

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

FIFTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT

FIRST SESSION

WRITTEN ADJOURNMENT RESPONSES

11 and 12 March 2014

(Extract from book 3)

Internet: www.parliament.vic.gov.au/downloadhansard

By authority of the Victorian Government Printer

The Governor

The Honourable ALEX CHERNOV, AC, QC

The Lieutenant-Governor

The Honourable Justice MARILYN WARREN, AC

The ministry (from 22 April 2013)

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Minister for Police and Emergency Services, and Minister for Bushfire Response	The Hon. K. A. Wells, MP
Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Community Services, and Minister for Disability Services and Reform	The Hon. M. L. N. Wooldridge, MP
Cabinet Secretary	Mr N. Wakeling, MP

Legislative Council committees

Privileges Committee — Ms Darveniza, Mr D. Davis, Mr Hall, Ms Lovell, Ms Pennicuik, Mrs Peulich 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, Mr Ramsay and #Mr Scheffer.

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 Finn, #Ms Hartland, Mrs Kronberg, #Mr Leane, Mr Ondarchie, Ms Pennicuik, #Mrs Peulich, Mr Ronalds, Mr Scheffer, #Mr Tarlamis, Mr Tee and Ms Tierney.

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

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

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

Participating member

Joint committees

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Law Reform, Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee — (*Council*): Mr Ramsay and Mr Scheffer. (*Assembly*): Mr Carroll, Mr McCurdy and Mr Southwick.

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

Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee — (*Council*): Mr Dalla-Riva. (*Assembly*): Ms Barker, Ms Campbell, Mr Gidley, Mr Nardella, Dr Sykes and Mr Watt.

Heads of parliamentary departments

Assembly — Clerk of the Parliaments and Clerk of the Legislative Assembly: Mr R. W. Purdey

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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Deputy President: Mr M. VINEY

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Mr J. LENDERS

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Mr G. JENNINGS

Leader of The Nationals:

The Hon. P. R. HALL

Deputy Leader of The Nationals:

Mr D. DRUM

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Dalla-Riva, Hon. Richard Alex Gordon	Eastern Metropolitan	LP	O'Brien, Mr David Roland Joseph	Western Victoria	Nats
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Hartland, Ms Colleen Mildred	Western Metropolitan	Greens	Scheffer, Mr Johan Emiel	Eastern Victoria	ALP
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Koch, Mr David Frank	Western Victoria	LP	Tarlamis, Mr Lee Reginald	South Eastern Metropolitan	ALP
Kronberg, Mrs Janice Susan	Eastern Metropolitan	LP	Tee, Mr Brian Lennox	Eastern Metropolitan	ALP
Leane, Mr Shaun Leo	Eastern Metropolitan	ALP	Tierney, Ms Gayle Anne	Western Victoria	ALP
			Viney, Mr Matthew Shaw	Eastern Victoria	ALP

¹ Resigned 3 February 2014

² Resigned 26 March 2013

³ Appointed 8 May 2013

⁴ Resigned 1 July 2013

⁵ Appointed 21 August 2013

⁶ Appointed 5 February 2014

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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, 11 March 2014

Emergency response system

Raised with: Minister for Police and Emergency Services

Raised by: Ms Crozier

Raised on: 5 September 2013

REPLY:

ADAM is a national system developed and used in Israel for supplying information on the location and identification of casualties during mass casualty incidents and interfaces with patient registration system of hospitals. It provides hospitals and municipalities with immediate access to the identity and location of casualties.

Consideration of such a system in Australia is not a matter for Victoria alone but is a matter that should be looked into at a national level. I have asked the department to refer your enquiry about this system to our national counterparts.

Regional and rural ambulance charge

Raised with: Minister for Health

Raised by: Ms Darveniza

Raised on: 19 September 2013

REPLY:

The current ambulance fee structures relating to rural emergency transports remained unchanged for eleven years under the previous Labor government.

They were not addressed during Daniel Andrews' botched merger of rural and metropolitan ambulance services, but the Victorian coalition government, through its current consideration of funding reform options and its specific funding of \$12.9 million over four years to improve ambulance patient transfer times, is acting to address this.

Mildura ambulance station

Raised with: Minister for Health

Raised by: Ms Broad

Raised on: 15 October 2013

REPLY:

The Victorian government is implementing vital ambulance service reforms across the state. This investment includes an additional 310 paramedics and 30 patient transport officers, including 49 new ambulance staff in the Loddon Mallee region.

This will provide a significant increase to operational paramedic numbers and will considerably increase capacity to respond to the growing demand for ambulance services across the State.

In fact the number of staff funded by the Victorian government and put in place in the Loddon Mallee region to 31 December 2013 is 30.

