boundary, which is used to determine eligibility for the conveyance allowance, was undertaken. The last review had been conducted in 1983.

On 30 October 2012, the Victorian government announced that the current Urban Growth Boundary would be used to determine eligibility for the conveyance allowance from 2013. In addition, means testing was to be introduced for new applicants in 2013, who had not previously claimed in 2012.

A generous six year grandfathering period was also announced to assist schools and families currently receiving the conveyance allowance to deal with the transition to the new metropolitan boundary and means testing requirements.

Exemptions for a large number of postcodes within the Urban Growth Boundary have been granted in recognition of the limited access to public transport services in those areas. Specialist and alternative setting schools within the Urban Growth Boundary have also been exempted from the changes.

In the weeks following the October 2012 announcement, I received feedback from schools, families, and Members of Parliament located in rural and regional Victoria regarding their concerns with the proposed move to introduce means testing in 2013.

After listening to this feedback, it was understood there were unintended consequences for schools and local bus services arising from the introduction of means testing.

On 29 November 2012, I announced that means testing would no longer be applied from 2013. This means that in 2013 students in rural and regional Victoria will be able to apply for the conveyance allowance under the 2012 eligibility criteria.

The announced change to the new metropolitan boundary came into effect on 1 January 2013 as well as the six year grandfathering period and exemptions to postcodes within the UGB with limited access to public transport.

Please note, the free school bus services provided through Public Transport Victoria are not affected by the changes to the conveyance allowance.

Students: education conveyance allowance**Raised with: Minister for Education****Raised by: Ms Darveniza****Raised on: 28 November 2012****REPLY:**

I am informed as follows:

Changes to the conveyance allowance program were first announced in the 2011–12 Victorian budget. Following the budget announcement, a departmental review of the metropolitan boundary, which is used to determine eligibility for the conveyance allowance, was undertaken. The last review had been conducted in 1983.

On 30 October 2012, the Victorian government announced that the current Urban Growth Boundary would be used to determine eligibility for the conveyance allowance from 2013. In addition, means testing was to be introduced for new applicants in 2013, who had not previously claimed in 2012.

A generous six year grandfathering period was also announced to assist schools and families currently receiving the conveyance allowance to deal with the transition to the new metropolitan boundary and means testing requirements.

Exemptions for a large number of postcodes within the Urban Growth Boundary have been granted in recognition of the limited access to public transport services in those areas. Specialist and alternative setting schools within the Urban Growth Boundary have also been exempted from the changes.

In the weeks following the October 2012 announcement, I received feedback from schools, families, and Members of Parliament located in rural and regional Victoria regarding their concerns with the proposed move to introduce means testing in 2013.

After listening to this feedback, it was understood there were unintended consequences for schools and local bus services arising from the introduction of means testing. On 29 November 2012, I announced that means testing would no longer be applied from 2013. This means that in 2013 students in rural and regional Victoria will be able to apply for the conveyance allowance under the 2012 eligibility criteria.

The announced change to the new metropolitan boundary came into effect on 1 January 2013 as well as the six year grandfathering period and exemptions to postcodes within the UGB with limited access to public transport.

Please note, the free school bus services provided through Public Transport Victoria are not affected by the changes to the conveyance allowance.

Budget: gaming licences**Raised with: Minister for Gaming****Raised by: Mr O'Donohue****Raised on: 28 November 2012****REPLY:**

The Victorian Auditor-General's June 2011 report on the allocation of electronic gaming machine entitlements that was conducted under the previous government found that the revenue obtained from the sale of the entitlements was around \$3 billion less than the assessed fair market value of those assets.

The Victorian Auditor-General concluded that the allocation largely failed to meet its intended financial outcome of capturing a greater share of the industry's supernormal profits and as a result large venue operators, rather than the community, are the beneficiaries of this windfall gain.

Despite being valued by the Auditor-General at a midpoint of \$4.1 billion, the former government sold 27 300 electronic gaming machine entitlements for just \$981 million. The failure of the former government to achieve fair value for taxpayers from this allocation process has had a significant negative impact on Victoria's finances which will continue to be felt over the next decade.

