

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

FIFTY-EIGHTH PARLIAMENT

FIRST SESSION

WRITTEN ADJOURNMENT RESPONSES

17 and 18 March 2015

(Extract from book 4)

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By authority of the Victorian Government Printer

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The Lieutenant-Governor

The Honourable Justice MARILYN WARREN, AC, QC

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Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade	The Hon. A. Somyurek, MLC
Minister for Planning	The Hon. R. W. Wynne, MP
Cabinet Secretary	Ms M. Kairouz, MP

Legislative Council committees

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

Joint committees

Environment and Natural Resources Committee — (*Council*): Mr Ramsay and Ms Symes. (*Assembly*): Mr Battin, Ms Halfpenny, Mr McCurdy, Mr Richardson 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 — Acting Clerk of the Legislative Council: Mr A. Young

Parliamentary Services — Secretary: Mr P. Lochert

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FIFTY-EIGHTH PARLIAMENT — FIRST SESSION**

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The Hon. D. K. DRUM

Leader of the Greens:
Mr G. BARBER

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

¹ Resigned 25 February 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, 17 March 2015

Junction Oval

Raised with: Minister for Sport

Raised by: Mr Drum

Raised on: 23 December 2014

REPLY:

The Labor Government has committed \$25M towards the redevelopment of the Junction Oval.

Under Labor's plan for Junction Oval, Cricket Victoria's administrative, development and training functions will be consolidated in the one space — the Victorian Cricket and Community Centre. It will also house the National Centre for Diversity through Cricket, to promote social inclusion.

The redevelopment will also feature women's facilities, a high performance training centre and medical and rehabilitation facilities. The new venue will have a capacity of up to 7000 which will also enhance the State's range and flexibility of venues, improving our ability to attract major events, such as the ICC World Twenty20.

This Government is excited about the future of cricket. Cricket participation in Victoria has grown 56 per cent since 2006, and entry-level participation has quadrupled. 51 000 girls and women now play the sport. International cricket contributes \$70 million to Victoria's economy. That is why we have also committed \$10 million over the next 4 years to upgrade community cricket facilities across the state such as buildings, grounds, training facilities, equipment and storage and other support.

In relation to the AFL and St Kilda football club, the AFL is an obvious beneficiary of the Junction Oval project because, with the additional first class cricket venue in Victoria, the MCG will be freed up for the start of the AFL season each year.

The Premier has stated that he is open to further talks with the AFL and St Kilda however our priority at the moment is getting on with projects we had announced as part of the election, including delivering Labor's plan for Junction Oval.

Fishermans Bend development

Raised with: Minister for Planning

Raised by: Mr Davis

Raised on: 10 February 2015

REPLY:

I am currently receiving advice from the Metropolitan Planning Authority (MPA) and my department on options to recast the planning of Fishermans Bend to create a series of distinct neighbourhoods. This area needs to showcase best-practice urban renewal that enables appropriate development and growth, protects local amenity and provides the necessary community and transport infrastructure to support these new communities. The agencies charged with the development of the new vision for the Fishermans Bend neighbourhoods, including the MPA will work with bicycle and public transport peak bodies. I expect any new plan for Fishermans Bend to go through a comprehensive public exhibition process to ensure all members of the community have their voices heard.

Sunbury municipality

Raised with: Minister for Local Government

Raised by: Mr Finn

Raised on: 10 February 2015

REPLY:

As announced by the former Liberal Government, Sunbury and Hume were set to separate from 1 July 2015. It was a deadline decided on without consultation and without adequate advice.

The City of Hume has subsequently suggested that they do not believe they have enough time to address outstanding issues in asset management, staffing or services. This is as a direct result of the previous Government's mismanagement.

I am currently considering the City of Hume's advice and will respond in due course. Unlike the previous Government, I do not intend to rush recklessly into making important decisions.

Whooping cough vaccine

Raised with: Minister for Health

Raised by: Mr Leane

Raised on: 10 February 2015

REPLY:

The Andrews Labor Government has committed to invest \$8.4 million over the next four years to reintroduce the whooping cough vaccine program so savagely cut by the previous government.

