

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

FIFTY-EIGHTH PARLIAMENT

FIRST SESSION

WRITTEN ADJOURNMENT RESPONSES

10, 11 and 12 November 2015

(Extract from book 16)

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By authority of the Victorian Government Printer

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The Honourable LINDA DESSAU, AM

The Lieutenant-Governor

The Honourable Justice MARILYN WARREN, AC, QC

The ministry

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Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water	The Hon. L. M. Neville, MP
Minister for Police and Minister for Corrections	The Hon. W. M. Noonan, MP
Attorney-General and Minister for Racing	The Hon. M. P. Pakula, MP
Minister for Agriculture and Minister for Regional Development	The Hon. J. L. Pulford, MLC
Minister for Women and Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence	The Hon. F. Richardson, MP
Minister for Finance and Minister for Multicultural Affairs	The Hon. R. D. Scott, MP
Minister for Planning	The Hon. R. W. Wynne, MP
Cabinet Secretary	Ms M. Kairouz, MP

Legislative Council committees

Privileges Committee — Mr Drum, Ms Hartland, Mr Herbert, Ms Mikakos, Ms Pulford, Mr Purcell, Mr Rich-Phillips and Ms Wooldridge.

Procedure Committee — The President, Dr Carling-Jenkins, Mr Davis, Mr Jennings, Ms Pennicuik, Ms Pulford, Ms Tierney and Ms Wooldridge.

Legislative Council standing committees

Standing Committee on the Economy and Infrastructure — Mr Eideh, Mr Elasmarr, Mr Finn, Ms Hartland, Mr Morris, Mr Ondarchie and Ms Tierney.

Standing Committee on the Environment and Planning — Ms Bath, #Mr Bourman, Mr Dalla-Riva, Mr Davis, Ms Dunn, #Ms Hartland, Mr Leane, #Mr Purcell, #Mr Ramsay, Ms Shing, Mr Somyurek and Mr Young.

Standing Committee on Legal and Social Issues — Ms Fitzherbert, Mr Melhem, Mr Mulino, Mr O'Donohue, Ms Patten, Mrs Peulich, #Mr Rich-Phillips, Ms Springle and Ms Symes.

participating members

Legislative Council select committees

Port of Melbourne Select Committee — Mr Barber, Mr Drum, Mr Mulino, Mr Ondarchie, Mr Purcell, Mr Rich-Phillips, Ms Shing and Ms Tierney.

Joint committees

Accountability and Oversight Committee — (*Council*): Ms Bath, Mr Purcell and Ms Symes. (*Assembly*): Mr Angus, Mr Gidley, Mr Staikos and Ms Thomson.

Dispute Resolution Committee — (*Council*): Mr Bourman, Mr Dalidakis, Ms Dunn, Mr Jennings and Ms Wooldridge. (*Assembly*): Ms Allan, Mr Clark, Mr Merlino, Mr M. O'Brien, Mr Pakula, Ms Richardson and Mr Walsh

Economic, Education, Jobs and Skills Committee — (*Council*): Mr Bourman, Mr Elasmarr and Mr Melhem. (*Assembly*): Mr Crisp, Mrs Fyffe, Mr Nardella and Ms Ryall.

Electoral Matters Committee — (*Council*): Ms Patten and Mr Somyurek. (*Assembly*): Ms Asher, Ms Blandthorn, Mr Dixon, Mr Northe and Ms Spence.

Environment, Natural Resources and Regional Development Committee — (*Council*): Mr Ramsay and Mr Young. (*Assembly*): Ms Halfpenny, Mr McCurdy, Mr Richardson, Mr Tilley and Ms Ward.

Family and Community Development Committee — (*Council*): Mr Finn. (*Assembly*): Ms Couzens, Mr Edbrooke, Ms Edwards, Ms Kealy, Ms McLeish and Ms Sheed.

House Committee — (*Council*): The President (*ex officio*), Mr Eideh, Ms Hartland, Ms Lovell, Mr Mulino and Mr Young. (*Assembly*): The Speaker (*ex officio*), Mr J. Bull, Mr Crisp, Mrs Fyffe, Mr Staikos, Ms Suleyman and Mr Thompson.

Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Committee — (*Council*): Mr Ramsay and Ms Symes. (*Assembly*): Mr Hibbins, Mr D. O'Brien, Mr Richardson, Ms Thomson and Mr Wells.

Law Reform, Road and Community Safety Committee — (*Council*): Mr Eideh and Ms Patten. (*Assembly*): Mr Dixon, Mr Howard, Ms Suleyman, Mr Thompson and Mr Tilley.

Public Accounts and Estimates Committee — (*Council*): Dr Carling-Jenkins, Ms Pennicuik and Ms Shing. (*Assembly*): Mr Dimopoulos, Mr Morris, Mr D. O'Brien, Mr Pearson, Mr T. Smith and Ms Ward.

Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee — (*Council*): Mr Dalla-Riva. (*Assembly*): Mr J. Bull, Ms Blandthorn, Mr Dimopoulos, Ms Kealy, Ms Kilkenny and Mr Pesutto.

Heads of parliamentary departments

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

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

Parliamentary Services — Secretary: Mr P. Lochert

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

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Barber, Mr Gregory John	Northern Metropolitan	Greens	Morris, Mr Joshua	Western Victoria	LP
Bath, Ms Melina ²	Eastern Victoria	Nats	Mulino, Mr Daniel	Eastern Victoria	ALP
Bourman, Mr Jeffrey	Eastern Victoria	SFP	O'Brien, Mr Daniel David ¹	Eastern Victoria	Nats
Carling-Jenkins, Dr Rachel	Western Metropolitan	DLP	O'Donohue, Mr Edward John	Eastern Victoria	LP
Crozier, Ms Georgina Mary	Southern Metropolitan	LP	Ondarchie, Mr Craig Philip	Northern Metropolitan	LP
Dalidakis, Mr Philip	Southern Metropolitan	ALP	Patten, Ms Fiona	Northern Metropolitan	ASP
Dalla-Riva, Mr Richard Alex Gordon	Eastern Metropolitan	LP	Pennicuik, Ms Susan Margaret	Southern Metropolitan	Greens
Davis, Mr David McLean	Southern Metropolitan	LP	Peulich, Mrs Inga	South Eastern Metropolitan	LP
Drum, Mr Damian Kevin	Northern Victoria	Nats	Pulford, Ms Jaala Lee	Western Victoria	ALP
Dunn, Ms Samantha	Eastern Metropolitan	Greens	Purcell, Mr James	Western Victoria	V1LJ
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Elasmar, Mr Nazih	Northern Metropolitan	ALP	Rich-Phillips, Mr Gordon Kenneth	South Eastern Metropolitan	LP
Finn, Mr Bernard Thomas C.	Western Metropolitan	LP	Shing, Ms Harriet	Eastern Victoria	ALP
Fitzherbert, Ms Margaret	Southern Metropolitan	LP	Somyurek, Mr Adem	South Eastern Metropolitan	ALP
Hartland, Ms Colleen Mildred	Western Metropolitan	Greens	Springle, Ms Nina	South Eastern Metropolitan	Greens
Herbert, Mr Steven Ralph	Northern Victoria	ALP	Symes, Ms Jaelyn	Northern Victoria	ALP
Jennings, Mr Gavin Wayne	South Eastern Metropolitan	ALP	Tierney, Ms Gayle Anne	Western Victoria	ALP
Leane, Mr Shaun Leo	Eastern Metropolitan	ALP	Wooldridge, Ms Mary Louise Newling	Eastern Metropolitan	LP
Lovell, Ms Wendy Ann	Northern Victoria	LP	Young, Mr Daniel	Northern Victoria	SFP
Melhem, Mr Cesar	Western Metropolitan	ALP			

¹ Resigned 25 February 2015

² Appointed 15 April 2015

PARTY ABBREVIATIONS

ALP — Labor Party; ASP — Australian Sex Party;
DLP — Democratic Labour Party; Greens — Australian Greens;
LP — Liberal Party; Nats — The Nationals;
SFP — Shooters and Fishers Party; V1LJ — Vote 1 Local Jobs

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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, 10 November 2015

Ballarat rail services

Raised with: Minister for Public Transport

Raised by: Mr Morris

Raised on: 11 June 2015

REPLY:

As you are aware, with Labor's Regional Rail Link now complete, it was necessary to rewrite the timetable for the Ballarat line.

