

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

FIFTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT

FIRST SESSION

WRITTEN ADJOURNMENT RESPONSES

14, 15 and 16 October 2014

(Extract from book 14)

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By authority of the Victorian Government Printer

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The Honourable ALEX CHERNOV, AC, QC

The Lieutenant-Governor

The Honourable Justice MARILYN WARREN, AC

The ministry

(from 17 March 2014)

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

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Economy and Infrastructure References Committee — Mr Barber, Mrs Coote, #Ms Crozier, Mr Finn, #Mr Leane, Mr Lenders, Mr Melhem, Mr D. D O'Brien, #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.

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

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Participating member

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Environment and Natural Resources Committee — (*Council*): Mr Koch and Mr D. D O'Brien. (*Assembly*): Ms Duncan, Mr Pandazopoulos and Ms Wreford.

Family and Community Development Committee — (*Council*): Mrs Coote. (*Assembly*): Ms Halfpenny, Mr Madden, Mrs Powell and Ms Ryall.

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Rural and Regional Committee — (*Council*): Mr D. R. J. O'Brien. (*Assembly*): Mr Howard, Mr Katos, Mr Trezise and Mr Weller.

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Council — Acting Clerk of the Legislative Council: Mr A. Young

Parliamentary Services — Secretary: Mr P. Lochert

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FIFTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT — FIRST SESSION

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The Hon. P. R. HALL (to 17 March 2013)

Deputy Leader of The Nationals:

Mr D. R. J. O'BRIEN (from 17 March 2013)

Mr D. K. DRUM (to 17 March 2013)

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Coote, Mrs Andrea	Southern Metropolitan	LP	Millar, Mrs Amanda Louise ⁴	Northern Victoria	LP
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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
Leanders, Mr John	Southern Metropolitan	ALP	Viney, Mr Matthew Shaw	Eastern Victoria	ALP
Lewis, Ms Margaret ¹⁰	Northern Victoria	ALP			

¹ Resigned 26 March 2013

² Appointed 8 May 2013

³ Resigned 1 July 2013

⁴ Appointed 21 August 2013

⁵ Resigned 3 February 2014

⁶ Appointed 5 February 2014

⁷ Resigned 17 March 2014

⁸ Appointed 26 March 2014

⁹ Resigned 9 May 2014

¹⁰ Appointed 11 June 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, 14 October 2014

Landmate

Raised with: Minister for Corrections

Raised by: Mr Ramsay

Raised on: 5 February 2014

REPLY:

I refer to your matter raised in the Legislative Council on 5 February 2014 regarding the Landmate program and the Dadswell Bridge fire recovery.

On 27 February we had the opportunity to visit Dadswell Bridge together to see firsthand the damage caused by the recent bushfires. These devastating bushfires forced the closure of the Grampians National Park during January's peak tourist season and damaged local farming properties. For weeks, a Landmate crew from Hopkins Correctional Centre outside of Ararat worked with local farmers around Dadswell Bridge to remove, repair, and replace fences destroyed by the fires.

Prisoners have removed approximately 9.2 kilometres of damaged fencing, installed 1 kilometre of new fencing and repaired 3 kilometres of damaged farm fences. In times of natural disaster, prison staff and prisoners have stood side-by-side with the towns and communities of Western Victoria to help get them back on their feet. Through projects such as this, prisoners learn new skills and trades to increase the likelihood of gaining employment upon their release while giving something back to the community and making reparation for their crimes. Putting prisoners to work on fire recovery projects is just one way our prisons make a real difference in Western Victoria, and the ongoing expansion of the prison system provides even more opportunity to strengthen these partnerships.

Through these initiatives, the coalition government continues to deliver the infrastructure, the beds and the jobs needed to build a safer community and stronger corrections system.

I thank you for your ongoing interest and support of the Landmate program, particularly in Western Victoria.

Geelong region police resources

Raised with: Minister for Police and emergency services

Raised by: Ms Tierney

Raised on: 26 March 2014

REPLY:

I note your concerns regarding police resources in the Geelong, Surf Coast and Bellarine region. I confirm that Victoria Police has no plans to reduce policing in this area. As you are aware, communities on the Bellarine Peninsula will continue to have a 24-hour operational police response, including increased divisional van patrols by police and extended operating hours for the Bellarine police station.

On 26 August 2014, the Chief Commissioner of Police and I visited the Bellarine Peninsula and announced a six-month review of local policing. The review will seek community feedback regarding the working operations of

Victoria Police on the Bellarine Peninsula and there will be extensive consultations across the entire area. The feedback period includes the summer months, when the population on the Bellarine Peninsula rises significantly.

While the government is responsible for the provision of resources to Victoria Police, the allocation of police resources and the operation of police facilities across Victoria is the responsibility of the Chief Commissioner of Police who is best placed to determine state wide policing needs.

Since November 2010, Division 1 of the Western Region, which includes Greater Geelong and Surf Coast Police Service Areas (PSA), has been allocated an additional 57 officers, boosting police resources by 16.7 per cent.

In the 12 month period to June 2014, Victoria Police crime statistics for Western Region Division 1 indicate a significant reduction in the rate of crime per 100 000 population for a number of crime categories. This includes a 13.5 per cent reduction in the rate of robbery and a 4 per cent reduction in the rate of assaults. Positive results have also been seen with a 5 per cent fall in the rate of residential burglary and a 10.1 per cent fall in the rate of burglary (other) which includes commercial premises. These results reflect ongoing efforts by local police.

In regard to the concerns you have expressed about the status of Blue Light activities in the Geelong area, I am advised by Victoria Police that in order to build its front-line capacity it has reassigned a number of centralised positions. This means that from 31 March 2014, Victoria Police no longer provide dedicated full time staff and resources to the Blue Light State Council, including the Blue Light Youth Camp. However, Victoria Police remains supportive of Blue Light, which is one of numerous community engagement programs that police are involved in.

Local police management are able to continue their support for Blue Light, including attendance at events and meetings. Police are also able to volunteer their time to assist with these programs, as many officers currently do. This approach recognises that Blue Light functions have always been heavily reliant on support from local police.

Victoria Police will also continue to strengthen its focus on youth engagement through the recently established Priority Communities Division. In conjunction with Community Liaison Officers, Youth Resource Officers and Crime Prevention Officers, who currently operate within each Police Service Area and/or division, this arrangement ensures that police continue to build and maintain positive relationships with youth in Victoria.

Thank you for raising these matters with me.

Local learning and employment networks

Raised with: Minister for Education

Raised by: Mr Leane

Raised on: 29 May 2014

REPLY:

I am informed as follows:

In 2014, funding for the LLENs is provided through separate funding agreements with the state and commonwealth governments, totalling \$13.3 million.

The Victorian government committed last year to maintaining 2013 levels by providing \$2.3 million. Disappointingly, the commonwealth government has reduced its funding from \$11 million in 2014 to zero funding in 2015.

As a result, the Napthine government recently announced that it will more than triple its investment in the LLENs, from \$2.3 million in 2014, to \$8 million in 2015.

This is in addition to the Napthine government's standing commitment to support the industry-focused Workplace Learning Coordinators program with \$5.1 million funding. The coordinators organise workplace learning placements for 15–19 year olds and their work complements that of the LLENs.

This combined \$13.1 million investment will ensure that we can continue to support young people through pathways from school to further education and work.

Under the Napthine government, students have unprecedented access to a range of senior secondary options, including Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE), VCE (Baccalaureate), Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) and Specialist and Industry Pathways.

The Productivity Commission's report of government services clearly shows Victorian students value their education, with the highest year 10–12 retention rates of any state in Australia, at 83.4 per cent.

Schools are best placed to identify the needs of their students and community, but there is a role for government and the community in identifying and addressing the needs of vulnerable young people — including those who are disengaged from school.

The new Children and Youth Area Partnerships framework, detailed in the Napthine government's Victoria's Vulnerable Children Strategy, will bring together key government and community sector leaders to tackle child and youth vulnerability, including engagement in education.

As a further sign of the Napthine government's continuing commitment to supporting young people, in the coming months we will be working with LLENs, Workplace Learning Coordinators, schools, industry and other stakeholders to manage the transition to a more effective and sustainable state-based model.

Mentone Gardens aged-care facility

Raised with: Minister for Ageing

Raised by: Mr Lenders

Raised on: 29 May 2014

REPLY:

I am sympathetic to the concerns of residents and their families in relation to the facility formerly known as Mentone Gardens, a private business.

This is a complex matter which is presently under investigation by the appointed company liquidator.

My department has made enquiries of both the liquidator and the Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC) in support of a coordinated response to the liquidator's findings. In late 2013 I wrote to the liquidator, but regrettably he declined to provide copies of his reports to the department.