Under the Labor Government's plan, expectant parents and parents of newborn babies will be able to receive the whooping cough vaccine for free, helping to protect more babies from this life-threatening disease.

The Department of Health and Human Services is currently developing a communication strategy and undertaking a tender process for the supply of the vaccine. Once available, this will be provided through a range of services including maternity hospitals, general practitioners and other immunisation providers.

Mobile phone data usage

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

Raised by: Mr Melhem

Raised on: 10 February 2015

REPLY:

I refer to the matter raised about your enquiry into unanticipated phone use charges and the measures available to consumers for ensuring that they do not exceed their desired, or agreed, monthly limit, often referred to as a 'cap'. A 'cap' is commonly understood to include an agreed fixed price per billing period for the use of services up to a certain value. The use of additional services exceeding this value is usually charged at a different unit rate. According to guidance developed by the Consumers' Telecommunications Network, consumers have the option of choosing between two types of caps: a 'hard cap', where the consumer's service stops once their credit is exhausted; and a 'soft cap', where extra charges accrue after the cap is exceeded, often at a higher rate.

The Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) has regulatory responsibility for monitoring and reporting on developments in the communications sector. In May 2010, this included surveying the experiences of Australian consumers with mobile capped plans and the management of their expenditure under these plans, following an increase in 2008–09 in the number of complaints received by the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman (TIO).

On 1 September 2012, ACMA introduced a mandatory Telecommunications Consumer Protections Code (the Code), broadly aimed at protecting telecommunications (telco) customers from unanticipated bill charges, confusing mobile plans and poor complaints handling processes. The Code delivers on the key recommendations of ACMA's Reconnecting the Customer report, which estimated that choosing the wrong plan was costing telco customers up to \$1.5 billion annually.

Under the Code, which is enforced by ACMA, telco providers must advise customers having difficulty paying their bills or meeting unexpectedly high bills about "spend management" tools, hardship advice and options to restrict services, such as the choice of a 'hard cap'. Customers must also receive a two-page document known as a Critical Information Summary' including essential information about service, unit pricing and complaints-handling, as well as information enabling consumers to easily understand how many calls or texts they can make under their plan. This information is additional to the introduction of notifications about data usage and expenditure thresholds.

Consumer protection regulators also provide nationally consistent guidance to consumers about how to manage expenses by placing restrictions on data usage. The guidance, which is available on the ACMA and Australian Competition and Consumer Commission websites, was developed in consultation with all relevant agencies and includes advice about resolving disputes about unexpected high data usage. Importantly, if a consumer's efforts to resolve a dispute directly with their telco are unsuccessful, they have the option of contacting the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman.

Thank you for raising this matter, I trust this information is of assistance to you.

Rural council planning flying squad

Raised with: Minister for Local Government

Raised by: Mr Morris

Raised on: 10 February 2015

REPLY:

I thank the Member for Western Victoria for his question on the future of the Rural Council Planning Flying Squad.

The Government has committed \$500 million over four years to support rural and regional Victoria. This commitment includes the \$250 million Regional Infrastructure Fund, the \$200 million Regional Jobs Fund, and the \$50 million Stronger Regional Communities Fund.

The Government recognises that the Rural Council Planning Flying Squad program has provided local councils with valuable assistance.

The government is committed to facilitating major projects and developments which accelerate investment, jobs and growth for rural and regional Victoria.

Weed management

Raised with: Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water

Raised by: Mr O'Donohue

Raised on: 10 February 2015

REPLY:

The Victorian Government places great value on partnerships with local government, community groups and industry in the care and protection of the environment.

The Urban Fringe Weed Management Initiative (UFWMI) was a pilot approach designed to protect key environmental values on public land from high threat weeds.

The UFWMI assisted in developing partnerships through capability development to deliver on-ground weed management outcomes that peri-urban councils can now apply through their day-to-day land management activities.

