

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

FIFTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT

FIRST SESSION

WRITTEN ADJOURNMENT RESPONSES

7 and 9 May 2013

(Extract from book 6)

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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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Privileges Committee — Ms Darveniza, Mr D. Davis, Mr P. Davis, Mr Hall, Ms Lovell, Ms Pennicuik and Mr Scheffer.

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, Mrs Coote, #Ms Crozier, Mr Drum, Mr Finn, #Ms Hartland, #Mr Leane, Mr Lenders, Mr Melhem, #Mr Ondarchie, Ms Pulford and Mr Ramsay.

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.

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

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

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

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Dispute Resolution Committee — (*Council*): Mr D. Davis, Mr Hall, Mr Lenders, Ms Lovell and Ms Pennicuik. (*Assembly*): Mr Clark, Ms Hennessy, Mr Merlino, Dr Napthine and Mr Walsh.

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

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

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

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

Parliamentary Services — Secretary: Mr P. Lochert

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FIFTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT — FIRST SESSION

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Dalla-Riva, Hon. Richard Alex Gordon	Eastern Metropolitan	LP	O'Donohue, Mr Edward John	Eastern Victoria	LP
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Hartland, Ms Colleen Mildred	Western Metropolitan	Greens	Tarlamis, Mr Lee Reginald	South Eastern Metropolitan	ALP
Jennings, Mr Gavin Wayne	South Eastern Metropolitan	ALP	Tee, Mr Brian Lennox	Eastern Metropolitan	ALP
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Kronberg, Mrs Janice Susan	Eastern Metropolitan	LP	Viney, Mr Matthew Shaw	Eastern Victoria	ALP
Leane, Mr Shaun Leo	Eastern Metropolitan	ALP			

¹ Resigned 26 March 2013

² Appointed 8 May 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.

Tuesday, 7 May 2013

Big Hill goldmine: future

Raised with: Minister for Energy and Resources

Raised by: Mr O'Brien

Raised on: 5 February 2013

REPLY:

I refer to the matter you raised during the adjournment debate in the Legislative Council on 5 February 2013 regarding the proposed Big Hill Enhanced Development Project at the Stawell Gold Mine.

The Department of Primary Industries (DPI), through its Earth Resources Development Division and Earth Resources Regulation Victoria, is facilitating the appropriate processes for the assessment of the proposed Big Hill project.

At this stage, this includes liaising with the Department of Planning and Community Development about the Big Hill Environment Effects Statement Referral that will identify the appropriate assessment process for the proposal. DPI is also consulting with the Department of Business and Innovation to promote awareness of the relevant approvals process under the *Mineral Resources (Sustainable Development) Act 1990*.

The Earth Resources Development Division is also liaising with Crocodile Gold at the senior executive level to ensure early identification of issues and options. A growing need is for effective community consultation as community awareness increases.

I am committed to the appropriate development of Victoria's earth resources in accordance with Victoria's rigorous laws and regulations and will ensure consideration of the Big Hill proposal demonstrates this.

DPI will continue to be available to discuss issues with the company and the local community through the assessment and approvals processes for the Big Hill Enhanced Development Project.

Thank you for raising this matter during the adjournment debate.

Colac Area Health: services

Raised with: Minister for Health

Raised by: Ms Pulford

Raised on: 5 February 2013

REPLY:

The board is focussed on improving the performance of Colac Area Health.

The decision to appoint a delegate to the board of a Victorian health service is a very serious one and one which I will consider if necessary.

Asbestos: non-occupational exposure**Raised with: Minister for Health****Raised by: Mr Scheffer****Raised on: 5 February 2013****REPLY:**

I refer to matters raised by Mr Scheffer (Eastern Victoria) in relation to the enHealth publication *Asbestos: A guide for householders and the general public—May 2012* (the Guide).