Following yet another attempt to seek information from the liquidator, he recently supplied the Department of Health with some preliminary information.

Both I and my department have responded to numerous letters from residents, ex-residents and their advocates, and I am advised that a senior representative from the department has had a number of meetings with creditors and their representatives, including attendance at a creditors' meeting to listen to concerns and respond to questions.

I have also written to the Commissioner for Police to investigate claims by residents that there has been fraud, misappropriation or theft involved in the company's transactions.

Costerfield mine

Raised with: Minister for Energy and Resources

Raised by: Ms Darveniza

Raised on: 11 June 2014

REPLY:

I am aware of the community concerns regarding the operation of the Mandalay Resources mining operation at Costerfield, and the elevated levels of antimony in the surrounding environment. The community has also raised concerns about their health, with residents of Costerfield and residents in the Heathcote area having undertaken urine tests that showed elevated levels of antimony. The government takes these concerns very seriously and has taken a number of measures to address this matter thoroughly and effectively and to investigate the concerns of residents.

My department, the Department of State Development, Business and Innovation (DSDBI) acted immediately following dust complaints made earlier this year, directing that Mandalay Resources undertake a range of measures to reduce antimony dust coming from the mine. Dust emissions were significantly reduced and DSDBI, in conjunction with EPA Victoria, will continue to monitor the area to ensure dust emissions stay well within acceptable guidelines.

DSDBI has been working with a multi-agency government reference group, which includes the Department of Health, EPA Victoria and the Department of Environment and Primary Industries, as well as the City of Greater Bendigo. This group developed a scope of works to perform a rapid health risk assessment, which was undertaken by expert consultants, Golder Associates.

The testing found elevated levels of antimony around Costerfield, but determined that adverse health effects as a result are unlikely. The total daily intake level of antimony at most households tested well below World Health Organisation guidelines.

Considering the Costerfield area is naturally high in antimony, it is more likely that people living in this area may be exposed to higher levels than other communities living in areas with low environmental antimony levels. Their report is available online at the follow address: energyandresources.vic.gov.au/Costerfield.

As antimony is not an essential metal for normal body function, the Department of Health has advised Costerfield residents to take steps to reduce their exposure to antimony as a precaution. This includes measures such as:

- Drinking water that meets Australian Drinking Water Guidelines (Coliban Water meets this criteria as does commercial bottled water).
- Reducing dust inside the home.
- Minimising exposure to bare soil for pre-school aged children to prevent ingestion.

Golder Associates have been engaged to undertake a more comprehensive risk assessment with environmental sampling of air, dust, soil and rainwater over a twelve month period. This will provide a better understanding of the background levels of antimony found in the area and the different ways of possible exposure.

In response to elevated urinary antimony results, the Department of Health undertook work which has identified wide-spread anomalies and inaccuracies in reported urine testing results. Subsequent investigations into sample collection and testing processes by the Department of Health and the Royal Prince Alfred laboratories in Sydney have now raised significant doubts about some reported results for urinary antimony levels prior to July 2014. This information has been communicated to the community and health professionals in the area and people with previously elevated urinary antimony results who are concerned have been advised to speak to their GPs and undertake a repeat test.

DSDBI and other government agencies have provided regular updates and information to Costerfield residents and across the broader Heathcote area, including newsletters, local newspaper advertisements, online information, one-on-one engagement and an open-house session in Heathcote attended by representatives from across government, Golder Associates and the Medical Director of the Victorian Poisons Information Centre, Dr Shaun Green.

It is worth noting that a modern underground gold and antimony mine has been operating at Costerfield since 2006, under licences and planning permits approved by the former Labor government. Processes followed at that time determined that an Environmental Effects Statement was not required.

It appears that some people have questioned the work of Golder Associates and suggested that department agencies have failed in their duties. I can assure you that Golder Associates provide environmental and engineering advice to a broad range of clients in industry and government. In the last 10 years they have been used approximately 145 projects for governments of all political persuasions.

For example, under a Labor government in 2008, Golder Associates were awarded a commission by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. Golder provided remediation services for the Albert Park Secondary College, which is located on the storage depot of a former gas manufacturing site. They prepared a Remediation Action Plan for on-site treatment of the contaminated soil and undertook soil and groundwater investigations to allow redevelopment of the school.

The government is committed to continuing to provide correct and trusted information to the community. If a community member has any concerns about their health, or the health of their family, they should see their doctor, or speak to a representative from the Department of Health on 1300 761 874.

Health funding

Raised with: Minister for Health

Raised by: Mr Melhem

Raised on: 11 June 2014

REPLY:

I can confirm that the Health portfolio budget for 2014–15 is a record high \$15 billion, an increase of \$607 million relative to 2013–14, and an increase of \$3.6 billion since the coalition government came to office.

The 2014–15 Victorian hospital budgets are available on the Department of Health website, and show an average increase of 5.1 per cent relative to the previous year. This clearly demonstrates the Napthine government's commitment to properly fund hospital services.

The 2014–15 financial year marked new commonwealth-state funding arrangements. The Napthine government actively negotiated with the commonwealth to deliver a fair outcome for all Victorians under the new arrangements.

This is in sharp contrast with state Labor who remained silent when Julia Gillard and Tanya Plibersek slashed \$475 million from Victoria's health budget in 2012–13. It was only through the determined efforts of the coalition government that \$107 million was clawed back to Victorian public hospitals and health services to spend on the sick and injured in the community. \$368 million over the forward estimates was lost.

But Labor's silence, and for that matter the Green's silence was not enough insult to the people of Victoria. When presented with an opportunity to send a united message of concern about the cuts imposed by Julia Gillard and Tanya Plibersek on behalf of the people of Victoria, they did not.

On 15 November 2012, Labor MPs Martin Pakula, Candy Broad, Khalil Eideh, Jaala Pulford, Johan Scheffer, Gavin Jennings, Adem Somyurek, Shaun Leane, Brian Tee, John Lenders, Gayle Tierney, Jenny Mikakos and Matt Viney, along with Greens MPs Greg Barber, Susan Pennicuik and Colleen Hartland voted against a motion expressing concern in relation to the \$475 million cut.

Labor and Greens abandoned the interests of Victoria, and those in our community who depend on the services provided by the public health and hospital system.

Beaufort education regeneration project**Raised with: Minister for Education****Raised by: Ms Pulford****Raised on: 11 June 2014****REPLY:**

I am informed as follows:

The Napthine government has invested \$1.1 billion into school capital since 2011.

I am advised that the completed first stage of the Beaufort education regeneration project included the construction of a new early learning centre and primary school on the secondary college site.

The Napthine government's 2014–15 budget invests \$500 million for school infrastructure projects. This includes funding for 12 new schools in growth areas; further construction stages, modernisations or refurbishments at over 70 schools across the state; and funding for new relocatable classrooms.

The further stages of the Beaufort regeneration project cannot be funded from the 2014–15 Victorian budget as all funds for school capital have already been allocated to projects described in budget paper 4.

I understand that the Beaufort community has expectations about the completion of the education regeneration project. The reality Beaufort residents need to be aware of is that this project is one of hundreds of projects Labor promised funding to, but were either left unfunded or under-funded by the previous Labor government. This is in addition to the \$420 million school maintenance backlog left by Labor when it left office in 2010.

Moriac Primary School**Raised with: Minister for Education****Raised by: Ms Tierney****Raised on: 24 June 2014****REPLY:**

I am informed as follows:

Moriac Primary School is one of 200 schools promised capital funding by the former Labor government to which construction funding was never provided. To say that the \$4.23 million promised by the former Labor government was 'withdrawn' by the coalition government is false and misleading. It is a fact that this money was never appropriated by the previous Labor government at any time, in any of its budgets, to deliver the Moriac Primary School capital works project.

The Victorian government's independent condition assessment audit of 27 000 buildings across more than 1500 government schools in Victoria revealed a \$420 million maintenance backlog left by the previous Labor government.

As an initial response, the government allocated \$51.5 million in 2013 to the buildings identified as having the greatest maintenance needs. Funding was allocated on a priority basis in order to bring those schools up to an acceptable standard.

Moriac Primary School received \$288 039 in 2013 to upgrade the three poorest buildings at the school, with funding allocated to Block A (classrooms and administration), Block D (classrooms and library space), and the Art House (art and computer room).

The funding will address poor and worn elements in the three buildings to bring them up to a satisfactory condition standard. The budget allocated to the school for the works was informed by independent industry costings.

I am advised that works commenced at the school on 30 June 2014, following a pre-works meeting between the school, builder, project consultants and representatives from the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.

The department will continue to work closely with Moriac Primary School to ensure the funds are targeted to address the facilities with the greatest need.

