

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

FIFTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT

FIRST SESSION

WRITTEN ADJOURNMENT RESPONSES

2, 3 and 4 September 2014

(Extract from book 12)

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 17 March 2014)

Premier, Minister for Regional Cities and Minister for Racing	The Hon. D. V. Napthine, MP
Deputy Premier, Minister for State Development, and Minister for Regional and Rural Development	The Hon. P. J. Ryan, MP
Treasurer	The Hon. M. A. O'Brien, MP
Minister for Innovation, Minister for Tourism and Major Events, and Minister for Employment and Trade	The Hon. Louise Asher, MP
Minister for Local Government and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs.	The Hon. T. O. Bull, MP
Attorney-General, Minister for Finance and Minister for Industrial Relations.	The Hon. R. W. Clark, MP
Minister for Health and Minister for Ageing	The Hon. D. M. Davis, MLC
Minister for Education	The Hon. M. F. Dixon, MP
Minister for Sport and Recreation, and Minister for Veterans' Affairs	The Hon. D. K. Drum, MLC
Minister for Planning, and Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship	The Hon. M. J. Guy, MLC
Minister for Ports, Minister for Major Projects and Minister for Manufacturing	The Hon. D. J. Hodgett, MP
Minister for Housing, and Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development	The Hon. W. A. Lovell, MLC
Minister for Public Transport and Minister for Roads	The Hon. T. W. Mulder, MP
Minister for Energy and Resources, and Minister for Small Business.	The Hon. R. J. Northe, MP
Minister for Liquor and Gaming Regulation, Minister for Corrections and Minister for Crime Prevention	The Hon. E. J. O'Donohue, MLC
Assistant Treasurer, Minister for Technology and Minister responsible for the Aviation Industry	The Hon. G. K. Rich-Phillips, MLC
Minister for Environment and Climate Change, and Minister for Youth Affairs.	The Hon. R. Smith, MP
Minister for the Arts, Minister for Women's Affairs and Minister for Consumer Affairs	The Hon. H. Victoria, MP
Minister for Higher Education and Skills	The Hon. N. Wakeling, MP
Minister for Agriculture and Food Security, and Minister for Water.	The Hon. P. L. Walsh, MP
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	Mrs I. Peulich, MLC

Legislative Council committees

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

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

Participating member

Legislative Council standing committees

Economy and Infrastructure Legislation Committee — Mr Barber, Mrs Coote, #Ms Crozier, Mr Finn, #Ms Hartland, #Mr Leane, Mr Lenders, Mr Melhem, Mr D. D O'Brien, #Mr Ondarchie, Ms Pulford, Mr Ramsay and #Mr Scheffer.

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.

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 Lewis, Mrs Millar, Mr D. R. J. 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 Lewis, Mrs Millar, Mr D. R. J. O'Brien, #Mrs Peulich, #Mr Ramsay and Mr Viney.

Participating member

Joint committees

Accountability and Oversight Committee — (*Council*): Mr D. R. J. O'Brien and Mr Ronalds. (*Assembly*): Ms Kanis, Mr McIntosh and Ms Neville.

Dispute Resolution Committee — (*Council*): Mr D. Davis, Mr Drum, Mr Lenders, Ms Lovell and Ms Pennicuik. (*Assembly*): Ms Allan, Ms Asher, Mr Clark, Ms Hennessy, Mr Merlino, Mr O'Brien and Mr Walsh.

Economic Development, Infrastructure and Outer Suburban/Interface Services Committee — (*Council*): Mr Eideh, Mrs Millar and Mr Ronalds. (*Assembly*): Mr Burgess and Mr McGuire.

Education and Training Committee — (*Council*): Mr Elasmr, Mrs Kronberg and Mrs Millar. (*Assembly*): Mr Brooks and Mr Crisp.

Electoral Matters Committee — (*Council*): Mr Finn, Mrs Peulich, Mr Somyurek and Mr Tarlamis. (*Assembly*): Mr Delahunty.

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.

House Committee — (*Council*): The President (*ex officio*) Mr Eideh, Mr Finn, Ms Hartland, Mr D. R. J. O'Brien and Mrs Peulich. (*Assembly*): The Speaker (*ex officio*), Ms Beattie, Mr Blackwood, Ms Campbell, Ms Thomson, Mr Wakeling and Mr Weller.

Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Committee — (*Council*): Mr Viney. (*Assembly*): Ms Kanis, Mr Kotsiras, Mr McIntosh and Mr Weller.