In 2012–13 the budget includes \$85.8 million in revenue from the sale of entitlements. Had the Auditor-General's midpoint been achieved, revenue in 2012–13 would have been \$358.75 million. Thus in 2012–13 alone the budget is \$272.95 million worse off due to this failure of the former government. Across the other forward estimates years, the budget includes \$98.1 million per annum in revenue from the sale of entitlements compared with \$410 million that should have been received, representing a loss to taxpayers of \$311.9 million each year. The total loss to taxpayers over the four years of the budget forward estimates is more than \$1.2 billion.

The allocation of electronic gaming machines entitlements by the former government was nothing short of an unmitigated disaster and a financial crime committed against the people of Victoria. Every Victorian is entitled to mourn the roads, hospitals and schools that will never be built, the trains and trams that will never be bought and the services that will never be funded as a result of the former government's incompetence.

The former government completely squandered a once in a decade opportunity for Victorians to obtain a greater share of the significant financial benefits of our gaming industry. The impact of this failure will be felt by Victorians for years to come.

Pinewood Primary School: redevelopment

Raised with: Minister for Education

Raised by: Mr Tarlamis

Raised on: 28 November 2012

REPLY:

I am informed as follows:

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

The Victorian Liberal Nationals Coalition Plan for Education identifies a number of priority capital projects, including a \$4.5 million project at Pinewood Primary School, to be funded and commenced in the first term of this government.

Planning for the school's project is underway and is progressing well. This will enable the school's capital project to commence as soon as funding is announced in a future state budget.

Department of Education and Early Childhood Development: Moe regional office**Raised with: Minister for Higher Education and Skills****Raised by: Mr Viney****Raised on: 28 November 2012****REPLY:**

I am informed as follows:

There will be no reduction in frontline service delivery as a result of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development's redesign of its regional offices.

The new regional model ensures efficient and appropriate management to support the delivery of high-quality services to schools, principals, families and students. A key feature of the new regional model is its emphasis on addressing the needs of rural Victoria. The department's regional offices, including the Moe regional office, will continue to support local schools, services and communities in rural locations.

The Moe regional office will provide critical support to children, schools and families to improve learning and development outcomes, particularly for vulnerable children. The Moe regional office will deliver important services through staff employed as psychologists, speech therapists, social workers and visiting teachers to support students with disabilities.

The department continues to support school literacy intervention programs, such as Reading Recovery, through funding which allows schools to select programs and resources that best meet the needs of their students. The department will also continue to support the ongoing professional learning of Reading Recovery Tutors.

Disability support services including psychologists and counselling and welfare support to schools remain in place. However, management has been shifted from the department to direct management by the schools within which these specialists work.

In accordance with the government's commitment to overhaul the education bureaucracy and deliver greater autonomy to schools, the department and its regional offices will support schools and principals in relation to operational matters including facilities, finance and human resources.

Regional Growth Fund: future**Raised with: Minister for Regional and Rural Development****Raised by: Mr Drum****Raised on: 29 November 2012****REPLY:**

The Regional Growth Fund (RGF) is established under the *Regional Growth Fund Act 2011* (the RGF Act). The RGF Act provides the legislative basis of the RGF and amends the *Regional Development Victoria Act 2003* (the RDV Act) to provide the authority for Regional Development Victoria and the Department of Planning and Community Development to disburse money from the RGF for a range of purposes. The RGF Act also repeals the *Regional Infrastructure Development Fund Act 1999*.

Rescinding the RGF would require an Act of Parliament to repeal the RGF Act, as well as to amend the RDV Act to remove references to the RGF.

The establishment of a new fund would not in itself require a new Act of Parliament, although to restore the Regional Infrastructure Development Fund in its original form would require a new Act with consequential amendments to the RDV Act.

Princes Highway: Winchelsea–Colac duplication

Raised with: Minister for Roads

Raised by: Mr Ramsay

Raised on: 29 November 2012

REPLY:

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

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

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

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

In the 2011–12 federal budget, the federal government announced an allocation of \$7 million for planning of the duplication. Funding for construction is scheduled to be released as part of the next Nation Building Program, which commences in 2014–15.