Victoria Legal Aid

Raised with: Attorney-General

Raised by: Mr Eideh

Raised on: 25 June 2014

REPLY:

Victoria Legal Aid (VLA) is an independent statutory body that acts independently of government, as required under the Legal Aid Act 1978. It would not be appropriate for me as Attorney-General to intervene in their decision-making process regarding client eligibility criteria.

The Victorian coalition government is committed to supporting vulnerable Victorians obtain legal advice and assistance, which has been demonstrated through additional ongoing funding support to VLA in recent budgets. Under the coalition government, state funding for VLA has never been higher. In 2009–10, the former Labor government provided a total funding allocation of \$67 million to VLA, of which only \$38.3 million was recurrent funding. This year, the coalition government will provide more than \$82 million in recurrent funding to VLA. This represents a 22 per cent increase in legal aid funding by the coalition government over that provided by Labor.

William Ruthven Secondary College

Raised with: Minister for Education

Raised by: Ms Mikakos

Raised on: 25 June 2014

REPLY:

I am informed as follows:

The Victorian government has invested \$1.1 billion into school capital since 2011.

The Victorian government's 2014–15 budget invests \$500 million for school infrastructure projects. This includes funding for 12 new schools in growth areas, further construction stages, modernisations or refurbishments at over 70 schools across the state, and funding for new relocatable classrooms.

I understand that William Ruthven Secondary College is one of hundreds of capital projects left either unfunded or under-funded by the previous Labor government when it left office in 2010. This is in addition to a \$420 million school maintenance backlog left by the former Labor government, a \$120 million blow-out in Labor's failed Ultraneet system, and a \$70 million funding shortfall in Labor's rollout of the Building the Education Revolution program in Victoria.

Geelong Region Local Learning and Employment Network**Raised with: Minister for Education****Raised by: Ms Tierney****Raised on: 25 June 2014****REPLY:**

I am informed as follows:

In 2014, funding for the LLENs is provided through separate funding agreements with the state and commonwealth governments, totalling \$13.3 million.

The Victorian government committed last year to maintaining 2013 levels by providing \$2.3 million. Disappointingly, the commonwealth government has reduced its funding from \$11 million in 2014 to zero funding in 2015.

As a result, the Napthine government recently announced that it will more than triple its investment in the LLENs, from \$2.3 million in 2014, to \$8 million in 2015.

This is in addition to the Napthine government's standing commitment to support the industry-focused Workplace Learning Coordinators program with \$5.1 million funding. The coordinators organise workplace learning placements for 15–19-year-olds and their work complements that of the LLENs.

This combined \$13.1 million investment will ensure that we can continue to support young people through pathways from school to further education and work.

Under the Napthine government, students have unprecedented access to a range of senior secondary options, including Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE), VCE (Baccalaureate), Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) and Specialist and Industry Pathways.

The Productivity Commission's report of government services clearly shows Victorian students value their education, with the highest year 10–12 retention rates of any state in Australia, at 83.4 per cent.

Schools are best placed to identify the needs of their students and community, but there is a role for government and the community in identifying and addressing the needs of vulnerable young people — including those who are disengaged from school.

The new Children and Youth Area Partnerships framework, detailed in the Napthine government's Victoria's Vulnerable Children Strategy, will bring together key government and community sector leaders to tackle child and youth vulnerability, including engagement in education.

As a further sign of the Napthine government's continuing commitment to supporting young people, in the coming months we will be working with LLENs, Workplace Learning Coordinators, schools, industry and other stakeholders to manage the transition to a more effective and sustainable state-based model.

Wallan Secondary College**Raised with: Minister for Education****Raised by: Ms Lewis****Raised on: 26 June 2014****REPLY:**

I am informed as follows:

The Napthine government has invested \$1.1 billion into school capital since 2011.

The Napthine government's 2014–15 budget allocated more than \$500 million for school infrastructure projects. This includes funding for 12 new schools in growth areas, further construction stages, modernisations or refurbishments at over 70 schools across the state, and funding for new relocatable classrooms to help meet demand.

I understand that Wallan Secondary College has an expectation to see its full capital redevelopment plan funded and implemented. Projects like these were one of hundreds of planned redevelopments promised by the former Labor government that were either left unfunded or under-funded by that government.

With over 1500 government schools across the state the Napthine government is addressing the needs of school capital and maintenance in a way that proportionately responds to the \$420 million school maintenance backlog left by Labor, as well as delivering vital new school infrastructure in Victoria's growth areas, completing many of Labor's unfunded and undelivered building projects, and contending with Labor's cost blow-outs in education like the \$120 million blow-out in Labor's failed Ultranet ICT system and the \$70 million blow-out in delivering Labor's Building the Education Revolution program.

Student prayer groups

Raised with: Minister for Education

Raised by: Mr Ronalds

Raised on: 5 August 2014

REPLY:

I am informed as follows:

Student prayer groups have not been banned. Freedom of religion, speech and association are defining principles of our multi-faith and multicultural society and have a strong place in Victorian government schools.

Students in Victorian government schools are free to come together to pray or engage in discussion about their faith, as they have always been. Victorian government schools are strong supporters of the religious freedoms of their students, as should always be the case.

I have amended MD141 and had the department revise its policy guidance to schools to ensure that it is entirely consistent with the legislation which represents the will of the Parliament.

Disability services

Raised with: Minister for Community Services

Raised by: Ms Mikakos

Raised on: 6 August 2014

REPLY:

My department is actively working with Ms Phelps and her daughters who have both been allocated an Individual Support package. Funding will enable both girls to have an ongoing level of support to meet their essential needs and Ms Phelps will be able to choose a preferred provider to deliver these supports.

The girls remain on the Disability Support Register and will continue to be considered for an increase to their Individual Support Packages as resources become available. Resources are allocated by a panel, which includes members independent of my department. When allocating resources, the panel takes into account a range of factors relevant to each individual's circumstances. For these reasons, it is not possible to give a definite timeframe when further resources will become available for a particular individual.

World Congress of Families

Raised with: Minister for Health

Raised by: Ms Mikakos

Raised on: 7 August 2014

REPLY:

Breast cancer is the most commonly diagnosed cancer and the second leading cause of cancer-related deaths in Victorian women. Because it is a common disease and can have fatal consequences it is one that many women fear.

Over the years numerous epidemiological studies have been undertaken to try and identify key risk factors and to support prevention and identify effective treatments for breast cancer. These endeavours have been very successful and the most recently available data shows that the 5-year survival from breast cancer in Victoria is 90 per cent.

In the matter of a link between abortion and breast cancer, large valid scientific research studies have found no cause and effect relationship. This has been the accepted evidence which underpins cancer policy in Australia and Victoria.

Western Victoria Region police resources

Raised with: Minister for Police and Emergency Services

Raised by: Ms Pulford

Raised on: 20 August 2014

REPLY:

I note your concerns regarding police resourcing in Coleraine and Casterton. The government is committed to making our communities safer so families can feel safe on our streets, on public transport and in their homes. The government is providing \$602 million to deliver 1700 extra front-line police members by November 2014. In addition to more police, crucial front-line taskforces have been established by the Chief Commissioner of Police targeting family violence, sexual offending including online offences, organised crime, outlaw motorcycle gangs, illicit drug manufacture and distribution, and road safety.

Since November 2010, Division 2 of the Western Region, which includes the Southern Grampians (PSA), has been allocated an additional 17 officers, boosting police resources by 8.2 per cent.

I am informed there are no plans to alter the policing service to the communities of Coleraine, Casterton or Hamilton. Policing across the Division is managed in a flexible manner to ensure the best use of available resources. This takes into account that police response capacity within a locality is rarely dependent solely on local police resources, as calls made to '000' are processed and responded to by the closest available police personnel, no matter where they are based.

The Sergeant at Coleraine police station retired on 8 August 2014 and his position is being reviewed and will be advertised. Victoria Police has advised that leave arrangements for police at Coleraine have not impacted on the service provision to the Coleraine and surrounding communities.

The Victoria Police crime statistics for the 12-month period to June 2014 indicate a reduction in the rate of crime per 100 000 population for a number of crime categories. The rate of burglary (other), which includes commercial premises, has decreased by 8.6 per cent and the rate of property damage has decreased by 4.5 per cent. Increased police enforcement to actively address drug issues has seen an increase in the rate of drug offences across Division 2 Western Region.

While the government is responsible for the provision of resources to Victoria Police, the allocation of police resources and the operation of police facilities across Victoria is the responsibility of the Chief Commissioner of Police who is best placed to determine state wide policing needs.

It is important to note that the allocation of police resources by the Chief Commissioner is a long-established protocol that ensures the operational independence of Victoria Police, free from political interference.

I can assure the communities at Coleraine, Casterton and Hamilton that Victoria Police is committed to providing the best available policing service to meet local priorities.