The Ballarat line has many single track sections, which restrict V/Line's ability to run trains regularly in both directions during the morning and afternoon peak.

The services provided in the Ballarat line's timetable provide options for students to travel to Ballarat, with a road coach departing Bacchus Marsh each morning, and a train departing Ballarat station at 3.52 pm each weekday afternoon. A number of local buses in Ballarat provide connections to Ballarat station for the 3.52 pm service.

The Andrews Labor Government is committed to improving public transport in regional Victoria following years of neglect under the previous coalition government.

Princes Highway

Raised with: Minister for Roads and Road Safety

Raised by: Mr Purcell

Raised on: 1 September 2015

REPLY:

VicRoads advises me that it is aware of the arterial road priorities in South Western Victoria, and that several projects for reconstructing or resurfacing extensive sections of the Princes Highway between Colac and the South Australian border are being funded in the current 2015-16 program of works, and will be delivered during the warmer, drier part of the year.

The duplication of the Princes Highway between Geelong and Winchelsea is almost complete, and duplication between Winchelsea and Colac is continuing under the joint Commonwealth and State funding agreement.

In the meantime, VicRoads will continue to inspect and monitor the arterial roads and perform maintenance works as required.

China-Australia free trade agreement

Raised with: Premier

Raised by: Mr Ramsay

Raised on: 1 September 2015

REPLY:

The Victorian Government believes the China-Australia Free Trade Agreement will enable a stronger relationship and partnership with China.

We welcomed the agreement reached by the Commonwealth Government and Federal Labor on changes to the China Australia Free Trade Agreement (ChAFTA), an important step towards a deal that will open up significant new opportunities for Victorian businesses.

The agreement was particularly significant for Victoria's agricultural sector and would also benefit Victorian service providers in sectors like education, health and aged care, tourism and financial services.

The agreement will see tariffs on dairy, beef, sheep meat, wine and horticultural products phased out entirely in coming years, giving Victorian producers a major advantage over many competitors.

The agreed legislation now includes safeguards that will protect local wages and conditions, and uphold workplace skills and safety standards.

Level crossings

Raised with: Minister for Public Transport

Raised by: Mr Leane

Raised on: 2 September 2015

REPLY:

Contracts for the Level Crossings to be removed at Blackburn Road and Heatherdale Road were awarded on 8 September 2015. Work will commence at both sites at the end of 2015, with completion due in 2017.

We are aware and delighted by the level of interest in the level crossing removal projects from the community and stakeholders, and their keenness to be informed of the ongoing progress of the projects.

As such, we are establishing Stakeholder Liaison Groups (SLG) for the level crossing removal projects as a key avenue for community and stakeholder involvement during the construction phase. The SLGs will assist the project teams by:

- ensuring effective communication arrangements are established with interested and affected residents, businesses, interest and industry groups;
- ensuring that individuals and groups affected by the project have opportunities to participate in its development;
- providing a local perspective on project issues, particularly in relation to minimising impact on local communities; and
- providing input into the development and implementation of the project.

The SLG for Blackburn Road and Heatherdale Road level crossing removals will include, in addition to the Member for Eastern Metropolitan, Shaun Leane MP as Chair, the following participants:

- An Independent facilitator, Deputy Chair
- Members of the Level Crossing Removal Authority (LXRA)
- Contractor representatives
- Local community representatives
- Local trader representatives

– Representatives from local stakeholders

Other project staff, business groups, agency representatives and consultants, may provide support and give presentations to the SLG as required.

As well as this formal consultation group, the project team keep the community informed through regular community newsletters, information sessions, construction updates, posters displayed at the train station, local newspaper advertising, and the LXRA website, Facebook and Twitter. There will also be a dedicated 24-hour contact line for public enquiries.

Albion railway station

Raised with: Minister for Public Transport

Raised by: Mr Finn

Raised on: 2 September 2015

REPLY:

Protective Services Officers patrol Albion Station between 6.00 pm and last train each day. In addition, the station has a number of CCTV cameras in operation in the subway, station buildings and platforms as well as the station car parking and bus interchange areas.

West Footscray and Sunshine stations were upgraded to accommodate the Regional Rail Link Project. Public Transport Victoria has no immediate plans to upgrade Albion station.

PTV will continue to monitor the station and identify what can be done to improve safety.

Western Highway

Raised with: Minister for Roads and Road Safety

Raised by: Ms Dunn

Raised on: 3 September 2015

REPLY:

VicRoads acknowledges that there has been a discrepancy between the number of large old trees estimated to be impacted by the duplication, and the actual impact. This was identified by undertaking on-the-ground counting, which occurred in 2014.

VicRoads is continuing to work with everyone involved to understand how this discrepancy occurred. The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning has been fully briefed on the situation and is assisting VicRoads in this process.

VicRoads will release the findings of this investigation in due course.

VicRoads advises me that it will not be awarding any new contracts until the discrepancy in tree numbers is explained. Although, I am confident that VicRoads has followed due process and that the EES process is not flawed. It is worth noting that the overall impact on native vegetation approved under the Environment Effects Statement was to be 110 Ha. Through the 'minimise and avoid' process, VicRoads has reduced this impact to approximately 69 Ha, or a 37 per cent reduction.

VicRoads will continue to keep the community informed of the project's progress, and where possible, will minimise the environmental impact

Geelong region public transport**Raised with: Minister for Public Transport****Raised by: Mr Ramsay****Raised on: 16 September 2015****REPLY:**

The implementation of a new public transport network in Geelong has been undertaken to better support access to jobs and services across Geelong, and to meet the needs of the city as it grows. In doing this, some major improvements have been made to Geelong's bus network. These include:

- Upgrades to routes to operate every 20 minutes. In some cases this represents a tripling of frequency;
- Expansion of services to growth areas, such as Curlewis Parks and at Torquay;
- Significantly improved coordination with trains, with the majority of Geelong's bus network connecting with trains;
- More direct routes for a faster journey, to get cars off the road during peak times; and
- Much improved frequency to key locations where people need to go, such as the Pakington Street precinct in Geelong West, Deakin University's Waurin Ponds and Waterfront campuses, Belmont's High Street, and the growing Waurin Ponds activity centre.

As part of the consultation on the Regional Network Development Plan, we are actively listening to feedback from Geelong community, this feedback will be incorporated into further improvements to the network. I have advised PTV to review the Geelong bus network.

Somerville police station**Raised with: Minister for Police****Raised by: Mr O'Donohue****Raised on: 16 September 2015****REPLY:**

The Victorian Government is committed to a well-resourced police force, with a strong commitment to community engagement and policing.