With respect to the new Mildura Ambulance station, which will replace the existing ambulance station, built in the 1950's, I am advised that:

- The new ambulance station, while smaller than the existing station, has been purpose designed to meet present and future needs at Mildura and will do so with improved amenity and efficiency.
- All functions will be catered for and there are increased floor areas for many functions (such as purpose-built training and meeting facilities for paramedics) as appropriate to a facility reflecting modern ambulance service requirements.
- Ambulance Victoria has experience in developing ambulance stations in major centres across the State and has used that experience in determining the appropriate size, functionality and capacity requirements for the ambulance station.
- The number of toilet facilities provided in the new branch complies with building regulation requirements and architectural planning standards.
- Construction of a second branch was considered by Ambulance Victoria in the process of determining the optimal service consideration for Mildura; however, this was not proceeded with as it did not meet operational and response time criteria.
- Refurbishment of the existing station was also considered however it did not provide value for money when compared to the new build option currently being implemented.
- Ambulance Victoria has consulted branch staff in determining the final design and agreement has been reached with Ambulance Victoria's general manager and regional manager and both managers have approved the design.

I note the Bracks government and Brumby government refused to upgrade the station in over 11 years in government.

Social housing advocacy and support program

Raised with: Minister for Housing

Raised by: Ms Hartland

Raised on: 31 October 2013

REPLY:

The Social Housing Advocacy and Support Program (SHASP) continues to support people to maintain their tenancies and those in new tenancies through a case management approach.

The department has worked with SHASP agencies to ensure that case management of clients is not compromised.

The new funding allocation was achieved through non-direct service components of the program such as the management of community facilities on public housing estates and assistance with early housing applications. These activities will now be undertaken by the department within existing resources.

Out of 62 882 tenants statewide, 19.5 per cent (12 262 tenants) are currently in arrears. This is down from 20.2 per cent at the same time in 2012-2013.

In the last year, I have instructed my department to increase its focus on early intervention for rental arrears to assist tenants earlier and avoid significant debt. This focus has resulted in a 1.3 per cent reduction in client tenant arrears for the same time last year. The percentage of clients in arrears has also decreased by 1 per cent.

SHASP is only one of a suite of programs that provides support to high risk tenancies. In 2012-13 my department spent over \$80 million in managing and supporting tenancies.

We are encouraging innovative programs and models, as well as core day to day tenancy management, including:

- SHASP and the Support for High Risk Tenancy programs focus on supporting social housing tenancies;
- New work and learning centres implemented by this government and the public tenant employment program encouraging tenants into employment and education/training;
- Initiatives such as the ‘keeping in touch’ program to ensure we are linking with older persons living in public housing;
- An innovative concierge service model on some of our inner city high rise estates; and
- Funding the Tenants Union of Victoria, the Victorian Public Tenants’ Association and tenant groups to support tenants with information and advice.

City of Maroondah community projects

Raised with: Minister for Community Services

Raised by: Mr Leane

Raised on: 28 November 2013

REPLY:

The Victorian government has allocated \$4 million over four years to the Strengthening the Men’s Shed program. This program will expand men’s sheds into new communities across Victoria. Men’s sheds are valuable community facilities that give men a place to meet, establish social networks and work on meaningful projects that benefit the community.

The Croydon Men’s Shed has been advised that it will receive the full amount requested, \$60 000 in 2014-15, for the construction of a new shed. These funds are conditional on the men’s shed securing any additional funds necessary to complete the project from other sources.

This commitment of funds from the coalition government will assist the Croydon Men’s Shed to raise the funds needed to realise their vision.

Fire services property levy

Raised with: Minister for Police and Emergency Services

Raised by: Ms Hartland

Raised on: 10 December 2013

REPLY:

The Fire Services Property Levy ensures that all Victorian property owners pay a fair contribution for the fire services, and that fire services will continue to operate with sufficient resources.

There are strong safeguards in place to ensure that all funds raised through the levy go towards the Country Fire Authority (CFA) and the Metropolitan Fire and Emergency Services Board (MFB) budgets. The levy together with the government’s contributions towards our fire services, which form the fire services budgets, are legislated and publicly stated. The CFA and MFB Acts make it clear that the government will continue to fund 22.5% of the CFA budget and 12.5% of the MFB budget in 2013-14 and future years.

Victoria's fire agencies are well resourced to manage the 2013-14 fire season and other emergencies. As publicly stated by the government, there will be no reduction to the capacity of CFA and MFB to meet their frontline obligations.

Funding to the CFA under the coalition government has continued to increase. The government's contribution to the CFA for 2013-14 is \$446.2 million, an increase from \$430.8 million in the previous year.

The government's contribution of \$315.9 million in 2013-14 to the MFB budget is the largest in history. The government has also announced the new \$109 million multi-agency training facility in Craigieburn developed by MFB, providing the best emergency services training facilities in Australia. It will be a dynamic example of incorporating agency interoperability, supporting an all hazards, all agencies approach to emergency management in Victoria.

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

SPC Ardmona

Raised with: Premier

Raised by: Ms Darveniza

Raised on: 5 February 2014

REPLY:

The Victoria coalition government was pleased to recently announce that SPC Ardmona's long-term future in Shepparton has been secured with a \$100 million Victorian coalition government and Coca-Cola Amatil co-investment. The Victorian government has committed \$22 million towards a \$100 million investment that will transform and modernise SPC Ardmona's operations in Shepparton.