The Victorian government is working with the federal department and Infrastructure Australia regarding the projects to be funded under the next Nation Building Program.

Gas: regional and rural Victoria

Raised with: Minister for Regional and Rural Development

Raised by: Ms Broad

Raised on: 11 December 2012

REPLY:

Regional Development Victoria (RDV) is delivering the Energy for the Regions Program on behalf of the state. A staged approach has been adopted to ensure that gas is delivered in an efficient and cost effective manner. In May 2012, I announced the close of the first stage of the Program, which involved direct negotiations with the gas distribution businesses. This stage of the program resulted in agreement to connect Huntly and augment natural gas supply to Mildura.

At this time, I also announced the next stage for delivering the Program. This involves a broadened strategy to encourage competition and engage natural gas suppliers in both conventional pipeline and alternative delivery options.

This broadened strategy was developed on the basis of advice from RDV's independent strategic advisers. This advice suggested that a centralised tender process similar to that pursued by the former Labor government was unlikely to result in acceptable proposals from gas distribution businesses to connect remaining priority towns. As a consequence a revised approach was adopted.

Consistent with this, on 29 August 2012, fixed subsidy offers were made to Victoria's incumbent gas distributors to supply 13 regional towns with reticulated natural gas. These offers are now closed, and RDV is currently reviewing responses received from the gas distribution businesses.

As part of the broadened strategy, RDV is also conducting a tender process for the provision of natural gas for regional Victoria utilising alternative delivery solutions. Expressions of Interest have been sought and RDV is currently evaluating the responses received, with a view to inviting qualifying respondents to proceed to a Request for Tender in early 2013.

This is an innovative strategy to fulfil the coalition government's commitment to supply natural gas to remaining priority towns. It will also provide the state with an opportunity to work with the energy sector to develop a cost effective energy alternative for other remote communities and industrial energy users across regional Victoria.

The Victorian government remains committed to expanding the supply of natural gas to communities in regional and rural Victoria, including the priority towns identified in the Energy for the Regions Program.

Liquor licensing: live music venues

Raised with: Minister for Consumer Affairs

Raised by: Mr O'Brien

Raised on: 11 December 2012

REPLY:

Thank you for raising this important issue. The coalition government recognises that live music is an integral part of the social and cultural fabric of Victoria, and that live music provides a considerable economic benefit for the state, with many people employed directly or indirectly in the industry.

In contrast to the previous Labor government, the coalition government has taken significant steps during the last two years to engage more effectively with the live music industry. Most notably, it has delivered on an election commitment to establish the Live Music Roundtable as a forum to discuss liquor licensing and other related issues involving live music. Roundtable members include representatives of the music industry, licensees of live music venues, local councils, Victoria Police, government and other relevant experts.

The Roundtable has met twice since it was established, and is progressing work in a number of areas with a view to making recommendations to government about ways to improve the operation and regulation of live music venues in Victoria.

It is progressing this work through three working groups, which draw on the expertise of Roundtable members as well as invited experts who can make a positive contribution to the Roundtable's work program. These working groups meet in between Roundtable meetings and report to the Roundtable on their activities. I am pleased with the constructive and valuable contribution of all Roundtable members, particularly the experience provided by Music Victoria.

As you would also be aware, the government has implemented another election commitment to amend the objects of the *Liquor Control Reform Act 1998* to recognise the importance of live music. This amendment commenced operation on 20 February 2012, and assists regulators to consider the role of live music in their exercise of administrative authority. I am confident that these initiatives will produce positive results for the live music industry and I look forward to continuing this work into the future.

Northern Metropolitan Region: men's sheds

Raised with: Minister for Community Services

Raised by: Mr Ondarchie

Raised on: 11 December 2012

REPLY:

Men's sheds continue to play a vital role in many Victorian communities, providing opportunities for men to connect and participate in their local community.

I am pleased to advise that I recently approved \$700 000 of refurbishment funding through the Strengthening Men's Shed Grants program to support 36 men's sheds across Victoria.

This funding includes support for refurbishing two men's sheds in the Northern Metropolitan Region.