This is why, in the 2015-16 State Budget the Andrews Government increased funding for Victoria Police to \$2.5 billion, the largest ever budget for police. The government is providing \$148.6 million over four years to recruit, train and deploy 400 custody officers to initially supervise prisoners at around 22 police stations across Victoria. This will allow around 400 police officers to return to the frontline to focus on tackling crime and keeping the community safe.

The previous Coalition Government enshrined in law that the deployment of police resources are at the exclusive determination of the Chief Commissioner of Police. Under Victorian law therefore, I cannot direct the deployment of police officers to or at particular locations in accordance with section 10 of the Victoria Police Act 2013. The decision of how and where resources are deployed is appropriately a matter for the Chief Commissioner.

I am advised that the Somerville Police Complex is now operational, with staff from the Criminal Investigation Units of Rosebud, Hastings and Mornington moving into the Complex between 30 September 2015 and 1 October 2015, to become the Mornington Peninsula Criminal Investigation Unit. The Crime Scene Services Unit from Rosebud and Frankston police stations have also relocated to the new facility.

The Somerville Police complex will accommodate teams of detectives from Hastings, Mornington and Rosebud, as well as a number of specialist crime scene officers. There are also plans to accommodate highway patrol units from Frankston, Hastings and Rosebud at Somerville. The Chief Commissioner has confirmed it will not have the counter service.

The Chief Commissioner has indicated that the shift in the way Victoria Police operates will enable police to be out working in the community, providing a visible presence, responding to calls for assistance, in particular to calls about family violence, property crime and drug-use.

Somerville will continue to receive a 24-hour police response with counter services for face to face contact continuing to be provided from Mornington, Hastings and Rosebud Police Stations all within 10 kilometres of Somerville.

If any person in Somerville requires urgent police assistance, they should contact Victoria Police on the emergency number '000'. Calls made to '000' are processed and responded to by the closest appropriate police personnel.

The government will continue to consult with Victoria Police about overall police resourcing across the state. I am assured by the Chief Commissioner that the allocation of police resources across Victoria is continuously monitored by the respective command officers to ensure the best possible policing service is delivered to the Victorian community. Keeping the community safe is a core priority for Victoria Police.

Melbourne–Warrnambool rail services

Raised with: Minister for Public Transport

Raised by: Mr Morris

Raised on: 16 September 2015

REPLY:

The Andrews Labor Government is committed to improving public transport across Victoria. Additional services across regional rail lines are being considered as part of the of the Regional Network Development Plan, following extensive community consultation.

The former Government did not deliver a single extra weekday service for Warrnambool during Government. The Regional Network Development Plan will set out the priorities for regional transport in the short, medium and long term.

The Regional Network Development Plan will move Victoria away from ad hoc service improvements, towards a more coordinated regional public transport network where train and bus services work together to get people where they need to go.

Grange Road, Carnegie, pedestrian crossing

Raised with: Minister for Roads and Road Safety

Raised by: Ms Pennicuik

Raised on: 17 September 2015

REPLY:

VicRoads is aware of community concerns relating to the safety of pedestrians crossing Grange Road near the intersection with Oakleigh Road, and has undertaken detailed investigations to determine the most appropriate safety improvement for this location which may include the installation of traffic signals with associated pedestrian crossing facilities.

VicRoads receives many requests each year for the installation of new road safety infrastructure throughout Victoria. All requests are prioritised based on the extent to which such a treatment would improve safety at the site. VicRoads considers factors such as the need to cater for pedestrians, the historical safety record of the site, the impact that treating the site would have on the performance of the surrounding road network and the implementation costs.

VicRoads will ensure that any road safety upgrade will provide the greatest safety benefits for all road users, including pedestrians wishing to cross Grange Road.

This proposal will be considered for funding in a future program along with other state-wide priorities.

Kew development

Raised with: Minister for Planning

Raised by: Mr Davis

Raised on: 17 September 2015

REPLY:

As you are aware, the former Minister for Planning, the Hon. Matthew Guy MP, refused the application and I strongly defended the refusal at the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT), for the construction of a five level apartment building at the Kew Residential Services site. However, the VCAT Order set aside the refusal of the application and directed that a permit be granted for the construction of the apartment building.

On 17 May 2015, the Executive Director, Heritage Victoria, under the Heritage Act 1995, issued a Permit Refusal for the subject construction. I understand that the proponent, the Walker Corporation, has appealed this decision to the Heritage Council. The Executive Director of Heritage Victoria, will be defending his position, at the Heritage Council hearing on 10-11 December 2015.

The Heritage Council is an independent body and I am unable to guarantee that it will uphold the decision of refusal by Heritage Victoria.

Public holidays

Raised with: Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade

Raised by: Mr Ondarchie

Raised on: 17 September 2015

REPLY:

The introduction of the new public holiday provided additional coordinated leisure time for people to spend with family and friends, and resulted in increased social and community benefits for Victorians.

Furthermore, there were no trading restrictions imposed on Grand Final Friday, so business opening hours were a matter for individual owners and operators.

Public holidays

Raised with: Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade

Raised by: Ms Bath

Raised on: 17 September 2015

REPLY:

The evaluation process will seek input from interested parties. The issues they choose to raise will be left entirely up to them.

The evaluation process will be finalised before Easter 2016. In keeping with the initial Regulatory Impact Statement we will be seeking feedback from interested parties.

Koroit and District Primary School

Raised with: Minister for Roads and Road Safety

Raised by: Mr Morris

Raised on: 6 October 2015

REPLY:

VicRoads advises me that it has reviewed Commercial Road near the school, and confirms that there are large signs highlighting the school speed zone, and warning drivers of the 40 km/h speed limit at school opening and closing times.

A children's crossing is located in front of the school which is operated by a school crossing supervisor. There are numerous other signs to warn drivers of the school and school children in the area. These treatments are helping to ensure the safety of children and others using this road.

Based on the existing signage and pedestrian treatments, VicRoads advises me that the current static 40 km/h speed limit signage is suitable for the speed limit and traffic volumes on Commercial Road. Any proposal for electronic signage will be considered for a future funding program, based on criteria including daily vehicle volumes and the prevailing speed limit. However, VicRoads will continue to monitor the safety at this location.

To improve awareness of the school speed limit, the Moyne Shire has implemented a speed advisory trailer, to give feedback to drivers about their speed entering the school speed zone. VicRoads advises me that this program has had a positive outcome, by raising the awareness of traffic speeds around the Koroit Primary School.

Point Cook police station

Raised with: Minister for Police

Raised by: Dr Carling-Jenkins

Raised on: 6 October 2015

REPLY:

The Victorian Government is committed to a well-resourced police force, with a strong commitment to community engagement and policing.

In May 2010, the Labor Government committed funding for an additional 1966 police to the frontline. As at 30 June 2015, this has led to an increase of 86 full-time equivalent police in the North West Metropolitan Region Division 2, which includes Point Cook and Werribee.

The Andrews Labor Government's first budget in 2015-16 delivered a record \$2.5 billion to Victoria Police to continue their important work in keeping our community safe.

We are providing \$148.6 million over four years to recruit, train and deploy 400 custody officers to initially supervise prisoners at around 22 police stations across Victoria.

The custody officers may also be progressively deployed to other locations over time, depending on the resourcing needs and allocation of resources by Victoria Police, allowing police officers to return to the frontline where they belong. The new custody officers will initially work at six police stations.