Thank you for raising these matters with me.

Shrine of Remembrance

Raised with: Minister for Veterans' Affairs

Raised by: Mrs Coote

Raised on: 2 September 2014

REPLY:

In 2012, the Victorian government committed funding to the \$45 million Galleries of Remembrance project at the Shrine of Remembrance.

The Victorian government marked the official completion of the construction stage of the Galleries of Remembrance development on 4 August 2014. The Galleries will open to the public on the day of the formal dedication service which will be held on 11 November 2014.

The Shrine of Remembrance has a significant engagement program in place with schools across Victoria.

Each year, around 51 500 Victorian school students participate in the Shrine of Remembrance's education program. The Shrine has circulated to schools their July–December 2014 'What's On' update which talks about the new permanent exhibition, education centre and auditorium in Galleries of Remembrance. The Shrine's website also contains extensive information about these facilities.

A further promotion will follow the opening of the Galleries of Remembrance, including a refreshed program launch in time for school term 1 in 2015.

This project is at the centre of the government's commitment to appropriately commemorate the Anzac Centenary and will provide a lasting legacy for future generations of Victorians.

Student support programs

Raised with: Minister for Education

Raised by: Mr Leane

Raised on: 2 September 2014

REPLY:

The Victorian government funds and supports a range of initiatives delivered by schools and community agencies aimed at preventing disengagement and reconnecting disengaged young people to education and training.

Re-engagement programs, which operate outside mainstream classroom settings, provide a combination of tailored education provision and wellbeing support and are often run by schools in partnership with registered training organisations or community agencies. Schools are able to use their Student Resource Package funding to deliver or

purchase re-engagement programs to meet the needs of their students. The Victorian government provides an additional \$7.5 million per annum for 30 government schools to deliver re-engagement programs.

In addition to re-engagement programs, there are a range of resources in the school system to support student engagement. Student Support Services, managed through school networks, comprising psychologists, social workers and other allied health professionals, work in collaboration with schools and community services to identify and intervene early with children and young people who have additional needs or are at risk of disengagement.

We have recently committed \$8 million in 2015 for Local Learning and Employment Networks to improve the participation, engagement, attainment and transition outcomes of children and young people aged 10–19.

Further, the School Focused Youth Service (SFYS) operates statewide and focuses on supporting at risk young people aged 10–18 who require targeted or intensive intervention strategies to assist their learning, development, health and wellbeing.

Preventing and responding to youth disengagement will continue to be a strong priority for the Victorian government with the implementation of Children and Youth Area Partnerships, which bring together relevant government departments and community agencies to work collaboratively to improve outcomes for vulnerable children. I look forward to working with schools and community agencies to further improve outcomes for children and young people in Victoria.

Coles

Raised with: Minister for Technology

Raised by: Mr Somyurek

Raised on: 2 September 2014

REPLY:

I understand on 3 September 2014, Coles announced plans to restructure its Store Support Centre — based at its Head Office at Tooronga in Melbourne.

To clarify the adjournment matter which you have raised, I understand that Coles has denied reports that it is planning to end ICT jobs offshore.

While the news of any jobs losses in Victoria is disappointing, decisions regarding current and future workforce requirements are the responsibility of individual businesses. I note that the Victorian government is offering support to affected Coles workers through the Workers in Transition and Business in Transition Support programs.

The Victorian coalition government is also working closely with industry and education providers, including Coles, to implement initiatives under the Victorian ICT Workforce Development Plan.

The Victorian ICT Workforce Development Plan is ensuring that Victoria is well positioned to take advantage of the dynamic and evolving technology landscape, and that there are sufficient skilled ICT professionals to lead Victoria on the next wave of economic growth.

The Victorian coalition government recognises significant role that ICT plays across the Victorian economy. The government is committed to ensuring that the growing demand across all industry sectors for workers, skilled in understanding and applying ICT, to fill the high value ICT jobs of the future, is secured.

Ambulance officers

Raised with: Minister for Health

Raised by: Ms Darveniza

Raised on: 3 September 2014

REPLY:

Under Ambulance Victoria's proposed Rural Relieving Model:

- (1) Rural paramedics would not be forced to work anywhere in the state.
- (2) Rural paramedics would undertake default mandatory relieving for up to 4 weeks per year only if appointed statewide Regional Relievers are not available.
- (3) Rural paramedics would only be assigned relieving roles within about an hour's travel from their existing work location.
- (4) Rural paramedics would be subject to similar arrangements that have satisfactorily applied to Metropolitan paramedics for nearly 10 years.

Statements on this matter by the Ambulance Employees Australia are full of factual errors and continue to peddle misleading information and stories that are not supported by the facts.

Ambulance officers

Raised with: Minister for Health

Raised by: Mr Tee

Raised on: 3 September 2014

REPLY:

The matters raised in a letter from the Ambulance Employees Australia to members of Parliament have been the subject of a detailed response in correspondence from me.

A copy of my response will be provided to Mr Tee and other members on request.

In summary, that response demonstrates that the letter from the Ambulance Employees Australia is full of factual errors and continues to peddle misleading information and stories that are not supported by the facts.

Youth employment

Raised with: Premier

Raised by: Ms Tierney

Raised on: 3 September 2014

REPLY:

The Victorian coalition government is committed to growing jobs for Victorians.

There are now 108 900 more Victorians in employment than in December 2010.

Employment in regional Victoria is growing. Over the past year, 5700 additional jobs were created in regional Victoria (3-month moving average). Victoria's regional unemployment rate of 6.5 per cent is the lowest of the non-mining states, and is in line with the national regional average of 6.4 per cent.

There are now 25 900 more people employed in regional Victoria than in November 2010 (3-month moving average). This includes strong growth in the North-West Victoria region (+7700).

The regional youth (15–24 year olds) unemployment rate was 13.8 per cent over the year to July 2014, 1.3 percentage points lower than the year to November 2010. In addition, 58.2 per cent of Victorian youths were in

full-time education over the 12 months to July 2014. Over this same period, only 4.2 per cent of the Victorian youth population was both unemployed and not in full-time education.

The government spends \$1.2 billion per annum on skills and training, and there are a number of programs designed specifically for improving education and training outcomes for young people. The number of young students (15 to 19 years old) undertaking government subsidised training was well over 100 000 in 2011, 2012 and 2013. This is up from 74 400 in 2008. In the Great South Coast region, enrolments in government subsidised vocational training have increased from 11 600 in 2008 to 16 500 in 2013. This means more young people are accessing the skills and training they need to secure employment.

The government is currently implementing its \$30.1 million Education First Youth Foyers Program which will establish foyers in three TAFE's aimed at improving education, employment and housing outcomes for young people (16–24 years old) at risk of homelessness. The Holmesglen Waverley Youth Foyer is operational and currently accommodates 38 students. Kangan Institute Broadmeadows Foyer opened recently and GoTAFE Shepparton Foyer will open in late 2015.

The government also provides secondary school students the opportunity to undertake nationally recognised vocational certificates as part of their Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) or Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL). The number of young people in vocational education and training in 2010 was 426 900. In 2013, this number reached 645 000.

The government has supported jobs growth in regional areas through a number of initiatives. Since it was established in 2011, the Regional Growth Fund (RGF) has committed almost \$440 million, generating \$1.8 billion of total investment across 1600 projects (at 31 July 2014).

The RGF has provided \$186 million in assistance to 92 major economic infrastructure projects. These 92 projects will create almost 6000 direct and 11 000 indirect jobs, while an additional 7800 jobs were retained and 3900 created during construction. The government also invested \$22 million in SPC Ardmona, securing 500 jobs at SPC Ardmona and a further 2700 flow-on jobs in the Goulburn Valley.

As an example of the RGF's contribution to regional cities in Western Victoria, there has been over \$9 million committed for 29 projects in Warrnambool, leveraging more than \$47 million in total investment (as at 31 July 2014). Key projects include:

- \$3.6 million to the Warrnambool City Council towards the Warrnambool Eastern industrial precinct; and
- \$1.45 million (Regional Growth Fund) and \$2.62 million (Regional Aviation Fund) towards a \$4.92 million expansion of the Warrnambool Regional Airport.

Other government initiatives generating economic growth in the South-West Coast region are:

- \$3 million to construct a community health service in Moyne shire;
- \$15 million to develop a radiotherapy service for South West Victoria in Warrnambool;
- \$10 million for a rail crossing loop on the Warrnambool to Geelong rail link (at Warncoort); and
- \$50 million for upgrades to the Great Ocean Road.

Furthermore, the Victorian government is committed to ensuring workers, families and communities affected by the exit of major car manufacturers are supported through this transition period.