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

Public Accounts and Estimates Committee — (*Council*): Mr D. R. J. O'Brien and Mr Ondarchie. (*Assembly*): Mr Angus, Ms Garrett, Mr Morris, Mr Pakula and Mr Scott.

Road Safety Committee — (*Council*): Mr Elsbury. (*Assembly*): Mr Languiller, Mr Perera, Mr Tilley and Mr Thompson.

Rural and Regional Committee — (*Council*): Mr D. R. J. O'Brien. (*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 — Acting Clerk of the Legislative Council: Mr A. Young

Parliamentary Services — Secretary: Mr P. Lochert

MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
FIFTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT — FIRST SESSION

President: The Hon. B. N. ATKINSON

Deputy President: Mr M. VINEY

Acting Presidents: Ms Crozier, Mr Eideh, Mr Elasmar, Mr Finn, Mr Melhem, Mr D. R. J. O'Brien, Mr Ondarchie, Ms Pennicuik,
Mr Ramsay, Mr Tarlamis

Leader of the Government:

The Hon. D. M. DAVIS

Deputy Leader of the Government:

The Hon. W. A. LOVELL

Leader of the Opposition:

Mr J. LENDERS

Deputy Leader of the Opposition:

Mr G. JENNINGS

Leader of The Nationals:

The Hon. D. K. DRUM (from 17 March 2013)

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)

Member	Region	Party	Member	Region	Party
Atkinson, Hon. Bruce Norman	Eastern Metropolitan	LP	Lovell, Hon. Wendy Ann	Northern Victoria	LP
Barber, Mr Gregory John	Northern Metropolitan	Greens	Melhem, Mr Cesar ²	Western Metropolitan	LP
Broad, Ms Candy Celeste ⁹	Northern Victoria	ALP	Mikakos, Ms Jenny	Northern Metropolitan	ALP
Coote, Mrs Andrea	Southern Metropolitan	LP	Millar, Mrs Amanda Louise ⁴	Northern Victoria	LP
Crozier, Ms Georgina Mary	Southern Metropolitan	LP	O'Brien, Mr Daniel David ⁸	Eastern Victoria	Nats
Dalla-Riva, Hon. Richard Alex Gordon	Eastern Metropolitan	LP	O'Brien, Mr David Roland Joseph	Western Victoria	Nats
Darveniza, Ms Kaye Mary	Northern Victoria	ALP	O'Donohue, Mr Edward John	Eastern Victoria	LP
Davis, Hon. David McLean	Southern Metropolitan	LP	Ondarchie, Mr Craig Philip	Northern Metropolitan	LP
Davis, Mr Philip Rivers ⁵	Eastern Victoria	LP	Pakula, Hon. Martin Philip ¹	Western Metropolitan	ALP
Drum, Mr Damian Kevin	Northern Victoria	Nats	Pennicuik, Ms Susan Margaret	Southern Metropolitan	Greens
Eideh, Mr Khalil M.	Western Metropolitan	ALP	Petrovich, Mrs Donna-Lee ³	Northern Victoria	LP
Elasmar, Mr Nazih	Northern Metropolitan	ALP	Peulich, Mrs Inga	South Eastern Metropolitan	LP
Elsbury, Mr Andrew Warren	Western Metropolitan	LP	Pulford, Ms Jaala Lee	Western Victoria	ALP
Finn, Mr Bernard Thomas C.	Western Metropolitan	LP	Ramsay, Mr Simon	Western Victoria	LP
Guy, Hon. Matthew Jason	Northern Metropolitan	LP	Rich-Phillips, Hon. Gordon Kenneth	South Eastern Metropolitan	LP
Hall, Hon. Peter Ronald ⁷	Eastern Victoria	Nats	Ronalds, Mr Andrew Mark ⁶	Eastern Victoria	LP
Hartland, Ms Colleen Mildred	Western Metropolitan	Greens	Scheffer, Mr Johan Emiel	Eastern Victoria	ALP
Jennings, Mr Gavin Wayne	South Eastern Metropolitan	ALP	Somyurek, Mr Adem	South Eastern Metropolitan	ALP
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
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

CONTENTS

WRITTEN ADJOURNMENT RESPONSES

TUESDAY, 2 SEPTEMBER 2014

<i>Respite accommodation</i>	2933
<i>National disability insurance scheme</i>	2934
<i>Operation Newstart</i>	2934
<i>Woodend community bus</i>	2935
<i>Betrayal of Trust</i>	2935
<i>Werribee railway station</i>	2936
<i>Mount Macedon Road</i>	2936
<i>Disability emergency accommodation</i>	2937