The 400 new custody officers are among the 600 additional police personnel introduced by the government, including forensic scientists, transit police and Protective Services Officers (PSOs), and detectives dedicated to supervising serious sex offenders on supervision orders.

Under Victorian law, I cannot direct the Chief Commissioner about the allocation or deployment of police officers to or at particular locations in accordance with section 10 of the Victoria Police Act 2013.

The Andrews Government recognises that Victoria Police requires appropriate facilities to support police in the work they do in keeping our communities safe. That is why in the 2015-16 State Budget we provided additional funding to see Victoria Police record its largest ever budget

As you would expect, the government works closely with the Chief Commissioner to ensure Victoria Police is appropriately resourced to tackle law and order issues facing the Victorian community.

While the government determines the level of funding required to resource Victoria Police, the Chief Commissioner is responsible for determining how such resources are allocated, based on assessed operational need.

The operational need for new and upgraded police stations is determined by Victoria Police and is considered in the context of other priorities across the State. Where the need for additional police infrastructure funding is identified, the status of projects is determined by government through the Budget process.

The government will continue to consult with Victoria Police about overall police resourcing across the state. I am assured by the Chief Commissioner that the level of policing is continuously monitored by respective command officers, with a view to ensuring community safety.

Marine search and rescue services

Raised with: Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation

Raised by: Mr Eideh

Raised on: 6 October 2015

REPLY:

The Victorian Government greatly appreciates the work of all marine rescue volunteers who play a vital role to promote the safety and wellbeing of the community.

The Economic Development Infrastructure and Outer Suburban Interface Services Committee (the Committee) under the previous Parliament reported on marine rescue services in Victoria. The government is currently considering its response to the Committee's report.

I appreciate the interest of the community and your constituents in this matter.

Manningham bus services

Raised with: Minister for Public Transport

Raised by: Ms Dunn

Raised on: 6 October 2015

REPLY:

Changes to the Transdev bus network in Manningham were proposed to be provided through cutting other bus services in Melbourne's northern and western suburbs.

PTV is working with Transdev to introduce improvements to the local bus network and will consult with council and the local community.

Truck curfews

Raised with: Minister for Roads and Road Safety

Raised by: Ms Crozier

Raised on: 6 October 2015

REPLY:

Any changes to truck curfews are best considered in partnership with the relevant stakeholders, including councils, the community and the transport industry, as we work towards finding a balance that meets the needs of truck operators and the local community.

The Andrews Labor Government has committed to a trial of camera technology to identify trucks that breach the existing truck curfews on Beach Road. As part of this initiative, VicRoads will collect data on truck movements on Beach Road. The data will be used to determine the merits of extending truck curfews and possible impacts to other roads.

The cameras were installed in the first week of October 2015, and the survey will continue into early 2016.

Magpie Nest housing program

Raised with: Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing

Raised by: Ms Springle

Raised on: 6 October 2015

REPLY:

All tenants residing in the 20 properties acquired for the East West Link that are to be used by the Magpie Nest Housing project will be subject to rights and protections under the Residential Tenancies Act 1997.

A representative from my office met with housing advocates, including Lisa Peterson, on Thursday, 10 September, to discuss tenants' rights issues and the consultation process surrounding these properties.

Wodonga radiotherapy services

Raised with: Minister for Health

Raised by: Ms Symes

Raised on: 6 October 2015

REPLY:

Free public radiotherapy services are now available in Albury-Wodonga and the surrounding region. This means that cancer patients from the Albury-Wodonga region can access the highest quality radiotherapy treatment for free, and closer to home.

GenesisCare will provide public radiotherapy treatment from the Murray Valley Radiation Oncology Centre on Nordsvan Drive in Wodonga.

GenesisCare will then move into the \$65 million state-of-the-art Albury Wodonga Regional Cancer Centre when it opens its doors in mid-2016. The Albury Wodonga Regional Cancer Centre will feature 30 inpatient beds, 30 chemotherapy chairs, three radiotherapy bunkers, consulting suites, and a wellness centre.

This was enabled by a historic agreement between the Victorian and NSW Governments and Albury Wodonga Health.

It is expected that the new services will provide free treatment to around 740 cancer patients in the first year.

Curative radiotherapy is typically provided daily for between four and eight weeks, and patients in this region are currently forced to travel to Melbourne or Bendigo to access public services.

This new agreement with GenesisCare will also reduce pressure on other public radiotherapy services in Bendigo and Melbourne that currently provide care to Albury-Wodonga patients.

Kangaroo control

Raised with: Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water

Raised by: Mr Young

Raised on: 6 October 2015

REPLY:

The Department of Environment, Land Water and Planning (DELWP) has an understanding of the relative population trends of kangaroos from the numbers of authorities issued throughout the state for their control. The numbers of authorities issued can also give an indication of the population trends in specific areas of Victoria.

If kangaroo populations are impacting on members of the community through damaging fences, grazing pressure, or by posing a road hazard, Authorities to Control Wildlife (ATCWs) can be issued by DELWP to allow their control. The ATCW system is the established mechanism for land managers and land owners to control problem wildlife.

DELWP will continue to work with affected stakeholders to identify and respond to Wildlife issues in problem areas.

Autism Health & Well Being Expo

Raised with: Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing

Raised by: Mr Finn

Raised on: 6 October 2015

REPLY:

This Government is committed to supporting people with a disability, including those with Autism Spectrum Disorder and their families. This commitment was demonstrated in the 2015-16 State Budget when \$151 million was allocated over four years for 827 new individual support packages, to increase the amount of support available.

This commitment to improving support for all people with a disability was also demonstrated on 16 September 2015 when the Victorian and Commonwealth Governments signed the bilateral agreements on how the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) will roll out in Victoria.

The Victorian Government will contribute funding of \$2.5 billion per year and the Commonwealth will contribute \$2.6 billion per year when the scheme is fully implemented. This will more than double the current funding for disability support and an estimated 105 000 Victorians with a disability, including those with Autism Spectrum Disorder, will have access to the supports they need by 1 July 2019. Once fully rolled out, the NDIS will be the end of rationed services and waitlists for people with disability and their families.

The Department of Health and Human Services funds Amaze to provide information and support for people with Autism Spectrum Disorder, their families and professionals working with them.

Amaze has also been funded to be a Disability Support Organisation by the National Disability Insurance Agency. This funding has been provided to enable Amaze to work with people with a disability, their families and carers to make the most of opportunities presented by the NDIS and engage effectively with the scheme.

An important component of the NDIS is Information, Linkages and Capacity Building (ILC) which highlights the importance of self-advocacy and peer support in building the capacity of individuals with a disability and their families.

The ILC Framework recognises the important role peer support has in providing support and information to families through sharing and acknowledging the wisdom of lived experience.

We are expecting ILC to be implemented and funded by the National Disability Insurance Agency as part of full scheme NDIS rollout across Victoria.

I encourage Ms Curtis to discuss with Amaze the opportunities the scheme may bring to continue her work providing valuable information about services and supports to people with Autism Spectrum Disorder and their families.

In addition, every two years the Victorian Government offers Disability self-help grants for up to \$10 000, for period of two years. The 2015-17 grant round, which recently closed to applications, was open to self-help groups that support people with a disability.

Small business innovation programs

Raised with: Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade

Raised by: Mr Rich-Phillips

Raised on: 7 October 2015

REPLY:

I would like to take this opportunity to bring you up to date on the Andrews Labor Government's commitments to help companies such as eHatsystems to grow in Victoria.