The government, together with Ford, Alcoa and the commonwealth government, established the \$29.5 million Geelong Region Innovation and Investment Fund and the \$24.5 million Melbourne's North Innovation and Investment Fund to help create new jobs in areas most affected by Ford's impending closure and Alcoa's Point Henry plant closure.

The government is also working with General Motors Holden and the Toyota Motor Corporation Australia to support coordinated re-skilling and re-training of their employees under the \$155 million Growth Fund announced by the commonwealth government.

Early assistance is crucial to helping affected workers transition to alternative employment. Accordingly, on 1 May 2014, the Victorian government announced a \$30 million skills package for Victoria's automotive supply chain workers. This funding is in recognition that many supply chain firms are small and medium enterprises without corporate support to assist their employees with transition. The package comprises Career and Transition Advice Services (CTAS) and subsidised training.

Information and advice is available at Workforce Development Centres (WDCs) in Geelong, Dandenong and Broadmeadows. WDCs are hubs where people of any age and industry can access information and advice on vocational training and local job opportunities.

Lyndale Secondary College

Raised with: Minister for Education

Raised by: Mr Tarlamis

Raised on: 4 September 2014

REPLY:

I am informed as follows:

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

The Victorian government's 2014–15 budget invests \$500 million for school infrastructure projects. This includes funding for 12 new schools in Victoria's growth areas, further construction stages, modernisations or refurbishments at over 70 schools across the state, and funding for new relocatable classrooms.

A recent independent system-wide school maintenance audit revealed a \$420 million maintenance backlog left by the former government. The Victorian government has increased direct school maintenance funding by over 40 per cent since 2010, whereas the former government cut spending by 20 per cent over a decade.

In 2013 the Victorian government allocated \$51.5 million to address the critical maintenance needs of over 570 buildings across 250 government schools. Additionally, the Victorian government announced on 16 September 2014 a further \$23 million to address the critical maintenance needs of 321 buildings at 169 government schools.

The additional maintenance funding is being used to address the state's poorest rated government school buildings in an objective, methodical, evidenced-based, and targeted way.

I understand that Lyndale Secondary College is one of hundreds of schools with capital works projects that were left planned but unfunded by the previous government. Funding for this project cannot be funded through the 2014–15 Victorian budget as all capital funding has been allocated to projects described in budget paper 4.

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development recently met with the college, and explained what steps the school council should take to address any emergency maintenance issues. The department will continue to work closely with Lyndale Secondary College on its future plans for capital improvements.

Merbein P-10 College

Raised with: Minister for Education

Raised by: Ms Lewis

Raised on: 16 September 2014

REPLY:

I am informed as follows:

The government's 2014–15 state budget allocated \$500 million for school infrastructure projects, including funding for upgrades to more than 70 schools identified as needing modernisation or refurbishment. I am pleased to say that Merbein P–10 College was allocated \$1.153 million in capital funding to upgrade facilities as part of the recent budget.

Country Fire Authority Warrnambool brigade

Raised with: Minister for Police and Emergency Services

Raised by: Ms Tierney

Raised on: 16 September 2014

REPLY:

The Country Fire Authority has advised that the aerial pumper was delivered back to the Warrnambool Fire Brigade on 18 September 2014, following the required modifications and certification of the pumper's design. These modifications were an important safety agreement with WorkSafe Victoria that will provide better safety for the operators and efficiency of the pumper.

During the Hazelwood mine fire, the pumper was stationed at Geelong, Ballarat and Bendigo, for specific operator training. It was also despatched to two other fire stations for training purposes. At all other times, when not located at the Warrnambool fire station, the pumper was at the Major Appliance Workshop in Cranbourne or Warrnambool for modifications and repairs.

The Warrnambool Fire Brigade is an extremely busy unit, responding to almost 600 call-outs each year, and protects one of Victoria's fastest-growing regional towns and a community of more than 35 000 residents.

The new Warrnambool fire station at a cost of \$7.7 million is scheduled to be completed by November 2015, and will support the brigade in its vital work of protecting the community.

Avoca Shire Turf Club

Raised with: Minister for Racing

Raised by: Mr Ramsay

Raised on: 17 September 2014

REPLY:

Following the completion of stage one of the Horse Movement project to upgrade the mounting yard fencing earlier this year, I am pleased to confirm that the government is investing \$10 592 from the Victorian Racing Industry Fund to assist the Avoca Shire Turf Club and Racing Victoria undertake Stage Two of this vital infrastructure project.

Stage Two works will significantly enhance the race day experience for owners and the general public and will further improve safety for horses and industry participants.

New walkways and fencing will improve viewing access in the horse stalls area and the removal of the centre column will improve the catchment of water runoff from the stall roofing.

I understand that the works will commence after the Pyrenees Winemakers Avoca Cup meeting on 18 October 2014 and will be completed for the Pyrenees Christmas race day on 6 December 2014.

WRITTEN ADJOURNMENT RESPONSES

Tuesday, 14 October 2014

COUNCIL

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Christmas race day is a fantastic opportunity for families, community groups and businesses to come together and enjoy the festive season with community organisations and sporting clubs competing for the prestigious Gold Antler trophy.

The government is also providing \$12 350 through the Victorian Racing Industry Fund Raceday Attraction program to support the Avoca Christmas race day.

WRITTEN ADJOURNMENT RESPONSES

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

Wednesday, 15 October 2014

School funding

Raised with: Minister for Education

Raised by: Ms Tierney

Raised on: 12 November 2013

REPLY:

I am informed as follows:

The Victorian government signed an historic agreement last year which will provide significant additional funding for schools. This unprecedented level of resourcing has been achieved along with guarantees that there will be no increase in commonwealth interference in local school decision-making. Funding has already begun to flow to schools with a record \$9.2 billion for school education in Victoria in 2014–15.

The government is working to cut red tape and administrative burdens from schools, such as the School Compliance Checklist. Small schools in the Grampians region, and beyond, are benefitting from a highly successful expanded roll out of the Local Administrative Bureau program. Under this model, schools are working with the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development to manage school administrative functions normally carried by principals in small schools. These local clustering arrangements are working to benefit school leaders and staff across Victoria.

The government recognises the challenges and demands of the principal role, particularly for those new to the job. Programs delivered through the Bastow Institute of Educational Leadership, such as the Professional Support for New Principals, Coaching for Individuals and Collegiate Groups and Coaching for Leadership Teams, provide principals and school leaders, at all stages of their careers, with tailored and context-specific professional learning to support them in their roles.

The department's South-Western Victoria Region conducts quarterly forums in five locations for all principals. These forums enable the Region to communicate key information to principals and their broader school communities and also afford principals the opportunity to raise any issues relevant to their role as a school leader.

In addition, all schools have an allocated Senior Advisor, Regional Performance and Planning to provide principals with a direct point of contact for the South-Western Victoria Regional Office. Through the Senior Advisor, principals can access relevant expertise from various staff within the Region.

Ann Nichol House

Raised with: Minister for Ageing

Raised by: Ms Pulford

Raised on: 29 May 2014

REPLY:

Aged Care is regulated and largely funded by the commonwealth government.

The Victorian coalition government is prepared to support proposals that are demonstrated to expand and enhance the provision of residential aged care services to the Bellarine community.

We want to see growth in aged care places, continued provision of high-quality services as well as facilities and infrastructure that meet modern standards.

While it would be improper for the government to interfere in the decision-making of an independent, community controlled organisation, I have met with Ann Nichol and representatives from the community and have written to Bellarine Community Health asking for the Board to give consideration to an outcome that accommodates appropriate recognition of the community's contribution in the Ann Nichol House facility.

Recent statements made by Lisa Neville indicate that a Labor government would strip Bellarine Community Health of its funding. This means more than \$4.5 million of annual funds cut and more than 3500 local clients and services thrown on the scrap heap.

Alfred Health

Raised with: Minister for Ageing

Raised by: Ms Mikakos

Raised on: 11 June 2014

REPLY:

Victoria's public health services make their own decisions regarding service delivery, and this includes decisions about how to communicate service changes to residents, their families, staff and the broader community.

Alfred Health is an approved provider of residential aged care under the commonwealth Aged Care Act 1997 and this involves particular responsibilities to provide information and support to residents in respect of any service changes.

The Department of Health has advised me that Alfred Health has engaged with stakeholders at different stages of its project and continues to be available to discuss issues of concern with interested parties. The department has further advised me that Alfred Health's advice has been that the forum in May 2014 was part of a series of targeted meetings with people directly affected by the change, and not a community consultation.

The reality is that the Labor government, of which Ms Mikakos was a part, oversaw a range of closures of Victorian public residential aged care facilities including in Ballarat and Frankston. In addition, documentation from 2009 reveals that the Victorian Labor government had plans to transfer 60 public sector residential aged care beds operated by Austin Health at the Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital with Darley House to a private aged care provider.