WEDNESDAY, 3 SEPTEMBER 2014

<i>Country Fire Authority North Hamilton brigade</i>	2939
--	------

THURSDAY, 4 SEPTEMBER 2014

<i>Duck hunting</i>	2941
<i>Child protection</i>	2942

WRITTEN ADJOURNMENT RESPONSES

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

Tuesday, 2 September 2014

Respite accommodation

Raised with: Community Services

Raised by: Ms Mikakos

Raised on: 11 March 2014

REPLY:

The Victorian government is firmly committed to supporting Victorians with a disability. Since coming to office, an additional \$570 million has been allocated to disability services, taking annual funding to \$1.68 billion.

As part of our commitment to increase access to respite services, we provided an additional \$21 million in the 2011–12 state budget for community based respite services, including school holiday respite and the development of innovative respite options. With this investment the government has established better access, greater flexibility and more choice in the respite services that are available to families and carers.

Under the Innovative Respite and School Holiday Respite initiatives, 30 service providers were funded to deliver additional respite support and school holiday respite support for people with a disability, their families and carers.

Carers make a significant contribution to the lives of Victorians with a disability. To sustain these informal care arrangements, the government will continue to provide a range of carer supports, including community based and facility-based respite.

In addition to the facility based respite service that commenced operation in the city of Whittlesea in February 2013, new facilities will commence in Morwell and Frankston from June 2014 and July 2014 respectively.

The Victorian government is also committed to the implementation of the full National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) from 1 July 2016 so that Victorians with disability, their families and carers have the lifetime support they need.

The NDIS agreement will provide more than 100 000 Victorians who have a significant or profound disability with choice and control over the care and support they require.

Victoria will continue to work with the commonwealth and the NDIA to ensure the NDIS delivers innovative respite options to support people with a disability, their families and carers.

I assure the member that my department will continue to support Mrs Anzelmi and her son.

National disability insurance scheme

Raised with: Community Services

Raised by: Ms Mikakos

Raised on: 7 May 2014

REPLY:

There is no proposal to alter the bilateral agreement between the Victorian and commonwealth government from either party to the NDIS agreement.

Operation Newstart

Raised with: Police and Emergency Services

Raised by: Ms Tierney

Raised on: 27 May 2014

REPLY:

The government is committed to making our communities safer so families can feel safe on our streets, on public transport and in their homes. To ensure this commitment is realised, the government is providing \$602 million to deliver 1700 extra frontline police members by November 2014. The allocation of new and existing police resources across Victoria is the responsibility of the Chief Commissioner of Police, who is best placed to determine statewide policing needs.

Victoria Police has advised me that from the beginning of 2014, police have no longer been directly involved with Operation Newstart. Although remaining supportive of the programme, Victoria Police members will focus their attention on a wider group of disengaged school-age youth, at risk of entering the justice system. This will meet the needs of a greater number of school-age young people across the state than those currently enrolled in Operation Newstart. It is important to note that Victoria Police remains committed to a strong focus on youth engagement operations.

Victoria Police has recently established the Priority Communities Division to strengthen and focus police engagement with youth following a review of its community engagement support functions.

The new Priority Communities Division, coupled with the Community Liaison Officers, Youth Resource Officers and Crime Prevention Officers who currently operate within each Police Service Area and/or division, will ensure police continue to build and maintain positive relationships with youth in Victoria. I understand that Victoria Police is currently clarifying the short, medium and long-term priorities and commitments of the Priority Communities Division.

This will ensure Victoria Police continues to engage with the state's youth, to build and maintain positive relationships.

Woodend community bus

Raised with: Public Transport

Raised by: Mrs Millar

Raised on: 11 June 2014

REPLY:

I appreciate the member for Northern Victoria's support for the Gisbus service.

I can advise that Public Transport Victoria (PTV) is in the early stages of preparing a public transport plan for Regional Victoria. The opportunities to introduce a similar service to Gisbus in Woodend will be considered in that Plan.

Betrayal of Trust

Raised with: Attorney-General

Raised by: Ms Hartland

Raised on: 12 June 2014

REPLY:

The government's response to the *Betrayal of Trust* report was tabled in the Victorian Parliament on 8 May 2014. In that response, the government provided in principle support for all of the report's recommendations.

As indicated in the government's response, work to implement the report's recommendations is occurring in three phases:

1. the immediate protection of children and new criminal law offences;
2. new measures to strengthen organisations' approaches to preventing and responding to child abuse; and
3. civil law reform and redress.