The Guide was produced by the Australian Environmental Health Standing Committee (enHealth), of which the Victorian Department of Health is a member. The guide was endorsed by the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee, and is a national publication to which all state and territory governments and the Australian government contributed.

The guide uses a risk management/harm minimisation approach to describe the risks to health from being exposed to asbestos fibres in the non-occupational environment.

It also explains who is at risk and how to reduce exposure to householders, their families and others. I did not agree with the first version of the document expressing concerns. To this extent, I agree with Mr Scheffer. The document has been revised and corrections made.

In his submission, Mr Scheffer mentioned that:

“I am deeply concerned over the potential health detriments and deaths that we know are caused by any level of exposure to asbestos.”

I am advised that:

1. the information in the guide is based on research and scientific evidence, and has been developed by public health experts to minimise potential health risk associated with asbestos in the home
2. the guide has the support of public health experts in all jurisdictions
3. with regard to the comment that: *“health detriments and deaths that we know are caused by any level of exposure to asbestos”*, the evidence is clear. No safe level of exposure to asbestos has been established, and this is clearly stated in a highlighted section on page 17 of the guide.

As with any guide, it is important for the reader to read the whole section and to not focus on a few words or a sentence which the reader may take out of context with the main messages of the guide.

I have been advised that reaction to the guide has been largely positive, and that there is currently a backorder of requests for hard copies of the document. State and territory health departments and several councils and asbestos groups have placed links to the guide on their websites.

I am advised that SafeWork South Australia refer to the Guide on page 9 of their publication *“Asbestos and the Home Renovator”*. I am further advised that the SafeWork South Australia Asbestos web page mirrors the message contained within the Guide by stating “It is unusual for an asbestos-related disease to develop from a single exposure. Generally a large, ongoing exposure to asbestos fibres is required.”

The amended guide is an important means of assisting householders to identify and to manage the potential risks of asbestos in the home. I am advised that the guide is currently out of print, and enHealth is reviewing how the key messages will be delivered in the next edition, which is expected in coming months.

The key message is that there is no safe level of asbestos exposure and Mr Scheffer — I welcome your advocacy and vigilance

Mildura Base Hospital: future

Raised with: Minister for Health

Raised by: Ms Broad

Raised on: 19 February 2013

REPLY:

The Victorian government funds Mildura Base Hospital to deliver health services to the Sunraysia Community. The level of services is guided by a Services Agreement and monitored closely by the department.

The government is committed to improving health services for all Victorians and is assessing the best options for delivery of public health services in Mildura after 2015. The community can continue to advocate through the Community Advisory Board which has recently been strengthened through the appointment of Dr Fiona Wright.

There is no relationship between Victorian Health funding and donations by Paul Ramsay or Ramsay Health to the Federal Liberal Party.

Peter James Centre: stroke rehabilitation ward

Raised with: Minister for Health

Raised by: Mr Leane

Raised on: 19 February 2013

REPLY:

On 22 October 2012, through the Mid Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook, the commonwealth government announced that it would cut \$107 million from Victorian health services over the remainder of the 2012–13 financial year and an estimated \$475 million over the next four years. This included a cut of \$8.4 million to Eastern Health. Eastern Health includes Box Hill Hospital and the Peter James Centre.

This was an unprecedented cut to health service funding in the middle of a financial year and includes a claw back of \$40 million of 2011–12 funding which has already been spent delivering vital hospital services to Victorians.

The reduction in commonwealth funding was unplanned and against the spirit of the National Health Agreement, which promised certainty and predictability in funding for health services.

While the commonwealth government has recently reversed their decision for the remainder of the 2012–13 financial year, the ongoing impact of the commonwealth funding reduction of \$368 million from 1 July 2013 on services including stroke rehabilitation services remains unclear.

My department is working closely with Eastern Health regarding its financial position and the impact of the funding cuts and is keeping me informed. Despite these efforts, the sharp reduction in commonwealth funding to Eastern Health has had a significant impact.