In the recent State Budget, the Labor Government confirmed it has allocated \$60 million for the Startup initiative to support our brightest entrepreneurs to develop and grow their business ideas. The Startup initiative will help our entrepreneurs access the skills, capability and resources they need to build innovative and high growth firms.

A further \$200 million was also allocated for the Future Industries initiative which will support high growth, high value industries that are critical to securing Victoria's future as a competitive, innovative and outward looking economy.

The Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources is currently undertaking preparatory work on these two new initiatives which will include a range of innovation opportunities for companies.

I would urge interested companies such as eHatsystems to visit www.business.vic.gov.au regularly over coming months to review the information being released on the initiatives and identify potential options for support which they might pursue.

Very recently, on Wednesday 27 October, the first major program announcement from the Future Industries Initiative was made by my colleague the Minister for Industry when she launched the Future Industries Fund Manufacturing Program.

Companies can now apply for grants of up to \$500 000 from this Manufacturing Program to invest in new manufacturing technologies and processes that will create new jobs, increase productivity and boost economic growth.

I understand that the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources has responded to Mr Lancaster of eHatsystems in response to his correspondence to the Premier.

I trust that this information has assisted in answering your concerns.

Warrnambool ministerial visit

Raised with: Minister for Training and Skills

Raised by: Ms Tierney

Raised on: 7 October 2015

REPLY:

I thank the member for her invitation to visit Warrnambool to discuss what actions the Andrews government can take to improve job opportunities for all Victorians. I am pleased to advise that I visited Warrnambool on 29 October 2015 to announce the establishment of a Skills and Job Centre in Warrnambool, and meet with the Board of South West TAFE.

I previously visited Portland and Hamilton in March this year to host industry roundtables and to meet with local employers to discuss similar issues to those raised in this adjournment. I also visited Warrnambool in January this year and again in July.

In July I was pleased to announce that South West Institute of TAFE would receive \$1.6 million in Government funding to get 270 people skilled up for jobs in growing industries. The funding will allow South West to help tackle youth unemployment in the region by getting young people to participate in traineeships which will see them develop skills to get jobs in the growing administrative and personal services fields.

The funding is from the \$50 million TAFE Back to Work fund which is allowing TAFEs to better meet the training needs of businesses that hire unemployed youth, the long-term unemployed and retrenched workers as part of the Back to Work Scheme. This is on top of the Government's \$320 million TAFE Rescue fund which is flowing to TAFEs in need.

The Government has committed a further \$15 million to create Skills and Jobs Centres in every TAFE across Victoria with \$1 million allocated to South West Institute of TAFE. The Skills and Jobs Centres will be a one-stop-shop for students looking to start training, workers needing to reskill, unemployed workers needing support and for industry and employers. TAFEs will be the key hub for the Skills and Jobs Centres, ensuring that each of the centres is tailored to meet the needs of their local communities and industries.

The availability of an appropriately skilled workforce is one of the key drivers of regional prosperity, productivity improvement and further jobs growth.

Witness assistance service staff

Raised with: Attorney-General

Raised by: Mr O'Donohue

Raised on: 7 October 2015

REPLY:

I refer to the question asked by the Hon Edward O'Donohue MLC regarding witness assistance service staff.

I note that the Office of Public Prosecutions is an independent statutory body. I am however advised that the matter has now been resolved.

Western Victoria Region tourism

Raised with: Minister for Tourism and Major Events

Raised by: Mr Purcell

Raised on: 7 October 2015

REPLY:

Thank you for your adjournment in relation to tourism opportunities in Western Victoria and for meeting with me also to discuss these further.

Aboriginal tourism is an important component of Victoria's tourism product offering. The Victorian Government is committed to growing and developing regional Aboriginal tourism experiences, and to increase the profile of the Victorian Aboriginal experience to a global audience.

In August, the Premier announced that the Budj Bim Cultural Landscape would be Victoria's number one priority for World Heritage Listing. This is a significant commitment and follows on from the development and release of the Budj Bim Master Plan in 2014.

I welcome the opportunity to visit these important sites in my capacity as Minister for Tourism and Major Events in the future. My office will contact you in due course to arrange this visit at an appropriate time.

Public holidays

Raised with: Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade

Raised by: Ms Wooldridge

Raised on: 7 October 2015

REPLY:

The introduction of the new public holiday provided additional coordinated leisure time for people to spend with family and friends, and resulted in increased social and community benefits for Victorians.

Furthermore, there were no trading restrictions imposed on Grand Final Friday, so business opening hours were a matter for individual owners and operators.

Wonthaggi hospital

Raised with: Minister for Health

Raised by: Ms Bath

Raised on: 7 October 2015

REPLY:

Bass Coast Health is the major public healthcare provider in South Gippsland providing a range of acute, sub-acute health, mental health and aged and community services.

In keeping with its growing and changing population Bass Coast Health continues to expand and enhance its range of services for the local community.

However, after \$1 billion in cuts to health by the former Liberal government and four years of underinvestment in capital, Bass Coast Health, like many other health services, is struggling with infrastructure challenges.

The Andrews Labor Government is working hard to fix the mess that we have inherited in health, but this takes time. That is why in our first budget we have invested \$560 million to build and expand hospitals right across Victoria.

A master plan of the Wonthaggi campus was completed in October 2011, followed by a feasibility study that was completed in June 2012.

Stage one of the master plan was to deliver the ground floor of a new community rehabilitation centre and a new dental clinic. Both of these facilities are now operational.

The Department of Health & Human Services continues to work with Bass Coast Health to plan for future capital developments and is currently working towards the development of a new community health centre on Phillip Island with Bass Coast Health and other local stakeholders.

I look forward to speaking with the chair and chief executive officer of Bass Coast Health about the service plan for the future when I am next in the region.

Grange Road, Carnegie, pedestrian crossing

Raised with: Minister for Roads and Road Safety

Raised by: Ms Fitzherbert

Raised on: 7 October 2015

REPLY:

VicRoads is aware of community concerns relating to the safety of pedestrians crossing Grange Road, near the intersection with Oakleigh Road, and has undertaken detailed investigations to determine the most appropriate safety treatment option.

VicRoads receives many requests each year for the installation of new road safety infrastructure throughout Victoria. All requests are prioritised based on the extent to which such a treatment would improve safety at the site. VicRoads considers factors such as the need to cater for pedestrians, the historical safety record of the site, the impact that treating the site would have on the performance of the surrounding road network and the implementation costs.

In this context, VicRoads has evaluated the need for improvements at this site and has developed a proposal treatment to provide the greatest safety benefits for all road users, including pedestrians wishing to cross Grange Road.

This proposal will be considered for funding in a future program along with other statewide priorities.

Country football and netball program

Raised with: Minister for Sport

Raised by: Mr Drum

Raised on: 7 October 2015

REPLY:

The former Bracks Government established the Country Football and Netball Program 10 years ago and this government is continuing the program with a one year extension for 2015-16.

I recently opened the 2015-16 Country Football and Netball Program and applications close on 11 February 2016.

As members are aware, this program is a partnership with Netball Victoria and AFL Victoria. Over the coming months the government will be working with our partners on the next steps for this program.

In addition to this program, the government will continue to support football and netball clubs right across Victoria through the \$100 million Community Sports Infrastructure Fund and the \$9.6 million Inner City Netball Commitment which will develop 64 courts across four inner Melbourne councils.