While the grants component of the trial will conclude, the partnerships established with local government and community groups will continue to be developed and supported. In addition, the lessons from the UFWMI will be used to inform the development of a statewide biodiversity strategy to protect our environment for future generations.

Northern Hospital

Raised with: Minister for Health

Raised by: Mr Ondarchie

Raised on: 10 February 2015

REPLY:

I thank the Member for Northern Metropolitan Region for his question regarding Northern Health.

Just as no single individual, organisation, or sector, working alone can achieve key health related improvements for Victorians, the burden of healthcare for the northern growth areas of Melbourne does not fall solely upon Northern Health. The Andrews Government is keenly aware of the pressures on all health services in Victoria and is actively seeking ways in which to support innovative and efficient healthcare delivery across all settings.

As you would be aware the \$1 billion in cuts to the Victorian health system over the past four years, and significant underfunding of capital needs across the state over the same period has left the system in crisis.

It was also the case that the former government promised to deliver 800 additional hospital beds during the last term and failed.

Since coming to office, I have appointed respected surgeon and former Victorian AMA President Dr Doug Travis to undertake a statewide capacity survey of Victoria's hospitals with a direction to provide recommendations to me by the end of June 2015 on how to increase the capacity of the Victorian health system.

The Andrews Government recognises the need and requirement for investment right across the Victorian health system. Consequently, in addition to the \$200 million committed to the Western Women's and Children's Hospital, the \$150 million towards the development of the Victorian Heart Hospital, and the \$106 million to expand Casey Hospital, the Government has also committed \$200 million over four years to support a range of initiatives identified by the Travis Review which best assist in optimising the capacity of the Victorian health system.

I am pleased to advise that Northern Health has already responded proactively to the Travis Review.

The Andrews Government looks forward to the recommendations of the final report, and to supporting those innovative models of service delivery and redesign which increase the capacity of our health system to treat Victorians into the future.

I have enjoyed the opportunity to meet with Northern Health, and be provided with ongoing advocacy by the members for Thomastown, Mill Park, Yan Yean, Broadmeadows, Yuroke, Pascoe Vale, Preston, Ms Mikakos, Mr Elasmara and yourself about the importance of Northern Health to the health and wellbeing of residents in Melbourne's North.

I look forward to visiting the campuses of Northern Health and many other health services across Victoria.

Local government rates

Raised with: Minister for Local Government

Raised by: Mr Davis

Raised on: 11 February 2015

REPLY:

I thank the Member for the Southern Metropolitan Region for raising the current Government's election commitment to implement the Fairer Rating System.

While ensuring rates are kept affordable for families, communities and businesses, the Government is also committed to ensuring that local councils continue to be financially sustainable, so that they can continue to contribute to the wellbeing of Victorians.

The establishment of the Fairer Rating System will incentivise local councils to only raise revenue through rates for activities that their communities need and want.

The Government will work with the ESC, and in consultation with interested parties, to ensure that the Fairer Rating System is implemented in an effective and reasonable manner.

To ensure that the CPI-based cap and exemptions process is fair, we have asked the ESC to develop an implementation framework that takes into account:

- The impact of Commonwealth cuts to local government grants,
- Extraordinary circumstances that councils may be facing such as bushfires,
- Council's ability to raise revenue in other ways, and
- Their need to have sufficient rate revenue to maintain essential services and infrastructure.

The Andrews Labor government has always been committed to consulting on the implementation of the Fairer Rating System.

City of Greater Dandenong elections

Raised with: Minister for Local Government

Raised by: Mrs Peulich

Raised on: 11 February 2015

REPLY:

I acknowledge the Member for South Eastern Metropolitan Region's question concerning the Greater Dandenong City Council and the forthcoming local government general elections scheduled for October 2016.

As Minister for Local Government I am committed to ensuring council electoral processes are fair and transparent.

Local governments play an important role in delivering grass roots democracy — just over four million voters were enrolled at the 2012 council elections — and they elected 631 councillors to represent their local communities.

I am keen to encourage meaningful participation by voters and candidates to maintain community confidence in the integrity of local democratic governance.