It is disappointing that you and your colleagues voted on 11 December 2012 to support the savage commonwealth government cuts and I regard this as an act against the interests of Victorian patients and patients in the Eastern region.

Roads: city of Whittlesea

Raised with: Minister for Roads

Raised by: Ms Mikakos

Raised on: 21 February 2013

REPLY:

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

The Victorian government recognises the development needs of the Epping area and the need for transport infrastructure to facilitate such development. The government has confirmed budget funding of \$7.5 million to widen Cooper Street between Edgars Road and the Hume Freeway. This project will improve travel times on this key east–west route and provide better access for the community and industry to the new Melbourne Markets. VicRoads expects construction to be completed in early 2014.

The Victorian government's 2012 Priority Infrastructure submission to Infrastructure Australia included several projects to respond to growth pressures including upgrades to the Hume Freeway, Western Freeway and the Calder Freeway, as well as a Growth Area Priority Transport Package.

Planning for major road improvements, such as the Hume Freeway–O'Herns Road Interchange and the duplication of Epping Road will be undertaken in this context, and also with regard to the objectives of the Victorian government's Metropolitan Planning Strategy.

The 2046 date was advised by Growth Areas Authority as to the year in which Melbourne's population would reach 6 million, the Northern Growth Corridor would be fully developed and as a result the O'Herns Road interchange, the O'Herns Road duplication and the Edgars Road extension would all be required.

This is not to suggest these projects are not needed at an earlier date, however, as no interim modelling was undertaken (i.e. 2020, 2030 et cetera) VicRoads has not determined a time-frame in which these projects must be delivered to support this growth.

The extension of Edgars Road between Cooper Street and O'Herns Road lies within the Cooper Street Employment Area, and will initially be constructed as a single carriageway local road.

A Development Contribution Plan has been established for the Cooper Street Employment Area, which requires the provision of land and construction of the first carriageway of Edgars Road between Cooper Street and O'Herns Road, to be undertaken as part of ongoing development in this precinct. The Whittlesea City Council is responsible for the implementation of these developer-funded works.

Development within the Cooper Street Employment Area has not progressed sufficiently to enable the implementation of the Development Contribution Plan requirements, including land and the first carriageway for the Edgars Road extension. The timing of these works will be dependent on the rate of development in this area.

Prevent Alcohol and Risk Related Trauma in Youth program: funding

Raised with: Minister for Community Services

Raised by: Ms Mikakos

Raised on: 5 March 2013

REPLY:

In 2009–2010, time-limited funding was provided for the *P.A.R.T.Y 4 Schools* program over three years to operate the program at Alfred Health, one year funding to establish the program at Royal Melbourne Hospital and to

provide a regional schools subsidy fund. Following the commencement of the program at Royal Melbourne Hospital, the coalition government committed \$300 000 over three years to continue the program.

This funding has supported approximately 1000 senior high school students participating in this hospital based education program each year.

Through *Reducing the Alcohol and Drug Toll: Victoria's Plan 2013-2017*, the coalition government committed to delivering comprehensive, evidence-based alcohol and drug education and health promotion programs, such as the PARTY program, that strengthen wellbeing and resilience amongst young people.

Hospitals: federal funding

Raised with: Minister for Health

Raised by: Mr O'Brien

Raised on: 5 March 2013

REPLY:

The Department of Health is working with health services to assess the impact of the commonwealth funding cuts instituted since December 2012 and the impact of the \$368 million that will be cut from 1 July 2013.

The Department of Health and health services are working to minimise the impact on services and patients.

The Victorian government is committed to seeking to restore full and promised funding by the commonwealth government to Victorian health services and patients.

Western Highway: Beaufort bypass

Raised with: Minister for Roads

Raised by: Ms Pulford

Raised on: 5 March 2013

REPLY:

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

Four alignments were identified to inform the start and end points of the Western Highway duplication either side of Beaufort and Ararat as part of the project to upgrade the Western Highway from Ballarat to Stawell to a four-lane divided highway.