Police station security

Raised with: Minister for Police

Raised by: Mr O'Donohue

Raised on: 8 October 2015

REPLY:

The government recognises that Victoria Police requires appropriate facilities to support police in the work they do in keeping the community safe. That is why in the 2015-2016 State Budget, we provided Victoria Police with a record budget of \$2.5 billion.

Minor works and maintenance at police stations is determined by Victoria Police under the facilities minor works program, where projects are considered in the context of other priorities.

I am informed that there are a range of security measures that are being undertaken at Victoria Police sites. The installation of redesigned counters and screens at the Endeavour Hills police station was completed on 13 October 2015 and security works at the Narre Warren police station commenced on 16 October 2015.

Additional security measures are continuing to be put in place around facilities and security has been progressively increasing across the organisation. As you can appreciate, for security reasons, I am not able to comment on other stations receiving security upgrades.

The government works closely with the Chief Commissioner to ensure Victoria Police is appropriately resourced to tackle law and order issues facing the Victorian community.

School asbestos removal

Raised with: Minister for Education

Raised by: Ms Shing

Raised on: 8 October 2015

REPLY:

The safety of students and school communities is the highest priority for the Andrews Labor Government.

The 2015-16 State Budget provides \$42 million as part of an extensive \$100 million asbestos-removal program. The program will involve a state-wide audit to identify and prioritise those school buildings containing asbestos, remove all hazards posing an immediate risk, and retire asbestos-containing relocatable classrooms.

The Department of Education and Training has a comprehensive asbestos management program to ensure that schools are safe for students and staff alike. All schools known to contain asbestos have an Asbestos Management Plan which identifies the location of this hazardous material. Principals are trained to use their plans to monitor changes in the condition of asbestos and to identify potential risks or changes in the condition of the asbestos.

In addition to the asbestos-removal program described above, capital works funding has been announced in the 2015-16 budget for the following schools in the Gippsland region:

- Commercial Road Primary School
- Kurnai College
- Morwell Primary School
- Tobruk Street Primary School
- Sale Specialist School.

This funding will allow for the removal of asbestos as part of the capital works project.

Tower Hill Wildlife Reserve

Raised with: Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water

Raised by: Mr Morris

Raised on: 8 October 2015

REPLY:

The amenities block in Tower Hill Reserve was built in 1969, prior to community expectations, legislation and government policy requiring the provision of accessibility for public buildings.

This question was asked in the Legislative Council on 8 October 2015 and I refer you to the answer given then.

Disability grants

Raised with: Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing

Raised by: Mr Leane

Raised on: 8 October 2015

REPLY:

On Tuesday 22 September, I was represented by Ms Gabrielle Williams MP, Parliamentary Secretary for Carers and Volunteers at an event at Ross House, where Ms Williams announced the opening of the 2015-17 Disability Self-Help Grant round.

The Disability Self-Help Grants provide up to \$10 000 (ex GST) over two years to assist disability self-help groups to:

- strengthen the capacity of people with a disability to live independently in their own community and actively participate in community activities
- support members to make informed decisions about their own lives
- encourage a network of community peer support and information exchange for people with a disability and their families/carers

- increase opportunities for self-help groups to provide information and education on the experiences of people with a disability.

The Disability Self-Help Grant guidelines provide advice about how disability self-help groups can apply for this funding. A copy of the guidelines have been sent to the office of the Member for Eastern Metropolitan Region.

Multicultural affairs grants

Raised with: Minister for Multicultural Affairs

Raised by: Mrs Peulich

Raised on: 8 October 2015

REPLY:

The Victorian Government set aside \$25 million over four years for Social Cohesion and Community Resilience.

This commitment is being pursued through initiatives that are evidence-based through the involvement of leading researchers and academics and co-created through genuine collaboration with communities, especially young people.

Aspergers Victoria

Raised with: Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing

Raised by: Mr Finn

Raised on: 8 October 2015

REPLY:

On 16 September 2015 the Victorian and Commonwealth Governments signed the bilateral agreements on how the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) will roll out in Victoria.

The Victorian Government will contribute funding of \$2.5 billion per year and the Commonwealth will contribute \$2.6 billion per year, when the scheme is fully implemented. This will more than double the current funding for disability support and an estimated 105 000 Victorians with a disability, including those with Autism Spectrum Disorder, will have access to the supports they need by 1 July 2019. Once fully rolled out, the NDIS will be the end of rationed services and waitlists for people with disability and their families.

The NDIS has acknowledged the importance of self-advocacy and peer support in building the capacity of individuals with a disability and their families.

The National Disability Insurance Agency has funded a number of grass roots community organisations to act as Disability Support Organisations. In Victoria funding has been provided to enable Amaze to work with people with Autism Spectrum Disorders, their families and carers to make the most of opportunities presented by the National Disability Insurance Scheme and engage effectively with the scheme.

An important component of the NDIS is Information, Linkages and Capacity Building (ILC) which highlights the importance of self-advocacy and peer support in building the capacity of individuals with a disability and their families.

The ILC Framework recognises the important role peer support has in providing support and information to families through sharing and acknowledging the wisdom of lived experience.

We are expecting ILC to be implemented and funded by the National Disability Insurance Agency as part of full scheme NDIS rollout across Victoria.

I would encourage Aspergers Victoria to contact Amaze to discuss the opportunities the scheme may bring for people with Aspergers and their families.

In addition, every two years the Victorian Government offers Disability self-help grants for up to \$10 000, for a period of two years. The 2015-17 grant ground, which recently closed to applications, was open to self-help groups that support people with a disability.

Port of Melbourne

Raised with: Minister for Ports

Raised by: Mr Melhem

Raised on: 8 October 2015

REPLY:

The Port Capacity Project in the Webb Dock precinct is Melbourne's largest port infrastructure initiative since the development of Swanson Dock in the 1960s.

I'm pleased to report that its progress is on schedule and within budget.

Progress on site is clearly visible with significant works undertaken including piles being driven, minor dredging, installation of navigation aids at the northern end of Webb Dock and the construction of internal roads including a direct link from the port to the West Gate / M1 corridor, together with upgrades to the existing Todd Road roundabouts.

The development of the new 920 metre quay line at the automotive terminal at Webb Dock West is well advanced with berths 1 and 2 already in operation.

The new container terminal development undertaken by Victoria International Container Terminal at Webb Dock East is on schedule to host container vessel arrivals in the latter half of 2016-early 2017.

The project is designed to accommodate Melbourne's container and automotive trade needs well into the future.

Alongside the development of container and automotive trade capacity, the project incorporates a Pre-Delivery Inspection (PDI) Hub at Webb Dock North which consolidates the import pre-delivery service. One of the benefits of situating the PDI Hub in the precinct is the streamlining of new motor vehicle delivery to dealerships thereby avoiding duplicate truck journeys over the West Gate Bridge.

I am also pleased to note that there have been extensive community amenity works undertaken as part of the project following community consultation and input. At the southern end of Webb Dock, the recently completed Webb Point / Maritime Cove Observation Deck is open to the public offering an elevated vista from the city skyline to Williamstown. The Webb Trail which runs along the eastern edge of Webb Dock has also been redeveloped with improved lighting.

Kindergarten funding

Raised with: Minister for Families and Children

Raised by: Ms Crozier

Raised on: 8 October 2015

REPLY:

I refer the Member to my response for the adjournment dated 17 September 2015.

Firefighting aircraft

Raised with: Minister for Emergency Services

Raised by: Mr Leane

Raised on: 20 October 2015

REPLY:

This year, Victoria will have its largest ever contracted air fleet of 47 airplanes and helicopters.