Healesville and District Hospital

Raised with: Minister for Health

Raised by: Mr Jennings

Raised on: 7 August 2014

REPLY:

The coalition government is investing \$7.8 million to redevelop the Healesville and District Hospital. This funding was allocated in full in the state budget. New services are already being delivered at Healesville including:

- an additional seven operating lists per month; and
- additional specialist clinics providing an additional 100 patient appointments and additional doctors.

The plans for the Healesville redevelopment have been released and are available for community review. The Victorian government is continuing to improve access to health services for the Healesville community.

The decision to release information or data that is managed by Eastern Health is a matter for Eastern Health, subject to applicable regulation.

The coalition government has released more health service data to the community over the last four years in office than at any time in the state's history. The former Labor government's record on transparency should be questioned, as the former health minister, Daniel Andrews refused to release data.

I am advised that Eastern Health has met with consultants Brewerton & Associates on behalf of the Save Healesville Hospital Action group with regard to their request for information. Eastern Health in conjunction with the Department of Health are working on the data request.

Moonambel water supply

Raised with: Minister for Water

Raised by: Mr D. R. J. O'Brien

Raised on: 20 August 2014

REPLY:

My office has contacted the Pyrenees Shire Council to schedule a meeting for me with representatives and winegrowers in the Moonambel area.

Western Metropolitan Region constituent

Raised with: Minister for Housing

Raised by: Mr Melhem

Raised on: 21 August 2014

REPLY:

I refer to the adjournment debate you raised in the Legislative Council on 21 August 2014 regarding two units in Footscray West leased by the Director of Housing (director).

I am informed by the Department of Human Services that the director signed the lease for one of the units on 7 March 2014 but before the Director was able to take physical possession of the property it was occupied by squatters. Around the same time the second unit became vacant and was also occupied by squatters.

The department worked with the real estate agency representing the owners to remove the squatters and have the abandoned goods removed as quickly as possible. The squatters were removed from both units. This was not a simple process and required the assistance of the Police.

Consumer Affairs assessed the property left behind by the squatters and confirmed the goods could be legally removed and disposed of. The goods have been removed, and the damage to the unit which the department leased on 7 March 2014 has been repaired by the department at the department's expense. That unit is now in the process of being tenanted.

The damage to the second property which the Director currently leases on a monthly tenancy will, the department informs me, be completed within the next week.

All rent withheld by the department during the occupancy by the squatters was paid to the landlord in September and the landlord and the department are currently discussing entering a new long-term lease for this second unit to replace the current monthly lease arrangement.

Welshmans Reef Caravan Park

Raised with: Minister for Water

Raised by: Ms Lewis

Raised on: 4 September 2014

REPLY:

Welshmans Reef Caravan Park requires an upgrade of approximately \$2.6 million to meet ongoing regulatory, operating and capital improvement responsibilities by Goulburn-Murray Water (GMW).

Upgrades are required to be undertaken on the toilets, sewerage system, roads, electricity supply, outdoor facilities, general assets and Country Fire Authority access.

The caravan park currently makes an operating profit of \$25 000, which is less than 1 per cent of the capital upgrades required.

GMW has decided that it will not use irrigator funds to secure the ongoing operation of the caravan park.

While the caravan park is not financially viable, I understand that GMW is prepared to consider a leasing arrangement inclusive of the responsibility for capital expenditure and meeting regulatory compliance.

GMW has advised that it will consider requests for additional site clearing time on a case-by-case basis.

While it is understandable that site holders at the Welshmans Reef Caravan Park are disappointed at the decision by GMW to close the caravan park, it is important that the park is maintained at appropriate standards with all risks appropriately managed.

Live music venues

Raised with: Minister for Environment and Climate Change

Raised by: Mr D. R. J. O'Brien

Raised on: 4 September 2014

REPLY:

I am informed that:

EPA Victoria (EPA) and the Department of Environment and Primary Industries (DEPI) have commenced a review of the two State Environment Protection Policies for noise (the noise SEPPs):

- State Environment Protection Policy (Control of Noise from Industry, Commerce and Trade) No. N-1 (SEPP N-1); and
- State Environment Protection Policy (Control of Music Noise from Public Premises) No. N-2 (SEPP N-2).

The noise SEPPs review is split into two stages.

Stage one involves consultation across the Victorian community to ask about people's experience of noise and the effectiveness of the current noise SEPPs. It aims to identify issues with the current noise SEPPs and receive feedback on what the objectives for the management of noise in Victoria should be.

A noise SEPPs review discussion paper has been developed and is open for comment until 15 October 2014. The paper is for the general community, businesses, acoustic consultants, planning professionals, local and state government agencies and other interested parties. EPA Victoria and DEPI will consider all feedback received about the review of the noise SEPPs and will publish a summary of the issues raised in submissions.

Stage one of the noise SEPP review includes a number stakeholder workshops hosted by EPA and DEPI in metro Melbourne and regional areas during September and October 2014.

As an alternative to making a submission on the discussion paper, a short survey is available on the EPA Victoria website to assist stakeholders to provide feedback on commercial, industrial and music noise. The survey contains some of the key questions outlined in the discussion paper, and I urge your constituents to take part should they so wish.

Following stage one, EPA and DEPI will develop options for managing commercial, industrial and music noise. This may involve making changes to the noise SEPPs, or the use of alternative regulatory or non-regulatory approaches.

If changes to the current noise SEPPs are proposed, EPA and DEPI will release a draft proposal and a policy impact assessment for further public comment. After receiving and considering feedback, a final position will be published by the Victorian government.

The noise SEPPs review is expected to be completed in 2016.

Early childhood facilities

Raised with: Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development

Raised by: Mrs Millar

Raised on: 16 September 2014

REPLY:

I am informed as follows:

I refer to your request raised during the Adjournment Debate on 16 September 2014 regarding the site for an early learning centre at Robertson Road, Gisborne.

Thank you for extending an invitation for me to visit the site for the new early learning facility.

I was pleased to visit Gisborne on 26 September 2014 to announce that the Macedon Ranges Shire Council had been successful in their application for a New Early Learning Facility grant of \$650 000 for the Gisborne Early Learning Centre as part of the 2014–15 Children's Facilities Capital Program grants round.

It was wonderful to visit Gisborne and hear further details about the plans for the centre and to learn more about the services it will offer local families in the Gisborne community.

I am proud of the record investment of more than \$120 million that the Victorian government has made in early childhood infrastructure, enabling many services to provide additional kindergarten places and other early learning and care services in quality and modern facilities.

Ann Nichol House

Raised with: Minister for Health

Raised by: Ms Pulford

Raised on: 16 September 2014

REPLY:

Aged Care is regulated and largely funded by the commonwealth government. The Victorian coalition government is prepared to support proposals that are demonstrated to expand and enhance the provision of residential aged care services to the Bellarine community.

We want to see growth in aged care places, continued provision of high quality services as well as facilities and infrastructure that meet modern standards.

While it would be improper for the government to interfere in the decision-making of an independent, community controlled organisation, I have met with Ann Nichol and representatives from the community and have written to Bellarine Community Health asking for the Board to give consideration to an outcome that accommodates appropriate recognition of the community's contribution in the Ann Nichol House facility.

Recent statements made by Lisa Neville indicate that a Labor government would strip Bellarine Community Health of its funding. This means more than \$4.5 million of annual funds cut and more than 3500 local clients and services thrown on the scrap heap.

Indigenous employment programs

Raised with: Minister for Employment and Trade

Raised by: Mr Leane

Raised on: 18 September 2014

REPLY:

The Employment Start Up for Indigenous Jobseekers program (ESIJ) has been funded since December 2008 to provide employment outcomes (a minimum of 16 weeks employment) and support Indigenous Victorians to enter the workforce.

To date, 690 of the outcomes have been completed and 530 of these have occurred since December 2010.

The Victorian government provided \$1.3 million in the 2014–15 financial year to achieve a further 130 employment outcomes for Indigenous Victorians.

Wedderburn aged care

Raised with: Minister for Ageing

Raised by: Ms Lewis

Raised on: 18 September 2014

REPLY:

The commonwealth government is responsible for regulating and funding aged-care services.

I understand that the Liberal Candidate for Ripon, Louise Staley, has met with members of the community about aged care options in Wedderburn.

Ms Staley has advised me that on 20 August 2014 she wrote to the commonwealth Assistant Minister for Social Services, Senator Mitch Fifield, to support the establishment of an aged care facility in Wedderburn.

I support and commend the advocacy and efforts of Ms Staley to secure a positive outcome for the Wedderburn community.

Mentone Gardens aged-care facility

Raised with: Minister for Ageing

Raised by: Ms Mikakos

Raised on: 18 September 2014

REPLY:

Mentone Gardens was a private business. The proprietor, a registered company, was subject to financial responsibilities under the Commonwealth Corporations Act 2001.