The Western Highway duplication project does not include the town bypasses of Beaufort or Ararat.

Both the Pyrenees Shire Council and the Ararat Rural City Council are aware that further funding is not available as part of the duplication project to progress this work any further.

The alignments identified for both Beaufort and Ararat do not preclude development opportunities occurring in those towns, however, I recently met with the Mayor and Chief Executive Officer of the Pyrenees Shire Council to discuss the implications of this investigation on land use planning within Beaufort.

VicRoads, the council and the Department of Planning and Community Development are exploring ways to reduce the number of alignments and how to incorporate the outcomes into the municipalities' future growth plans. If there are funding implications for this work, in the form of further detailed planning studies, it will require the agreement of the Australian government and will need to be assessed and prioritised with other road projects.

Dairy industry: farmer health

Raised with: Minister for Mental Health

Raised by: Ms Darveniza

Raised on: 6 March 2013

REPLY:

The Victorian government is committed to providing a quality response to people in the community who are seeking mental health advice for themselves or people they care about. A record \$1.14 billion has been allocated to mental health in 2012–13, resulting in more mental health beds, additional community based mental health services and reforms to the way in which mental health care is delivered.

There are over twenty telephone lines supporting people with a mental illness in Victoria. The coalition government has provided new funding to increase the capacity of a number of telephone advice lines, including Lifeline and Griefline. The enhancement of existing phone lines contributes to meeting the mental health needs of people from both metropolitan and rural areas within Victoria.

The previous government provided time-limited funding to the National Centre for Farmer Health which ceased on 30 June 2012. I understand the Minister for Health has been in discussions with the commonwealth to seek sustainable funding for the National Centre. As part of the Victorian government's Agricultural Flood Recovery package specific funding was provided to deliver the Sustainable Farm Families program to promote mental and physical health.

The Victorian government has also invested in a variety of programs to assist people with mental health needs in rural Victoria, such as funding provided to Kyabram and District Health Service to establish a counselling service to support members of the community across the district affected by the collapse of the Banksia Finance Group.

In 2011 the government provided \$1.55 million to the Loddon Mallee and Grampians regions for psychosocial support to rural Victoria during the aftermath of the floods.

Rail: Warragul station

Raised with: Minister for Roads

Raised by: Hon. E. J. O'Donohue

Raised on: 6 March 2013

REPLY:

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

I am pleased to advise that, on behalf of Public Transport Victoria, VicRoads has commenced the next phase of this project, with a call for tenders issued on 13 March 2013, for both the Warragul station works and the road underpass of the railway within a single combined contract.

VicRoads advises that a contract award is expected in September 2013, with works to commence on site in late 2013.

Manufacturing: Portland jobs

Raised with: Minister for Regional and Rural Development

Raised by: Ms Tierney

Raised on: 6 March 2013

REPLY:

The Victorian government aims to build stronger economies and communities in regional Victoria. The government has not dismantled Regional Development Victoria (RDV). In fact, RDV is leading this agenda across the state and the \$1 billion Regional Growth Fund is the principal platform for supporting regional development activities.

The government also has Regional Strategic Plans in place in every region to set out the vision and objectives for economic development and ensure local communities and Regional Development Australia Committees (RDAs) determine their own priorities and generate community-driven solutions.

The *Barwon South West Regional Strategic Plan 2012–2015* provides a clear, coherent framework for decision-making in the Barwon South West region.

The Plan also incorporates the *Great South Coast Regional Strategic Plan* that is specific to the Great South Coast sub-region, including Portland. It highlights Portland's specific economic functions and strengths that can be leveraged for the benefit of the whole region, such as the importance of its port to trade and logistics and its strengths in Professional, Scientific and Technical Services and Machinery and Equipment Manufacturing, supported by Portland Aluminium's production.