Banyule Community Health will receive \$27 571 to support the Ngurrungaeta Male and Father's Group refurbish an outdoor space by creating a covered work space, and undertaking paving, landscaping and an electrical upgrade.

Diamond Creek Men's Shed will receive \$29 584 to improve its facility including interior painting, electrical and lighting upgrades, building internal partitions to create a meeting space, upgrading the flooring, installation of a hot water and air conditioning systems and improvements in thermal insulation.

This refurbishment funding will help improve the amenity of these important men's sheds in the Northern Metropolitan Region.

Para-Ratray roads, Montmorency: safety

Raised with: Minister for Roads

Raised by: Mrs Kronberg

Raised on: 13 December 2012

REPLY:

VicRoads and Banyule City Council are working closely together to investigate possible treatments to address road safety concerns on Para Road, including the intersection with Ratray Road.

VicRoads receives many requests for pedestrian projects, which are considered for funding based on the effectiveness of proposals to improve the safety of pedestrians, the number and types of vehicles using the road, the historical safety record of the site, the impact that implementing a treatment would have on the operation of the road and the implementation costs.

Manufacturing: jobs

Raised with: Minister for Manufacturing, Exports and Trade

Raised by: Mr Somyurek

Raised on: 13 December 2012

REPLY:

I refer to the matter raised during the Adjournment Debate in the Legislative Council on 13 December 2012 regarding manufacturing jobs.

Victorian manufacturers face significant challenges, including the strength of the Australian dollar, volatile global economic conditions and the carbon tax.

The Victorian government's \$58 million Manufacturing Strategy is already helping Victorian manufacturers to grow their businesses by becoming more productive and competitive. Under Round One of the *Investing in Manufacturing Technology* initiative, the Victorian government has awarded \$3.4 million in funding to 19 manufacturing businesses, which has enabled them to invest almost \$14 million in new technologies, processes and equipment.

The Victorian government is also delivering other major initiatives under the Manufacturing Strategy, including:

- \$7.5 million Manufacturing Productivity Networks;
- \$13.7 million Specialist Manufacturing Service; and
- \$9 million Building Innovative Small Manufacturers.

The Victorian government also recognises the importance of supporting manufacturing businesses to identify and pursue opportunities in growing international markets, which is why we are delivering the \$50 million Victorian International Engagement Strategy.

Through the delivery of these key policies, the Victorian government is providing the foundation for a thriving manufacturing industry into the future.

WRITTEN ADJOURNMENT RESPONSES

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

Thursday, 7 February 2013

Planning: Freshwater Place

Raised with: Minister for Planning

Raised by: Mr Tee

Raised on: 27 March 2012

REPLY:

On the 11 April 2012 I issued Planning Permit No.: 2011/011626 to allow the demolition of existing buildings and construction of a 71-storey building with ground level retail at 1–15 Queens Bridge Street, Southbank.

I can confirm that the application underwent a comprehensive planning assessment process that considered the relevant state and local planning policies, reference documents, planning controls, formal and informal referral comments, and draft Southbank Structure Plan 2010. The City of Melbourne supported the application subject to a minimum of 10 metres tower to tower setback and compliance with the heights in the Structure Plan.

I can also confirm that I met with the Chairman of the Freshwater Place Owners' Corporation, who represented the residents. Their comments have been valuable and have assisted in the consideration of the application.

Planning: Tarrone power station

Raised with: Minister for Planning

Raised by: Mr Tee

Raised on: 2 May 2012

REPLY:

On 5 April 2012, I announced my approval of Amendment C47 to the Moyne Planning Scheme to facilitate the proposed Tarrone Power Station project.

The Tarrone Power Station project comprises a 790–920 megawatt gas-fired power station located 23 kilometres north of Port Fairy in south-west Victoria.

Amendment C47 rezoned the power station site to the Special Use Zone. A tailored Special Use Zone has proven to be an effective planning control to manage the use and development of other similar gas fired power station projects in Victoria, including the Mortlake Power Station (constructed) and the proposed Shaw River Power Station, also located in Moyne shire.