Two aircranes — Ichabod and Elsie — are on their way from Greece and will be based in Ballarat and Essendon respectively. These locations are ideally positioned to service the majority of Central, Eastern and Western Victoria and to provide support across broader Victoria.

As stated by you, air cranes based in New South Wales are already operational and available for use in Victoria as part of the national aviation arrangements. Cooperation among the states and territories is a hallmark of our aviation arrangements.

Large Air Tankers (LATs) bring a number of key attributes to the firefighting fleet, including the ability to:

- drop large loads of fire retardant at a time as well as drop split loads on different parts of a fire or different fires
- fly in conditions when other aircraft cannot operate, such as at night and in reduced visibility conditions, which extends the operational window
- quickly reposition across territory to deliver large quantities of retardant in widely dispersed geographic areas
- temporarily operate out of airports with minimal facilities (as long as the runway and pavement loadings are sufficient), as they only require refuelling and refilling with retardant, which could be generated from portable mixing vehicles.

The use of LATs also releases other aviation resources for other priority tasks.

Regarding the contracts of the two LATs that are due to expire, I have written to the Federal Minister for Justice, the Honourable Michael Keenan MP, requesting the Commonwealth to consider extending the contracts based in New South Wales. These LATs would support our existing fleet and allow Victoria to assist South Australia during its summer season.

On 14 October, I travelled to South Australia to meet with the South Australian Minister for Emergency Services, the Honourable Tony Piccolo MP, to discuss resources and to build on our already close working relationship with our interstate colleagues.

This additional capability will strengthen our national resources for the dangerous fire season ahead and ensure every part of the country has the maximum resources we can muster when needed.

In addition to contracted aircraft, Victoria also has access to over 100 ‘Call when needed’ aircraft, which can be activated at any time.

Thank you for raising this matter with me.

City of Greater Geelong CCTV cameras

Raised with: Minister for Police

Raised by: Mr Ramsay

Raised on: 21 October 2015

REPLY:

The Andrews Labor Government recognises the value that Geelong and the Bellarine places on community safety. That is why in our first Budget we provided \$7.8 million for a Bellarine Community Safety Initiative, including an extra 15 police for the region. In addition, we have provided \$30 000 to the City of Geelong to deal with community safety concerns in the Little Malop Street Mall.

The Public Safety Infrastructure Fund is a highly competitive grants program.

51 applications were received from 44 individual councils, seeking more than \$8 million in funding.

The Department of Justice and Regulation considers each application on its merits utilising a robust, multi-stage assessment process. This includes:

- assessment of eligibility against the published eligibility criteria
- initial merit assessment against the published assessment criteria
- merit assessment review, to ensure consistency in the application of the assessment criteria across all applications
- final review of the assessments and consideration of the published overlay assessment criteria by an Assessment Moderation Panel, which agrees the final recommendations for funding to be made to me.

The Assessment Moderation Panel was chaired by the Director, Community Crime Prevention and comprised senior representatives from:

- Victoria Police
- Department Environment, Land, Water and Planning (Urban Design and Local Infrastructure Policy & Partnerships business units)
- Regional Development Victoria
- Public Transport Victoria
- Municipal Association of Victoria.

The Panel recommended funding of \$2 502 145 for 14 applications be approved and the Government accepted these recommendations.

The City of Geelong made three applications for funding, not seven as has been claimed.

The department has offered to provide the City of Greater Geelong with detailed feedback on the reasons for this assessment.

WRITTEN ADJOURNMENT RESPONSES

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

Wednesday, 11 November 2015

Regional rail link

Raised with: Minister for Public Transport

Raised by: Mr Morris

Raised on: 2 September 2015

REPLY:

Along with local member for Buninyong, Geoff Howard MP I travelled on the Ballarat line in August to talk to passengers. In September, the Andrews Labor Government announced a series of initiatives to boost performance on the Ballarat line.

Since June the Andrews Labor Government has delivered extra carriages to provide more room for passengers.

Improvements for Ballarat line passengers will continue over the coming months, with work starting on the new Rowsley passing loop and car park expansion in Wendouree, and timetable adjustments in January.

Performance on the Ballarat line has improved and the Government will continue to identify what further improvements need to be made.

Invest Gippsland

Raised with: Minister for Regional Development

Raised by: Ms Shing

Raised on: 6 October 2015

REPLY:

I refer to the matter raised during the Adjournment Debate in the Legislative Council on 6 October 2015, regarding Invest Gippsland.

Invest Gippsland is an important initiative that will better connect Gippsland businesses to national and global markets and is a key region for the growth of food and fibre in Victoria, contributing \$6 billion per year to the regions total gross production of \$13 billion.

It is one of Victoria's most important food producing regions, specialising in key agribusiness industries such as dairy, beef and horticulture and employs 16 000 people.

The Victorian Government has identified Food and Fibre as one of six priority sectors for growth; a sector that will be supported by the \$200 million Future Industries Fund, the \$500 million Regional Jobs and Infrastructure Fund and the \$20 million Food Source Victoria initiative, aimed at supporting Victorian agrifood businesses to work together and with value chain partners to grow exports and create new jobs.

I would welcome an invitation to visit Gippsland at any time. There are clear opportunities for Gippsland food and fibre businesses to develop new export opportunities into Asian markets. The Victorian Government is helping to secure the future of regional industries through initiatives that will build industry capacity, increase exports and support the creation of new jobs and economic growth in our regional and rural communities.

Irrigation sector

Raised with: Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water

Raised by: Ms Lovell

Raised on: 6 October 2015

REPLY:

I thank the member for her question. I have had a chance to listen to and speak with many irrigators in my recent visits to both the Goulburn Murray Irrigation District and the Sunraysia Irrigation districts.

In regard to carry over water, I have heard about how important it has been to irrigators to provide flexibility in managing the risk of low water availability from year to year, particularly during the drought.

The carryover rules for northern Victoria were reviewed through the Northern Region Sustainable Water Strategy and again in 2012. Water can only be carried over by people who own a permanent water entitlement such as a water share.

In terms of speculators in the water market, at the moment we have seen little evidence of an increase of this type of activity. The number of water shares unconnected to land has stayed relatively steady at roughly 8% since mid-2009 when the limit was removed. Many of these water shares are still held by farmers, with the allocation regularly shifted to be used on their farms. We will continue to monitor these trends.

Secondly, delivery shares are paid by all customers (including the Victorian Environmental Water Holder) who have water delivered through irrigation infrastructure. In 2014/2015, the Victorian Environmental Water Holder, Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder and the Murray Darling Basin Authority collectively paid approximately \$11.7 million in headworks and delivery charges.

Thirdly, Victoria's water register website provides publicly available information on all water entitlements in Victoria, by water system and trading zone. Anyone can download copies of individual entitlement records which includes who owns the water share for a fee of \$13.60 each — in the same way that you can search the land titles register. All bulk water entitlement holders, including water corporations and the Victorian Environmental Water Holder, must report on their water holdings in their annual reports.

A transparent water market is critical to ensure that the market is fair and that market participants can trade with confidence. That's why we have ensured that Victoria's water register website is a national leader in providing the information needed to support water market transparency. This includes information on trading rules, restrictions and opportunities; and data on all recorded trade including the price of sale. The Victorian water trade annual report for 2014-15 is now available online.

The Victorian Government is committed to the continual improvement of Victoria's market information to provide further market transparency and to build market confidence. Work is currently underway on preparing additional summary information on trends in the market over the past 10-15 years, and on patterns in trade between different water users in recent seasons.