The state government has provided funding support for job growth in Portland. Contributions to local projects include:

- The Portland Harbour project through the *Boating Safety and Facilities Program* (\$1.5 million). The project will improve safety and access for recreational boaters and anglers visiting Portland for game fishing.
- Funding to Glenelg Shire Council through the *Local Government Infrastructure Account* (\$2.3 million) for a variety of projects in Portland stimulating a number of direct and indirect jobs.
- The Portland Civic Centre Masterplan through the *Putting Locals First Program* (\$30 000). The project will plan for a Civic Precinct connecting the town's CBD and Foreshore Precinct making the city more economically diverse and sustainable; and
- The Budj Bim Masterplan through the *Planning for Tomorrow Program* (\$100 000). The masterplan will collate several current proposals into an overall vision for sustainable tourism development delivering benefits throughout the Portland and Glenelg Shire areas.

Rosebud Rehabilitation Centre site: future

Raised with: Minister for Health

Raised by: Mr Scheffer

Raised on: 7 March 2013

REPLY:

The site of the former Rosebud Rehabilitation Centre is owned and operated by Peninsula Health.

In August 2011 Peninsula Health advised the Department of Health that they would relocate services from the Rosebud Rehabilitation Centre to the Rosebud Hospital and then sell the site of the Rosebud Rehabilitation Centre.

Services were moved from the Rosebud Rehabilitation Centre site to the Rosebud Hospital site in January 2012.

I am informed that the process of preparing this site for sale has been complex and lengthy and that Peninsula Health has engaged consultants to assist them in this process. Agreement has been reached with Mornington Peninsula Shire Council to remove a caveat that was held on the property. The property is now the subject of a cultural sensitivity review which is a requirement of the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 and this review is being conducted by a qualified aboriginal heritage consultant engaged by Peninsula Health.

I am advised that Peninsula Health is committed to progressing the sale of this property and that the property will be placed on the market as soon as all required preparation has concluded. Peninsula Health has stated that funds realised through the sale of this property will be used to fund the expansion of services for Rosebud and the surrounding local community.

Thompsons Road: upgrade

Raised with: Minister for Roads

Raised by: Mr Tarlamis

Raised on: 7 March 2013

REPLY:

The Victorian government is committed to improving the efficiency and safety of Victoria's road network. The 2012–13 state budget provides funding of \$548 million for a number of improvements through key road projects. Many of these projects are in Melbourne's south eastern suburbs.

VicRoads is investigating the possible future upgrade of Thompsons Road between Frankston-Dandenong Road and the South Gippsland Highway, and has secured amendments C136, C115 and C76 to the Casey, Greater Dandenong and Frankston Planning Schemes, respectively. These amendments introduce a Public Acquisition Overlay to reserve land to accommodate the future upgrade and duplication of Thompsons Road.

VicRoads is also undertaking a planning study to identify options for the upgrade of the Western Port Highway between the South Gippsland Freeway, Lynbrook and south of Cranbourne-Frankston Road, Cranbourne South. The preferred option involves converting the highway to freeway conditions, with access ultimately provided by a number of interchanges.

A proposal to duplicate Thompsons Road between Frankston-Dandenong Road and the South Gippsland Highway, including grade separation at the Western Port Highway and the Cranbourne railway line, will be considered for future funding in the context of the investigations outlined above.

Paramedics: enterprise bargaining

Raised with: Minister for Health

Raised by: Ms Darveniza

Raised on: 19 March 2013

REPLY:

Ambulance Victoria is continuing to negotiate in good faith with paramedics' bargaining representatives on the establishment of a new enterprise agreement that provides benefits for all parties to the negotiations.

On 21 March 2013, Ambulance Victoria presented a proposal to the two employee bargaining representatives involved in negotiations (Ambulance Employees Australia of Victoria (AEAV) and Emergency Medical Service Protection Association (EMSPA)) to consider a Voluntary Conciliation process with the assistance/support of the Fair Work Commission as a way to move forward in these negotiations.