A number of electoral reforms have been proposed following significant consultation with the sector and I am currently considering these and seeking feedback from the sector.

If there is compelling evidence that legislative reforms would materially improve the electoral system I will consider them in time for the 2016 municipal elections.

City of Greater Geelong mayor

Raised with: Minister for Local Government

Raised by: Mr Ramsay

Raised on: 11 February 2015

REPLY:

The Government supports the concept of a directly elected Mayor in Geelong. At the same time, as Minister for Local Government, I am aware that concerns about the model have been raised by various stakeholders.

I will continue to evaluate the current model for potential improvements. However, the Government won't be subjecting the ratepayers of Geelong to unnecessary and disruptive changes in the foreseeable future.

As custodians of the public trust, it remains the responsibility of the Mayor and his or her fellow Councillors to work productively together and to provide the good governance and strong leadership that the people of Geelong are entitled to expect from their Council.

The Government is committed to implementing its major election commitment to conduct the first comprehensive review of the Local Government Act 1989 in decades. This is to ensure that Victoria continues to have a modern and robust system of municipal governance.

This review will include consideration of the systems of governance of all of Victoria's councils, including those councils which have a directly elected Mayor.

Additionally, I note that, later this year, the City of Greater Geelong will be subject to an independent electoral representation review conducted by the Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC). This will review councillor numbers and ward structures within the municipality.

While it cannot look at the directly elected Mayor arrangements, the VEC will advise on a changed representative structure for the 2016 general elections. These changes should be implemented before any review of the model for electing the Mayor is contemplated.

East Gippsland timber industry

Raised with: Minister for Agriculture

Raised by: Ms Shing

Raised on: 11 February 2015

REPLY:

The Andrews Government supports a strong and viable timber industry. The Victorian timber industry plays an important role in supporting regional communities and jobs across the state.

In the Our Environment, Our Future election commitment, the government committed to establishing an industry taskforce to provide leadership to reach common ground on the future issues facing the industry, job protection, economic activity, protection of our unique flora and fauna and threatened species.

The election commitment indicates that the industry taskforce will include members from the broad range of stakeholders identified by Ms Shing (timber and timber products industry, environmental groups, scientists, local communities) as well as unions, threatened species experts, land owners and other relevant stakeholders.

The industry taskforce falls under the portfolio responsibilities of the Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water. As the Minister responsible for forest industry policy and as the relevant Minister for VicForests I will be working closely with the Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water on the establishment and operation of the industry taskforce to ensure that cross-portfolio matters are considered.

Child protection

Raised with: Minister for Families and Children

Raised by: Ms Springle

Raised on: 11 February 2015

REPLY:

Children thrive when they are living with a family. If children cannot live with their own family, then children should live in a caring and safe home environment.

The Andrews Government is committed to having more children in home based care, which will only be achieved with the support of foster, kinship and permanent carers.

A fortnightly care allowance is currently provided to volunteer foster carers as a contribution towards the costs associated for caring for children. Some child-related expenses may also be covered.

I have tasked my department with reviewing all care allowance policies to ensure they provide a consistent and transparent approach to this important aspect of financial support for volunteer carers.

I recently committed \$1.5 million towards improving foster care recruitment and retention and will continue to engage carers and service providers on issues of training, support and advocacy.

This commitment was part of a \$19 million announcement for a number of initiatives in out of home care, including \$16 million to ensure that more children and young people in residential care will have the extra security and safety of 24-hour support and a further \$1.5 million to the auditing of residential care facilities to ensure the highest standards of care are maintained by non-government agencies.

Marine search and rescue services

Raised with: Minister for Emergency Services

Raised by: Mr Eideh

Raised on: 12 February 2015

REPLY:

The Victorian Government greatly values the work of marine rescue volunteers, who selflessly devote their time and skills to promote the safety and wellbeing of the community.

As you are aware, the Inquiry into Marine Rescue Services in Victoria found a number of shortcomings in Victoria's current marine search and rescue arrangements, and made 43 recommendations on how to address them.