The amendment also applied the Environmental Significance Overlay around the Tarrone power station site to control the establishment of sensitive uses in proximity to the power station, and introduced an incorporated document to allow for the removal of native vegetation and road upgrades associated with the construction of the project.

Requirements for a Works Approval and a licence to discharge under the *Environment Protection Act 1970* were triggered by the power station classification as a Scheduled Premises under the Environment Protection (Scheduled Premises and Exemptions) Regulations, and address potential air emissions from the power station, sewage treatment and on-site water treatment.

A Works Approval Application WA67921 was lodged with the Environment Protection Agency (EPA) and was jointly advertised with Amendment C47.

Assessments and expert evidence were provided to the independent Panel appointed to consider submissions relating to Amendment C47.

The Panel was satisfied that air emissions, even when combined with the nearby proposed Shaw River Power Station project, will easily comply with the relevant health-based ambient air design requirements, will not contaminate rainwater or pasture, and dust during construction can be managed.

The Special Use Zone requires that a Traffic Management Plan (TMP) be prepared to manage all off site traffic impacts before construction commences.

The project proponent (AGL Energy) must now prepare a TMP in consultation with Moyne Shire Council and VicRoads. The plan must be approved by Moyne Shire Council before construction commences.

A copy of the independent Panel report, which includes detailed assessment of noise emissions, air emissions and traffic impacts, is publicly available and can be accessed from the web page of the Department of Planning and Community Development (www.dpcd.vic.gov.au/planning).

Swan Hill planning scheme: amendment

Raised with: Minister for Planning

Raised by: Ms Broad

Raised on: 5 June 2012

REPLY:

I approved Amendment C41 to the Swan Hill Planning Scheme on 19 July 2012 and notice of the approval of the amendment was published in the *Victoria Government Gazette* on 2 August 2012.

Port Phillip Bay: commuter service

Raised with: Minister for Planning

Raised by: Mr O'Brien

Raised on: 5 June 2012

REPLY:

As you are aware, on the 5 May 2012, I announced a study of the preconditions for viable commuter ferry services from Melbourne's western coastal communities to the central business district in order to assist in peak hour congestion, and improve the liveability of Melbourne.

The study is an input to the metropolitan planning policies being developed and will consider a range of options for ferry services, including sea skimmer craft. At this point in time no investment with any particular vessel is proposed.

The study report is expected to be completed in March 2013.

Planning: Darebin City Council**Raised with: Minister for Planning****Raised by: Mr Barber****Raised on: 21 June 2012****REPLY:**

The appropriate bodies to investigate matters such as those raised by Mr Barber are the Victorian Ombudsman or the Local Government Investigations and Compliance Inspectorate.

Cycling: government strategy**Raised with: Minister for Public Transport****Raised by: Mrs Coote****Raised on: 11 December 2012****REPLY:**

The Victorian coalition government recognises the important role that cycling plays in our state. The government has set out its 10-year plan to grow and support cycling and consolidate Victoria's position as Australia's most bike-friendly state in *Cycling into the Future 2013–23: Victoria's Cycling Strategy*. The strategy aims to make it easier for people to get out on their bikes for the first time and safer for people who already ride, both for transport and for recreation.

Safety is an integral element of *Cycling into the Future 2013–23*, which states:

‘We will support programs and actions to increase awareness of road rules relating to cycling, to encourage safe and respectful behaviours from all road users and to ensure bike riders and other road users have appropriate rights and responsibilities.’

The government has already taken steps towards this. To improve the relationship between cyclists and other road users, VicRoads conducted an online social media cycling safety campaign in early 2012. The objectives of the campaign were to foster positive and mutual respect between all road users, clarify cycling-related road rules and to encourage drivers and bike riders to share the road. VicRoads has also recently produced an information card with frequently asked questions by drivers and bike riders on how to share the road safely. In addition, every October Victoria Police conducts Safe Cycle month, which aims to reduce the incidence and severity of bike collisions by raising awareness of bike safety issues in the community.

The *Victorian Cycling Action Plan 2013–2014* will build on current safety initiatives and programs by reviewing road rules and road safety legislation, and by planning and conducting targeted public awareness and enforcement campaigns.