This co-investment aligns with the Victorian government's work in creating export opportunities for business in growing markets and supporting regional communities. The Victorian government also recognises the significance of the State's food and fibre industry, with total agriculture and food exports from Victoria accounting for 29 per cent of Australian food exports. Food and fibre are particularly important to the Shepparton region, which has more than 3000 agricultural businesses.

Up to 2700 jobs in the Goulburn Valley are dependent on SPC Ardmona. This co-investment will provide greater certainty for these workers and their families in the Goulburn Valley region. The Victorian government has committed \$2 million as part of the Victorian Training Guarantee to ensure SPC Ardmona workers are re-skilled and up-skilled.

This major co-investment will help SPC Ardmona to respond to global challenges, to be sustainable for the long term and to take advantage of the significant opportunities that the growing Asian economy presents. Through this co-investment SPC Ardmona will transform its operations, modernise food processing and increase its global and domestic product range.

Telephone scams

Raised with: Minister for Consumer Affairs

Raised by: Mrs Peulich

Raised on: 6 February 2014

REPLY:

The Victorian coalition government recognises that unfortunately anybody can fall victim to a scam, including telephone scams, which often involve some offer of a 'rebate', such as the recent ATO phone scam. However, sometimes certain people can be more susceptible to scams.

Because of this, Consumer Affairs Victoria conducts a range of communications activities to warn all Victorians, including the elderly and those from non-English speaking backgrounds about scams. I set out below examples of these activities to assist in protecting the most vulnerable in the community.

Consumer Affairs Victoria staff work across the state, delivering presentations and information to a range of groups about scams. It also uses social media channels to warn Victorians about current and emerging scams. Whilst some elderly and non-English speakers do not use social media, their family or friends who do are encouraged to share this information with them. Consumer Affairs Victoria also consistently shares warnings posted on social media by companies or agencies in whose names scams are conducted, such as the ATO.

In June last year, Consumer Affairs Victoria launched the second series of its Stevie's Scam School videos, including a rebate scam video, to help consumers avoid common scams. The videos were distributed to every municipal council in Victoria, and a range of organisations such as the Consumer Action Law Centre and Country Women's Association.

In January this year, to complement its existing online content, Consumer Affairs Victoria provided information on scams in 23 community languages on its website. The translated material includes specific information about rebate scams. A media release promoting this content received coverage in ethnic media, and resulted in SBS radio's Spanish and Sinhalese language programs covering the issue, and an article in the *Spanish Herald* newspaper.

In addition to the above, Consumer Affairs Victoria works with the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission and other state fair trading agencies, sharing information and resources to combat scams and protect the most vulnerable in our community.

WRITTEN ADJOURNMENT RESPONSES

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

Wednesday, 12 March 2014

Mallee Family Care

Raised with: Attorney-General

Raised by: Ms Pulford

Raised on: 19 September 2013

REPLY:

As Ms Pulford should be aware, it is not appropriate to purport to seek legal advice on an adjournment debate in the manner that she has done.

The raising of this matter by Ms Pulford appears simply to be part of her continued attempts to denigrate Mallee Family Care and its successes in securing work opportunities for its clients.

Solar panel grid connection

Raised with: Minister for Energy and Resources

Raised by: Mr Barber

Raised on: 15 October 2013

REPLY:

Powercor claims that the new pre-approval requirement is necessary to maintain reliability and quality of supply in accordance with its obligations under the electricity distribution code.

Under Victorian regulation, distribution businesses cannot refuse connection, but may ask customers to contribute to connection costs where network upgrades are required to support the new system. For smaller systems, this may occur in areas where solar is concentrated and/or the network is less resilient.

Affected customers are able to dispute the costs and terms of distribution business connection offers with the federal Australian Energy Regulator.

Reg Geary House

Raised with: Minister for Ageing

Raised by: Mr Eideh

Raised on: 13 November 2013

REPLY:

Under Victoria's devolved governance model, individual health services make their own decisions regarding public health service delivery.

The Chief Executive of Western Health, Professor Cockram, has advised me that the Board had made a decision to progress the closure of Reg Geary House.

Professor Cockram informs me that satisfactory alternative accommodation will be found for each resident and that every member of staff will be offered alternative employment within Western Health.

SPC Ardmona

Raised with: Minister for Manufacturing

Raised by: Mr Somyurek

Raised on: 4 February 2014

REPLY:

On 13 February 2014, SPC Ardmona and the Victorian coalition government jointly announced a \$100 million new investment in SPC Ardmona's Shepparton food processing facility.

The project includes a \$22 million co-investment from the Victorian coalition government.

This \$100 million project will result in the transformation and modernisation of SPC Ardmona's Shepparton facility and has secured the future of SPC Ardmona in the Goulburn Valley.

The announcement is in addition to initiatives previously announced by the Government in relation to the decision in April 2013 by SPC Ardmona to greatly reduce the intake of fruit in the Goulburn Valley. These initiatives include the *Fruit Industry Employment Program*, establishment of the *Goulburn Valley Taskforce*, and the \$5 million *Goulburn Valley Industry and Infrastructure Fund* designed to facilitate new investment and job creation in the region.