In response to the Inquiry's findings I have asked Emergency Management Victoria, as the statutory body tasked with coordinating emergency management policy and implementing the emergency management reform agenda, to work with the relevant agencies to develop a detailed and comprehensive whole-of-government response to the recommendations by mid-2015.

Shepparton central business district

Raised with: Minister for Regional Development

Raised by: Ms Lovell

Raised on: 12 February 2015

REPLY:

Greater Shepparton City Council will be eligible to apply for support for infrastructure projects through the new Regional Jobs and Infrastructure Fund.

The Andrews Labor Government believes that supporting local businesses, workers and students is the path to our prosperity and the key to our future, because we understand that rural communities and regional cities matter.

The former Baillieu/Napthine Coalition Government abandoned regional Victoria. Companies and TAFEs closed their doors, funds dried up and kids were leaving our regional cities and small country towns, looking for work and study.

Regional Victoria only got four per cent of the funds for major projects under the former Government, despite being home to 25 per cent of our population. Our regions deserve the support of a government that works hard to encourage growth and create jobs.

Labor is establishing the \$500 million Regional Jobs and Infrastructure Fund to support major projects, create the jobs and industries of the future and build stronger regional communities.

The fund will be divided into three parts focusing on major projects, employment and communities. Each is designed to make the most of regional Victoria's strengths and attractions, and ease pressure on families, companies and community groups after four years of Coalition cuts.

Regional Development Victoria will be providing support and advice to the Council to progress key priority projects for Shepparton, including the central business district (CBD) revitalisation.

Salvation Army youth street team

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

Raised by: Mr O'Donohue

Raised on: 12 February 2015

REPLY:

The government values the important contribution the Salvation Army makes to the community through its range of social programs.

The Youth Street Teams program, in which volunteers support the safety and wellbeing of young people in the Melbourne CBD on Friday and Saturday nights, is an important part of its work.

I understand that this is a joint initiative with the City of Melbourne and Victoria Police.

The government welcomes harm reduction initiatives such as this program and is committed to a range of strategies to assist young people in Victoria.

I would welcome the opportunity to meet with the Salvation Army to discuss their programs and any plans they may have for their expansion.

Industrial hemp

Raised with: Minister for Agriculture

Raised by: Mr Ramsay

Raised on: 12 February 2015

REPLY:

The Australian and New Zealand Ministerial Forum on Food Regulation has rejected a proposed variation to the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code that would permit foods derived from the seeds of low THC hemp.

Several concerns were raised by some Forum members. These included law enforcement issues, particularly from a policing perspective in relation to roadside drug testing, cannabidiol levels in hemp foods, and potential mixed messages to consumers about the acceptability and safety of cannabis from marketing of hemp in food.

The Forum agreed that further work would be undertaken promptly to consider law enforcement, roadside drug testing and marketing concerns in consultation with relevant ministers.

As part of a national approach to progress the Forum decision, the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources is working with the Department of Health and Human Services and Food Standards Australia New Zealand to resolve these issues and provide further development opportunities for the local hemp industry.

Our farmers, food processors and manufacturers make a major contribution to Victoria, particularly in regional communities. The Andrews Labor Government is committed to growing our food and fibre sector by focussing on Victoria's specialties and investing in infrastructure and skills.

Disability services

Raised with: Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing

Raised by: Dr Carling-Jenkins

Raised on: 24 February 2015

REPLY:

The Victorian Government is committed to an inclusive Victorian society where people with a disability have the same experiences, rights and opportunities as people without a disability and their efforts and achievements are their defining features, not their disabilities.

The recent Parliamentary Inquiry into Social Inclusion and Victorians with Disability highlighted that people with a disability face barriers to employment, education, affordable and flexible housing, service provision, access to technology and other areas. The Victorian Government has also committed to undertake a Parliamentary Inquiry into systemic failures in Victoria's disability service system. This Inquiry will examine why abuse is not reported or acted upon and how it can be prevented.