I am advised that, incidents notified to the Department of Health in 2011 and early 2012 related to private disputes about repayment of monies believed to be owed to former residents or their estates. I am advised that the department had no authority or regulatory role in these matters; however in each case it was understood there were discussions between the parties and the matters were resolved.

The department undertook a Targeted Compliance Review at Mentone Gardens in early 2013 to assess compliance with the requirement to establish a trust account.

I have written to the police commissioner regarding this matter seeking the assistance of Victoria Police in investigating claims of fraud, misappropriation or theft.

Mortlake, Derrinallum and Lismore small business

Raised with: Minister for Regional and Rural Development

Raised by: Ms Pulford

Raised on: 18 September 2014

REPLY:

It is unfortunate that the closure of the Hamilton Highway in April, due to an extended incident, has impacted adversely on a number of businesses along the highway route.

I am informed that through Regional Development Victoria, in conjunction with the two shire councils, a visit was organised by the Small Business Victoria Mobile Business Centre to the towns of Mortlake, Derrinallum and Lismore in May as a measure to assist these businesses. The centre provided free and confidential advice for the businesses and organisations in those towns, particularly to work through financial and business planning options to help recover from the road closure.

Officers of Regional Development Victoria have also been in discussions with the Moyne and Corangamite shires around measures and advancing projects to help these communities recover. These measures may include town revitalisation or infrastructure improvement projects to stimulate economic activity, which may be supported through our government's Regional Growth Fund.

WRITTEN ADJOURNMENT RESPONSES

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

Thursday, 16 October 2014

Colac Area Health

Raised with: Minister for Health

Raised by: Ms Tierney

Raised on: 4 February 2014

REPLY:

I am not the responsible minister.

Smoking regulation

Raised with: Minister for Health

Raised by: Ms Hartland

Raised on: 29 May 2014

REPLY:

The government is committed to introducing new evidence-based tobacco control measures in Victoria that prevent children and youth from starting smoking, help smokers to quit smoking and reduce second-hand smoke exposure.

The focus of the government's tobacco control reforms is on intergenerational change that will stop young people taking up smoking and support smokers to quit and stay smoke free. Consistent with past experience, the Victorian approach is to achieve this gradually through a series of sensible and practical steps that will build bipartisan and community support.

The government has recently announced its intention to ban smoking in outdoor dining areas. This significant reform will ensure that anyone preferring to eat in the open air can do so in comfort, and that the right example is being set for children.

The government does not intend to rush the implementation of this important reform, and will undertake consultation with key industry stakeholders before introducing the ban during the next Parliamentary term.

The government recognises that the ban will affect a wide range of small, medium and large businesses, and that sufficient time must be provided to allow them to adjust to the new law.

Further, the Parliament recently passed the Tobacco Amendment Bill 2014. This Bill will restrict smoking around entrances to childcare centres, schools, preschools, children's indoor play centres, public hospitals, registered community health centres and some government buildings.

The Bill also quadruples the penalty for possession of illicit tobacco by retailers and wholesalers, and amends powers of entry for inspectors to enhance enforcement of outdoor smoking bans. These changes are likely to commence in mid-2015.

The government has also introduced new outdoor smoking bans in areas commonly used by children and young people. Since 1 April 2014, smoking has been prohibited at outdoor children's playgrounds, public swimming pools, skate parks and sporting venues during organised underage sporting events.

Further, the government recently extended the bans on smoking at public transport stops to include all train station platforms, raised tram stops and bus and tram shelters. These bans took effect on 1 March this year. Additionally, in late 2012, the government banned smoking between the red and yellow flags and within a 50-metre radius of a red and yellow flag at all patrolled beaches in Victoria.

This means that smoking is now banned at thousands of outdoor public locations that are used by children and young people, ultimately protecting them from second-hand smoke and further de-normalising smoking.

Prison officers

Raised with: Minister for Corrections

Raised by: Mr Ronalds

Raised on: 10 June 2014

REPLY:

I refer to the Adjournment Debate you raised in relation to prison officer recruitment activities underway in Victoria's prisons.

As you would be aware, in June this year, I launched a new advertising campaign to spearhead the recruitment of 750 new prison and community corrections officers over the next 12 months. The Napthine coalition government's prison expansion program will deliver hundreds of new jobs for the state and create new career opportunities for Victorians.

The advertising campaign gives Victorians a behind-the-scenes look at the state's corrections system and highlights the huge range of job opportunities on offer across Victoria. Our prison officers and community corrections staff are our greatest asset, supporting a safer community and motivating offenders to make positive changes in their lives. Corrections Victoria staff come from a variety of working backgrounds, with farmers, teachers, police officers and even a former flight attendant among the recruits.

New recruits and staff receive comprehensive training, to provide them with the skills needed to perform their roles to the highest standards. More than 300 prison officers have already completed pre-service training and graduated in the first half of this year, with recruitment continuing over the next 12 months.

A key part of the recruitment campaign is to attract community corrections staff, who work with offenders on community-based orders to help them follow the conditions imposed by the courts. Corrections Victoria is looking for recruits with sound communication skills and life experience, as well as people with experience in trades and services to work in prison industries.

Across Victoria, the Napthine government's overall investment in Victoria's prison system is not only supporting a safer community, it is creating an estimated 1447 full-time ongoing operational prison jobs and up to 2780 construction jobs. Importantly, this includes an estimated 527 regional full-time ongoing operational prison jobs and up to 1350 regional construction jobs.

Since the coalition government came to government, we have opened more than 1800 beds with over 2200 beds in the pipeline, including the new 1000-bed medium security prison at Ravenhall in Melbourne's west.

The coalition government is addressing the previous Labor government's shameful neglect of the prison system and is building a better, safer Victoria.

Solar energy

Raised with: Minister for Energy and Resources

Raised by: Mr Barber

Raised on: 26 June 2014

REPLY:

I refer to the matter raised during the Adjournment Debate in the Legislative Council on 26 June 2014 regarding the electricity connection process for distributed solar generation.

Pursuant to Clause 5.1 of an electricity distribution business' licence, electricity customers must be offered connection to the distribution network upon request. In offering such a connection service, however, distribution businesses have an obligation to maintain the safety and integrity of the electricity network. For this reason, upon request to connect a small-scale distributed generator, such as a solar PV system, distributors quite often need to undertake a technical assessment to understand the likely network impacts of the connection.

Where a technical constraint is identified, negotiation between the distributor and the customer is often required before access can be granted. This can be a time intensive process involving an agreement to reduce the capacity of the generator or for the customer to contribute a fair and reasonable amount towards an upgrade of the network to provide sufficient capacity for the connection.

While distribution businesses are required to negotiate connection access arrangements with distributed generation proponents in good faith, as is stipulated in Electricity Industry Guideline no. 15 — Connection of Embedded Generation, the Victorian government acknowledges the administrative difficulty a number of solar customers have faced in connecting to the grid recently.

On 17 April 2014 the Australian Energy Market Commission (AEMC) made a final determination on a rule change proposal relating to the arrangements for connecting medium-scale distributed generation under Chapter 5 of the National Electricity Rules (NER). This determination applies a rule change, effective from 1 October 2014, which seeks to improve the connection process. The amended rule requires distribution business to provide greater clarity on application requirements, as well as provide specified timeframes for the negotiation process and greater clarity around dispute resolution avenues.

The AEMC has since also released a draft decision to amend Chapter 5A of the NER in relation to the connection of small-scale distributed generation. This decision proposes to provide small-scale customers (including solar customers) with the choice of using the improved connection process under the above Chapter 5 or the existing process under Chapter 5A.

While the regulatory framework provided under Chapter 5 of the NER currently applies in Victoria, the provisions included under Chapter 5A do not. As a result and with a view to alleviating identified issues in the Victorian connection process, the Victorian government is currently investigating adopting the national connection arrangements that would be proscribed under an amended Chapter 5A of the NER from 2016.

Portland Secondary College

Raised with: Minister for Education

Raised by: Ms Tierney

Raised on: 5 August 2014

REPLY:

I am informed as follows:

The Portland Re-engagement Program re-engages at-risk young people in school and provides meaningful pathways into further education and employment. I understand the program has had many successes in re-engaging young people into education.

The Victorian government's Towards Victoria as a Learning Community policy agenda increases autonomy for school principals in decision-making, including the allocation of their Student Resource Package (SRP), to meet the

needs of their school community. The new policy framework allows SRP funding to follow students to re-engagement programs that meet their educational needs. Guidance for schools and their community partners on the delivery of quality re-engagement programs, and funded pilot re-engagement programs to test effective models of re-engagement is also supported through this policy framework.