Legislation creating three new criminal offences: a grooming offence, a failure to protect offence, and a failure to disclose offence has already been passed by the Parliament.

The government has allocated \$10.1 million in funding to the Department of Justice and the Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP) to implement the recommendations that will strengthen the capacity of organisations to prevent and respond to child abuse. This funding will enable the staged introduction of minimum child safety standards for organisations with a responsibility for children. Oversight of organisations will also be improved by developing a reportable conduct scheme, which will require all allegations of child sexual abuse to be reported to the CCYP.

It is not correct to claim that the government response has indicated the government may wait for the outcome and recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse before acting on the *Betrayal of Trust* recommendations. One of the reasons for establishing a Parliamentary inquiry was so that practical and effective recommendations for reform would be developed and implemented in a timely manner.

However, the recommendations in relation to redress are complex and require careful consideration. The government intends to consult with community groups and victims to ensure that the design and implementation of the recommendations on redress are effective.

The government has also indicated that it will remove inappropriate time limitations and impediments with respect to access to justice for victims of child abuse.

As part of the response to *Betrayal of Trust*, the government has also introduced Common Guiding Principles which provide guidance on how government department should respond to civil claims involving allegations of child sexual abuse. Amongst other things, these principles note that the state will not ordinarily rely on a limitations defence in regard to these claims.

Werribee railway station

Raised with: Public Transport

Raised by: Mr Elsbury

Raised on: 24 June 2014

REPLY:

Metro advises that the area on Cherry Street in Werribee between Bunnings and the railway tracks is not actually a commuter car park, even though commuters have been parking there.

I have asked PTV to investigate the possibility of utilising this area as a commuter car park in the future, as well as to continue to monitor the effectiveness of local bus services connecting to stations along the Werribee line and consider further improvements if required.

Mount Macedon Road

Raised with: Roads

Raised by: Mrs Millar

Raised on: 24 June 2014

REPLY:

VicRoads recently assessed the safety history and maintenance records of Mount Macedon Road, and will undertake a review of the speed zone along this section of road. According to VicRoads' records, during the past five years, there have been no casualty crashes caused by a collision with an animal on the sections of Mount Macedon Road.

Sections of Mount Macedon Road have very tight bends and steep grades, and climatic conditions can change rapidly. Advisory speed signs are located on all curves and bends where driving at higher speeds is not appropriate. In one case, the advisory speed is signed as low as 10 kilometres per hour on the northern side of Mount Macedon.

VicRoads' maintenance records indicate that wombats are occasionally struck by vehicles on Mount Macedon Road. The existing wildlife warning signs display a kangaroo, which VicRoads understands is the most prevalent wildlife species in the area.

VicRoads will also review the sections of Mount Macedon Road to ensure that it meets current wildlife warning sign standards and includes 'wombat signs' where practical.

Disability emergency accommodation**Raised with: Community Services****Raised by: Ms Mikakos****Raised on: 26 June 2014****REPLY:**

I am aware that the Parliamentary Secretary, who is very familiar with Mr Luke Modra's complex support needs, spoke with Ms Mikakos after this matter was raised in the upper house.

The Parliamentary Secretary reassured Ms Mikakos that my department has been working very closely with Luke's family and Golden City Support Services, his disability support service provider, to ensure the best possible outcomes for Luke.

I am also very well aware of Mr Luke Modra's complex circumstances and understand his family's commitment to providing a supportive, safe environment for him and his carers.

Luke lives in a family-owned property and receives in-home, 24-hour-per-day support that is funded by the Victorian government through his Individual Support Package.

Luke's disability service provider recently advised my department that the repairs to the property's bathroom have been completed.

I assure Ms Mikakos that every effort was made to allow these repairs to be provided with the least possible disruption for Luke and in a way that was safe for him and his care team.

WRITTEN ADJOURNMENT RESPONSES

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

Wednesday, 3 September 2014

Country Fire Authority North Hamilton brigade

Raised with: Police and Emergency Services

Raised by: Ms Pulford

Raised on: 5 August 2014

REPLY:

The Victorian government acknowledges and appreciates the excellent work performed by volunteer emergency service agencies, such as the North Hamilton fire brigade.

The Volunteer Emergency Services Equipment Program (VESEP) grant application process is designed to incorporate the views and input of volunteers and their agencies. In the case of the Country Fire Authority (CFA) brigades, applications for funding are prioritised according to a suite of selection criteria at the local, state and VESEP panel levels. The success of an application is based on the individual merits of each project, and the extent to which it meets the selection criteria.