One employee bargaining representative (EMSPA) has advised it supports this proposal. The other employee bargaining representative (AEAV) at its State Council meeting on 10 April 2013 has failed to endorse or accept the proposal put forward by Ambulance Victoria to use a Voluntary Conciliation process with the assistance of the Fair Work Commission.

The government considers this proposal as advanced by Ambulance Victoria as a sensible means to progress this issue and is disappointed that AEA V has not embraced this proposal.

The government will continue to provide the assistance and support it has provided to date.

Local government: business tenants

Raised with: Minister for Local Government

Raised by: Mrs Peulich

Raised on: 19 March 2013

REPLY:

I thank the member for South Eastern Metropolitan seeking clarification on the eligibility of business representatives to vote at local government elections.

The current voter franchise for council elections extends to a broad number of categories which importantly includes business tenants. This reflects the wide range of community members who have a legitimate stake in council operations and service delivery. In summary, those eligible to be enrolled on the council voters' roll consist of:

- Electors on the Victorian state roll — they are automatically enrolled without application;
- Property owners who do not live in the municipality are also automatically enrolled;
- Other property owners not on the state roll, e.g. non-Australian citizens, may apply to be enrolled;
- Property occupiers who either pay rates directly to the council, or are liable to pay rates as a condition of their lease, e.g. shop tenants, may also apply to be enrolled;
- Nominees of corporations which own property-or occupy property and pay the rates-may be enrolled on application.

The City of Melbourne's voter eligibility framework is different and is set under separate legislation.

I strongly encourage eligible members of the business community to exercise their right to be included on the council voters' roll prior to the next general election in order to have a direct say in the electoral representation of their council. I also encourage business to be actively involved in important council strategic decisions affecting them such as the development of council plans and annual budgets.

Department of Primary Industries: job losses

Raised with: Minister for Agriculture and Food Security

Raised by: Mr Lenders

Raised on: 20 March 2013

REPLY:

I refer to the matter you raised during the adjournment debate in the Legislative Council on 20 March 2013 regarding the Victorian Auditor-General's Report on the Department of Primary Industries' Management of Freshwater Fisheries.

The Secretary of the Department of Primary Industries has contested the Auditor-General's finding that the department is not effectively discharging its legislative responsibilities for management of freshwater fisheries, while accepting the key audit recommendations.

DPI has a strong record of considering each of the economic, social and environmental objectives in the *Fisheries Act 1995* when making decisions to authorise recreational fishing and fish stock activities, as clearly demonstrated through the preparation of the Fisheries Regulations 2009 and associated Regulatory Impact Statement and development of various Fisheries Notices. DPI is also continuing to implement the current regulatory and translocation processes in close consultation with all interested stakeholders and relevant government agencies.

Under the previous Victorian government, DPI initiated action starting in 2008 to relocate its freshwater fisheries scientists from Snobs Creek to Queenscliff, which resulted in a reduction in the number of these scientists.

Progressive completion of initiatives such as the Port Phillip Bay Channel Deepening Project has given DPI the opportunity to place a greater focus on its core regulatory responsibilities for managing fisheries such as measuring catches, assessing fish stocks and undertaking targeted biological studies on key fish species.

The Victorian coalition government made a commitment at the last election to invest an additional \$16 million in the recreational fishing sector. I am proud that this funding, which we delivered in our first budget, is providing new opportunities for recreational fishers by boosting fish stocks and upgrading infrastructure around Victoria.

This work has broad support from the State's recreational fishing community. The April edition of the popular anglers' newsletter *Around the Jetties*, for example, stated with respect to the Auditor General's recent findings: 'Anglers in this state are well served by Fisheries Victoria and its management, particularly given the current economic stringency. Anglers in this state would have welcomed some acknowledgement of that fact in the report'.