Through Victoria's needs-based school funding approach, government schools receive equity funding in addition to core SRP funding to support programs focusing on at-risk students. I am advised, in 2014, Portland Secondary College received more than \$500 000 in equity funding as well as \$71 000 in Low socio-economic status (SES) Communities funding.

Schools can also draw on Student Support Services (SSS) to support student engagement. Managed through school networks and comprising psychologists, social workers and other allied health professionals, SSS work in collaboration with schools and community services to identify and intervene early with children and young people who have additional needs or are at risk of disengagement.

In recognition of the particular challenges of school retention in rural and regional Victoria, the Local Solutions Year 12 Retention Fund is providing \$5 million to support schools in these areas for programs to increase Year 12 retention and expand pathway options. Portland Secondary College was awarded a grant in Round Two of this Fund, and is receiving \$131 009 over 2014–15 to support its student retention activities. I look forward to seeing the outcomes Portland Secondary College achieves with this grant.

Medicare co-payment

Raised with: Minister for Health

Raised by: Mr Melhem

Raised on: 6 August 2014

REPLY:

The Victorian government is concerned about the proposed introduction of a \$7 co-payment.

As you are aware the proposed co-payment has been discussed in the chamber a number of times recently, including as the subject of questions without notice. I draw your attention to these lengthy responses.

While the commonwealth has declared that states and territories will be able to charge patients presenting to hospital emergency departments for 'general practitioner like attendances', the Victorian government has already indicated that it will not be introducing an emergency department co-payment in Victorian hospitals.

From Victoria's perspective, our priority is to ensure that we have a health system that supports good access to primary care so that Victorians can get the care they need when they need it and achieve their best possible health outcomes.

Wind energy

Raised with: Energy and Resources

Raised by: Mr D. R. J. O'Brien

Raised on: 7 August 2014

REPLY:

The Victorian coalition government is committed to providing an affordable and reliable energy supply for Victoria and is undertaking appropriate action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the energy sector.

We want diversity in the mix of electricity generation and support development of renewable and low emission energy. Electricity production in Victoria from wind, hydro and other renewables is 12 per cent and growing. Under Labor this was 7 per cent in 2009.

The Victorian government believes that renewable energy technologies of all sizes and varieties have an important role as part of our state's energy mix into the future.

To this end, the government currently offers installers of small-scale wind farms below 100 kilowatts in capacity a fair and reasonable feed-in tariff of 8 cents per kilowatt hour for excess electricity fed back into the grid. This reflects the wholesale value of the electricity produced and is a fair rate of return for investors while ensuring against cross-subsidisation.

This assistance is additional to that provided by the commonwealth government as part of the Renewable Energy Target, through its Small-scale Renewable Energy Scheme. The commonwealth scheme applies to wind farms, as well as other renewable sources, with capacity of 100 kilowatts or less and annual output below 25 megawatt-hours. Assistance under this scheme is paid on the basis of the expected electricity generated by the system over its lifetime up to 15 years. As of 12 August 2014, that assistance was being paid at a rate of \$36.50 a megawatt-hour.

Aircraft railway station

Raised with: Minister for Public Transport

Raised by: Mr Elsbury

Raised on: 19 August 2014

REPLY:

There are no plans to close Aircraft station as demonstrated by its inclusion in Public Transport Victoria's 'Network Development Plan — Metropolitan Rail' in the short and the long term.

Prisons

Raised with: Minister for Corrections

Raised by: Ms Darveniza

Raised on: 20 August 2014

REPLY:

I refer to the adjournment debate you raised in relation to prisoner escapes from Dhurringile prison. Prisoners placed at the Dhurringile minimum security prison have undergone a thorough risk assessment and have been assessed as low risk before being transferred to that prison. In response to the recent escapes, additional security measures have been put in place including more prison officers and operational safeguards. Additionally, I have directed the Secretary, Department of Justice to undertake a review of operations, including prison security and intelligence. This work is close to completion and already a number of operational changes have been implemented. The independent Office of Correctional Services Review is also undertaking a review. The findings of both reviews will inform any further operational changes.

Dhurringile prison values the support of the local community, especially neighbouring landowners, and is committed to engaging in ongoing consultation with the community. The Department of Justice has established a Community Advisory Group, with senior representatives from Victoria Police, Greater Shepparton Council and the Community Action Group. In July, I met with representatives of the Community Action Group to discuss these matters directly. Senior managers from the prison also meet regularly with the Dhurringile community.

Further, I can assure you that additional resources have been allocated to Dhurringile in response to the increased numbers of prisoners being placed at this prison. As at 30 June 2014, staffing numbers have increased to 138, up from 66 staff in December 2010. Staffing numbers are expected to increase to over 163 by 2015. Enhanced security and intelligence resources have also been directed to the prison, with additional intelligence staffing resources being added to the intelligence staffing complement and the daily attendance of the Security and Emergency Services Group (SESG). Enhancements to the management structure have also been made, with the number of Operations Managers increasing from one to three.

Dhurringile prison has a long-standing role in the local community with inmates being involved in community works such as flood and fire recovery work across the Hume Region and the popular Landmate program. The Napthine coalition government appreciates the support, cooperation and patience of the Dhurringile community and the local landholders as we deliver expansion works at Dhurringile prison and build a better, safer Victoria.

Hopkins Correctional Centre

Raised with: Minister for Corrections

Raised by: Mr Ramsay

Raised on: 21 August 2014

REPLY:

I refer to the Adjournment Debate you raised in relation to Hopkins Correctional Centre. I was very pleased to visit Hopkins Correctional Centre (Hopkins CC) with you on 23 September to view the progress of works on the expansion project. As we both saw, there has been significant progress. In January 2014, the new Canton accommodation unit was completed and Corrections Victoria began housing prisoners there at the end of January. The second phase of accommodation buildings — the Jackson and Bolac communities — have recently been completed and began accepting prisoners in late August. The kitchen and laundry will come on line this month, and works on the remainder of the facility are progressing well with construction contracted to be completed by the end of 2014.

Once completed, the Hopkins CC expansion project will have expanded the facility's total operational capacity from 388 beds to 831 beds, with new gatehouse, health, education, industries, multi-faith, kitchen, administration and support buildings. It also includes a major upgrade and refurbishment of the existing prison, including state-of-the-art security and building systems, and integrates the new and existing facilities into a single correctional precinct.

The Hopkins CC expansion project will deliver enhanced rehabilitation programs and services and increased prison capacity. As you know, the Hopkins CC expansion project would have been completed by now if Labor hadn't botched the project. The coalition government rescued the project, negotiating a revised agreement with the private sector consortium's financiers, the Commonwealth Bank, and the Bendigo and Adelaide Bank. Under the agreement secured by the government, the commercial risk profile remains with the banks; in particular, the obligation to deliver the project to agreed milestones and compliance standards and guaranteeing the payment of validated contractor claims. Importantly, as part of the revised agreement, an independent assessor was engaged to verify and pay subcontractors what they validly owed after they were left with outstanding claims against the failed builder as a result of Labor's botched project. This process fostered a positive environment for return to work by the subcontractors, and many were re-engaged to complete the project.

The Hopkins CC expansion project is generating substantial investment in the Ararat community and the Grampians region, supporting jobs and local businesses during construction phase completion and into the operational phase. Currently there is an average of 450 workers on site each site, with the labour numbers exceeding 600 per day during peak construction periods. Corrections Victoria's comprehensive state-wide recruitment campaign is seeking to meet the high demand for correctional officers that is being generated by the delivery of the Hopkins CC expansion project and other new prison beds in the system. Since December 2013, 121 new custodial officers (9 squads) have been trained, gradated and started work at Hopkins CC.

The coalition government is delivering the prison infrastructure and the jobs required to support a safe, secure and modern prison system. We are fixing Labor's mess, delivering our projects on time and on budget and building a better, safer Victoria.

Moreland security cameras

Raised with: Minister for Crime Prevention

Raised by: Mr Ondarchie

Raised on: 16 September 2014

REPLY:

I refer to the matter you raised in the Legislative Council on 16 September 2014 regarding Moreland City Council's delay in installing the public safety CCTV system in the Sydney Road, Brunswick after receiving a commitment from the coalition government of \$250 000 to do so in February 2013.

Given that council approached the government in December 2012 seeking support to install CCTV, noting that it believed 'CCTV has a vital role to play in a crime prevention strategy', the lack of priority council placed on implementing the project was very disappointing.

I can now confirm that Moreland City Council has finally completed the CCTV system installation, and the footage is now streaming live to the Brunswick Police Station.

I thank you for your advocacy on this matter on behalf of the local community. I know the delayed implementation of this important project was generating significant community concern.

I am delighted that the local police now have access to this important tool to help improve community safety in Brunswick.