Concerns have also been raised previously about whether greater regulation of water brokers is required. It is important to note that Australian Consumer Law applies to the conduct of water brokers and exchanges water market intermediaries. This general regulation already allows customers to report intermediaries to the ACCC for further action. There have been no breaches of this law to date.

And finally, under the Victorian Water Act, the Victorian Environmental Water Holder (VEWH) can already buy or sell water allocation where it is in line with statutory objectives—that is, if it benefits the environment. Proceeds from the sale of allocation are used to invest in future environmental watering priorities. This may include water purchase to meet shortfalls in any Victorian system, or investment in measures to improve the performance of Victoria's environmental watering program.

Since its commencement, the VEWH has bought and sold water allocation in water systems around Victoria, including the Murray, Goulburn, Loddon, Werribee and Maribyrnong systems. In northern Victoria, since 2012, the VEWH has sold over 37 000 ML in the Murray and Goulburn systems including 12 975 ML in 2014-15, and bought 300 ML in the Loddon system. The VEWH decisions to trade are announced on its website. VEWH allocation, use, carryover and trade volumes are published in its annual report.

Pakenham ministerial visit

Raised with: Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade

Raised by: Mr Mulino

Raised on: 7 October 2015

REPLY:

The Victorian Government certainly appreciates the enormous contribution of small businesses to any local community in terms of economic activities, jobs and social cohesion. The large number of diverse small businesses trading in Pakenham is no exception.

The small business sector makes a vital contribution to the Victorian economy. There are more than 532 000 actively trading small businesses in Victoria, accounting for 97.5 per cent of all businesses in the State. As the Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade, I am looking to develop a supportive environment for Victorian small businesses and will be implementing the Government's election commitments for small business, including establishing a Victorian Small Business Commission as well as developing a small business deregulation agenda that helps reduce regulatory burden by 25 per cent.

Thank you for the good news regarding Pakenham's growing population and a diversified local economy. I look forward to working in partnership with you to promote Pakenham as a great location for business, innovation and jobs. Please liaise with my Ministerial Office on telephone number 8392 2202 regarding my future schedule of electoral visits.

Caroline Springs railway station

Raised with: Minister for Public Transport

Raised by: Mr Eideh

Raised on: 20 October 2015

REPLY:

Caroline Springs station is needed to improve the public transport options available to Melbourne's growing western region. Construction started in early August and the station will open in 2016.

Abbotsford Convent

Raised with: Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade

Raised by: Ms Patten

Raised on: 20 October 2015

REPLY:

Thank you for raising this matter with me. Unfortunately, the congestion levy at the Abbotsford Convent does not fall within my portfolio responsibilities.

I encourage you to raise this with the Treasurer, who will be better placed to assist.

Box Hill transport interchange**Raised with: Minister for Public Transport****Raised by: Mr Leane****Raised on: 21 October 2015****REPLY:**

Thank you for your question requesting that representatives of local schools be invited to provide input to the Box Hill Transit Interchange Ministerial Advisory Group.

The Box Hill Transit Interchange Ministerial Advisory Group is a key commitment of the Andrews Labor Government to provide a clear direction for the future of the interchange through improving connecting trains, trams and buses. I thank the Member for Eastern Metropolitan for his hard work leading the advisory group.

That is an excellent suggestion to get passenger input and I encourage you to include relevant local stakeholders in the process to best inform the advisory group. I have asked an Officer from the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources to meet with the Assistant Regional Director, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development to arrange local schools input to the Ministerial Advisory Group.

WRITTEN ADJOURNMENT RESPONSES

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

Thursday, 12 November 2015

Stronger Country Bridges program

Raised with: Minister for Roads and Road Safety

Raised by: Mr Ramsay

Raised on: 8 October 2015

REPLY:

The Victorian Government announced that \$35.8 million would be provided for the Stronger Country Bridges Program. A further \$7 million in state funding was provided in the 2015-16 Victorian State Budget to contribute to the Federal Government's Bridge Renewal Programme. Both programs were targeted for bridges on arterial roads, which VicRoads maintains and as such, local council road bridges were not considered under this program. Castle Carey Road Bridge is not located on an arterial road network.

The Federal Government also provides funding to councils for maintenance of local roads and bridges under the Roads to Recovery programme, as well as through the Bridges Renewal programme. The Federal Government also provides funding to councils for road safety improvements and provides financial assistance grants to councils that can be used for roads and general purposes.

- A. The Stronger Country Bridges Program funded (\$35.8 million) for two sub program, being;
1. The Federal Government's Bridge Renewal Programme (BRP) (4 Metro + 2 Rural) (\$4.9 million State + \$4.9 million Federal)

Victoria had submitted a proposal to strengthen eight bridges as part of the BRP. Each of these bridges either has a load limit now or is likely to have a load limit within the next two years. Four of these bridges were located in metropolitan Melbourne and four in regional Victoria. In a letter dated 14 February 2015, the Federal Government advised that it would fund six out of the eight bridges that Victoria submitted for consideration; four bridges in metropolitan Melbourne and two in regional Victoria. These bridges are funded on a 50/50 split with the Federal and the State providing \$4.9 million each.

2. Bridge Strengthening Programme (100% from State Government) (all 15 rural road bridges) (\$30.9 million State)

The rest of the \$35.8 million (i.e. \$30.9 million), commitment from the Victorian Government will allow strengthening of 15 rural arterial road bridges. One of these bridges has a load limit now and requires replacement. The remaining 14 bridges are likely to have a load limit imposed within two years time. These bridges are located throughout regional Victoria. Once they are strengthened, they will support increased productivity within many farming and agricultural communities around Traralgon, Bendigo, Casterton, St Arnaud and Jeparit.

- B. The Federal Government's-National Highway Upgrade Programme (NHUP) (10 Metro + 21 Rural) (\$28M Fed + \$7M State)

The Federal Government has approved \$28 million for Victoria to strengthen 31 bridges along four national highway routes as part of the NHUP. The strengthening of these bridges will provide greater access to these routes for high productivity freight vehicles that are longer and heavier than 68.5 tonne B-Doubles (68.5 tonne B-Doubles currently have access to the majority of Victoria's arterial road network).

The Victorian Government provided \$7 million as its share to strengthen the 31 bridges along these routes as part of the NHUP. These routes include the Hume Highway, Western Highway, Goulburn Valley Highway and the Monash Freeway. The Monash Freeways bridges are considered strategically important to support freight into and out of rural areas.

Funding for Local Roads-Roads to Recovery Program

The Federal Government under this program makes a contribution to the maintenance of local roads. The focus of the program is on improving road safety, increasing productivity and improving social outcomes. The program allows councils to direct road construction and maintenance funding to where it is needed most.

Under the program, direct funding to local councils is distributed according to a formula based on population and road length set by the Local Government Grants Commissions in each state and the Northern Territory. Each council's Roads to Recovery allocation is fixed for the life of the program. Untied grants for local roads are part of annual financial assistance grants to councils.

The Federal Government has doubled the allocation to councils in 2015-16, boosting the programme from approximately \$71 million to \$142 million across Victoria.

Further information about this programme and how the Corangamite Shire Council can apply can be found at investment.infrastructure.gov.au/funding/r2r/.

Financial Assistance Grants

The Federal Government also provides financial assistance grants to local councils that can be used for roads and general purposes, allowing councils to prioritise funding based on community need.