Thank you for raising this matter with me.

Hamilton: red meat innovation centre

Raised with: Minister for Agriculture and Food Security

Raised by: Mr O'Brien

Raised on: 20 March 2013

REPLY:

I refer to the matter you raised during the adjournment debate in the Legislative Council on 20 March 2013 in relation to the red meat innovation centre in Hamilton.

The Red Meat Innovation Centre was established by the coalition government to position Victoria as a national leader in lamb research. In May 2012, I announced \$3.45 million to fund researchers and research projects at the Red meat Innovation Centre at Hamilton. This funding for researchers and research projects was in addition to

\$2.4 million announced in 2011 for capital works. The capital works have been completed and I officially opened the new animal feeding facility on 11 April 2013.

Thank you for raising this matter during the adjournment debate.

Hospitals: federal funding

Raised with: Minister for Health

Raised by: Hon. E. J. O'Donohue

Raised on: 20 March 2013

REPLY:

The Department of Health is working with health services to assess the impact of the commonwealth funding cuts instituted since December 2012 and the impact of the \$368 million that will be cut from 1 July 2013. The Department of Health and health services are working to minimise the impact on services and patients.

The Victorian government is committed to seeking to restore full and promised funding by the commonwealth government to Victorian health services and patients.

I suggest you make your views known to the Prime Minister and commonwealth Minister for Health as the impact on local health services, such as the Eastern Victoria Region, is of significant concern.

Waterbirds: protection

Raised with: Minister for Agriculture and Food Security

Raised by: Ms Pennicuk

Raised on: 20 March 2013

REPLY:

I refer to the matter you raised during the adjournment debate in the Legislative Council on 20 March 2013 regarding the destruction of a significant number of protected waterbirds on a private wetland near Boort in North Western Victoria.

Over the 2013 duck hunting opening weekend (16 and 17 March 2013), a significant number of protected waterbirds were destroyed on a private wetland north-west of Boort. This incident is the subject of an ongoing investigation by the Department of Primary Industries (DPI), with assistance from the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) and Victoria Police.

Investigating officers recovered 760 game ducks and 155 non-game birds that were shot and left in the water at Box Flat Swamp. The 155 non-game birds included protected Freckled Duck, Eurasian Coot and Australian Grebe.

Upon finding evidence of the offences, DPI immediately redeployed further resources to the site and an investigation commenced. All recovered birds were identified, photographed and catalogued prior to sanitary disposal. Staff statements are being prepared and Victoria Police is assisting in taking statements from witnesses, before people are formally interviewed.

To ensure that the investigation is not compromised, and to prevent further illegal destruction of protected species, the wetland was closed to hunting with the agreement of land owners on Tuesday 19 March and then closed for the remainder of the duck season under section 86 of the *Wildlife Act 1975*. The area has been signposted, all entrances locked and the closure is being enforced. Breach of the closure can attract fines of approximately \$3500 and result in the forfeiture of firearms and cancellation of Firearms and Game Licences.

DPI, with assistance from DSE and Victoria Police, will continue a thorough investigation into this incident and intends to prosecute those responsible where there is sufficient evidence.

Thank you for raising this matter with me.

Yabby industry: regulation

Raised with: Minister for Agriculture and Food Security

Raised by: Mr Lenders

Raised on: 21 March 2013

REPLY:

I refer to the matter you raised during the adjournment debate in the Legislative Council on 21 March 2013 regarding the yabby industry.

I welcome the final recommendations from the Rural and Regional Committee on the impact of food safety regulation on farms and other businesses. The recommendations that relate to the yabby industry will be considered along with the other recommendations from the Inquiry. The government is committed to reducing unnecessary regulatory burden and red tape and will examine where this can be achieved, while protecting public health.

The government will provide its response as required within six months.

Thank you for raising this matter during the adjournment debate.