The CFA has advised that there are 96 fire brigades in District 5, including the North Hamilton fire brigade, and that to date the operational needs of other brigades have been greater. The CFA has also advised that the terrain around North Hamilton is generally accessible by the current fleet of trucks. Furthermore, the North Hamilton fire brigade is a member of a large group of 18 brigades and receives support from neighbouring brigades.

The CFA has advised that it will continue to support applications by the North Hamilton fire brigade for funding through VESEP, taking into consideration the operational needs of all 96 fire brigades, in District 5.

Thank you for raising this matter with me.

WRITTEN ADJOURNMENT RESPONSES

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

Thursday, 4 September 2014

Duck hunting

Raised with: Agriculture and Food Security

Raised by: Mr Leane

Raised on: 6 May 2014

REPLY:

The Department of Environment and Primary Industries (DEPI), in partnership with Victoria Police and Parks Victoria, conducted a major compliance operation across the state over the opening weekend of the 2014 duck season. More than 130 field staff were deployed at 26 wetlands throughout Victoria to ensure that hunters and anti-duck hunting protestors complied with the laws and acted responsibly. It was estimated that 6500 hunters were active in these patrolled areas.

DEPI had four staff working together with two Victoria Police officers over the opening weekend of the duck season at Lake Lonsdale.

Allegations of illegal hunting activity at Lake Lonsdale have been made by a constituent of Mr Leane. These allegations should have been raised with officers at the time so they could have investigated. Anyone who observes alleged illegal hunting activity should report it to DEPI or Victoria Police immediately.

There are significant penalties for hunters who fail to comply with hunting and firearms laws, which include fines and jail terms, and firearms may be seized and Game and Firearms Licences cancelled where people are found guilty of committing offences.

Compliance operations at Lake Lonsdale were also conducted over the Easter weekend, with three authorised officers and one Victoria Police officer present at various times.

Compliance operations have continued across the state throughout the season and further operations are planned for the remainder of this season.

The majority of hunters do the right thing and comply with the hunting and firearms laws. The hunting community is working closely with DEPI and Victoria Police to address poor behaviour and I urge anti-duck hunting protestors to do the same to ensure that hunting remains safe, responsible and sustainable.

DEPI in partnership with hunting organisations and the hunting industry are running a respect campaign reminding hunters about responsible hunting practices and attitudes in an effort to minimise irresponsible behaviour, such as littering, and illegal activity, such as illegally shooting protected species.

Child protection

Raised with: Premier

Raised by: Ms Mikakos

Raised on: 5 August 2014

REPLY:

I refer to the matter raised regarding the sexual abuse and exploitation of children in the child protection system.

The Victorian coalition government is committed to protecting children from harm. The Victorian government has supported in-principle all of the recommendations of the Family and Community Development Committee's *Betrayal of Trust* report, and is working on implementing a number of reforms so that the devastating child abuse that victims have experienced in the past does not continue into the future.

Since the tabling of the *Betrayal of Trust* report in November 2013, the government has introduced three new criminal offences to protect children from abuse and bring offenders to justice. The government's next priority in implementing the report's recommendations is ensuring children are safe by strengthening organisations' approaches to preventing and responding to abuse.

The government is also taking steps to improve the experiences and outcomes of children living in state care through its *Out-of-Home Care: A Five Year Plan*, which was released in March 2014 and is in the early stages of implementation. At the end of the Plan, every young person living in residential care will have a therapeutic placement with supports that address their complex needs.

A \$128 million funding package will support implementation of the reforms to the out-of-home care system under the Plan. An additional \$38 million was allocated towards implementation of the Plan in the 2014–15 Victorian Budget, including to increase residential care capacity. The 2014–15 Victorian Budget takes the government's total investment in vulnerable children and families to more than \$900 million since November 2010.

Of particular note, the Plan highlights how the government will provide additional support to keep children safe from sexual exploitation. In 2013, around 2000 child protection practitioners, police, service providers and residential care workers received training on how to better protect vulnerable young people. The government has also published specialist best practice resources to help organisations manage and reduce the risk of sexual exploitation.

The Minister for Community Services, the Hon. Mary Wooldridge, MP, recently met with a group of Victorian residential care providers to discuss their concerns about existing and future demand pressures in the out-of-home care system.

The government will continue to work closely with residential care and other service providers to improve service system responses to support children living in residential care.