Hospitals: federal funding

Raised with: Minister for Health

Raised by: Mr Ramsay

Raised on: 21 March 2013

REPLY:

The commonwealth funding cuts have been vigorously disputed by the Victorian government. They were unplanned and against the spirit of the National Health Agreement, which promised certainty and predictability in funding for health services.

As a consequence of these cuts health services have faced tough decisions and delayed treatments, closed beds, and retrenched staff because of the commonwealth government's decision to cut funding.

The Department of Health is working with health services to assess the impact of the commonwealth funding cuts and the impact of the \$368 million that will be cut from 1 July 2013. The Department of Health and health services are working to minimise the impact on services and patients.

The Victorian government is committed to seeking to restore full and promised funding by the commonwealth government to Victorian health services and patients.

The Victorian government has increased funding to Victorian health services by \$1.3 billion since coming into office and in the current year we have put a record \$13.7 billion into health.

Housing: eastern suburbs facility

Raised with: Minister for Housing

Raised by: Mr Leane

Raised on: 16 April 2013

REPLY:

This matter does not fall within my portfolio of responsibilities and has been referred to the Minister for Mental Health for response.

WRITTEN ADJOURNMENT RESPONSES

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

Thursday, 9 May 2013

Barmah State Forest: feral horses

Raised with: Minister for Environment and Climate Change

Raised by: Mr Lenders

Raised on: 27 November 2012

REPLY:

The Victorian coalition government has sought a wild horse management strategy with the development of clear objectives aimed at managing the impacts of horses at the park; protecting, restoring and enhancing the River Red Gum flood plain ecosystems; and preserving indigenous cultural heritage whilst recognising the social and heritage values of wild horses in the park.

In 2009–10 Parks Victoria was awarded \$400 000 by the commonwealth government's 'Caring for our Country' program to fund the Barmah Forest Ramsar Wetlands Feral Horse Management project for three years (2010–2011 to 2012–2013). The project was based on the previous Labor government's objectives for the total removal of the wild horse population from the Barmah National Park, due to be completed by 30 June 2013.

Given the changed objective for wild horse management in Barmah National Park, this program was no longer appropriate. Furthermore, unavoidable delays in the program largely due to flooding meant that the project targets and timelines, as originally conceived, were not met.

Parks Victoria and the commonwealth government agreed that the commonwealth would only fund the project activities that could reasonably be completed by 30 June 2013, to a value of \$67 000. These funds have already been provided to Parks Victoria.

The balance of the funding (\$330 000) was never forwarded to the Victorian government — as such, at no stage did Parks Victoria return any funds to the commonwealth government.

Environment: container deposit scheme

Raised with: Minister for Environment and Climate Change

Raised by: Ms Hartland

Raised on: 19 March 2013

REPLY:

The Northern Territory (NT) government is planning to seek a permanent exemption of the NT container deposit scheme laws from the Mutual Recognition Act 1992 (Cth) and the Trans-Tasman Mutual Recognition Act 1997 (Cth).

In 2011 the former Victorian Premier indicated Victoria's support for a permanent exemption subject to the NT allowing sufficient time for interstate manufacturers to meet any new requirements.

The NT government invoked a temporary exemption on 3 January 2012 which has now expired. For the granting of a permanent exemption, there are set procedural steps which must be followed.

Once a Decision Regulation Impact Statement has been prepared by the NT government, it can be reviewed by the Standing Council on Environment and Water (SCEW), of which I am a member.

If SCEW supports an exemption by at least a two-thirds majority, the proposal will be referred to the Prime Minister as chair of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG). The Prime Minister will then write to COAG members seeking their approval of the proposal. If unanimous support is received, an exemption can be made.

On 11 April 2013, members of SCEW received an update on consideration of options for a national scheme to deal with packaging waste and litter. At that meeting I requested that work on the Decision Regulation Impact Statement modelling be completed as soon as possible to enable a facts-based response to this important issue. This request was reflected in the communique arising from this meeting.