The Victorian Government is committed to a National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and is contributing over \$300 million of existing and new funding for services for people with a disability in the Barwon Area over the three year NDIS trial period.

Victoria's transition to the NDIS and our continued focus on areas covered by the social inclusion inquiry will be framed in the context of the State Disability Plan. This highlights a continued role for all parts of the Victorian Government to enable people with a disability to contribute to the social and economic life of a community where their rights are protected.

Sunshine Hospital

Raised with: Minister for Health

Raised by: Mr Eideh

Raised on: 25 February 2015

REPLY:

I thank the Honourable Member for Western Metropolitan for raising the matter of the Women's & Children's Centre at Sunshine Hospital and for his concern for the health and wellbeing of his constituents.

I can assure the community of Western Metropolitan Melbourne that the delivery of acute health services is of vital importance to the Andrews Labor Government.

For too long the needs of families in the western suburbs were overlooked by the previous government.

This is evident by our commitment to fund a new \$200 million Women's and Children's Centre at Sunshine Hospital, which will provide 237 beds, 39 special care nursery cots, four theatres and additional clinics, catering for the needs of the fastest growing area in Australia closer to home. This will allow for an extra 2000 births a year and free up beds and services at Sunshine and surrounding hospitals.

The department has commenced work with Western Health on significant planning to enable this project to begin as soon as possible following funding by the Andrews Labor Government.

Graffiti

Raised with: Minister for Police

Raised by: Mr Finn

Raised on: 25 February 2015

REPLY:

The Community Correctional Services' Graffiti Removal Program (GRP) was established in late 2005 by the previous Labor government.

The Graffiti Removal Program puts up to 39 teams of offenders on community orders to work each week to remove graffiti from state and local government assets (including the rail corridor and roadsides), community assets and private property.

Community Correctional Services partners with councils and state agencies to ensure that local intelligence informs the sites chosen for clean-up.

Brimbank City Council has been a Graffiti Removal Program partner since late 2010. I am advised that graffiti is currently being removed from 26 sites across the municipality and, in total, 33 933 square metres of graffiti (equal in area to nearly two MCG playing fields) and 110 kilograms of rubbish has been removed from those sites.

Community Correctional Services will continue to work with Brimbank City Council to identify graffiti hotspots for cleanup.

Rail freight

Raised with: Minister for Roads and Road Safety

Raised by: Mr Ramsay

Raised on: 25 February 2015

REPLY:

I refer this matter to the Minister for Public Transport who has portfolio responsibility for rail freight and the Mode Shift Incentive Scheme.

Ambulance officers

Raised with: Minister for Ambulance Services

Raised by: Ms Symes

Raised on: 25 February 2015

REPLY:

Since 2009-10 the number of verbal abuse/threats and physical potential threats of violence against paramedics have doubled. The use of weapons against our paramedics has increased by 70 per cent. Worryingly of all reports of assaults and violence against paramedics, 20 per cent were drug or alcohol related.

No level of abuse or aggression against our paramedics is tolerated.

Attacking emergency service workers, including paramedics, is against the law and offenders can be convicted and sentenced to jail.

The Government has established the Ambulance Performance and Policy Consultative Committee so we can hear firsthand the issues our hard working paramedics are facing, including violence against paramedics and involve them in developing solutions that improve services to our community. I have recently visited Mildura to listen to local paramedics about the issues that matter to them. This feedback will inform the Committee's interim report due to be released in March this year.

Additionally we have acted to establish a taskforce to consider better strategies to respond to ice addiction, and the harm it causes to those affected and to better protect healthcare workers in the frontline. The Government has now released its Ice Action Plan which includes investments and strategies to keep frontline workers safe.

Ambulance Victoria has recently established an Occupational Violence Working Group, which is reviewing the aggression, and assault training paramedics receive, and current policies and procedures.

Regional community leadership program

Raised with: Minister for Regional Development

Raised by: Mr Mulino

Raised on: 26 February 2015

REPLY:

The Government is proud to continue to support the Regional Community Leadership Programs with its \$8 million commitment over four years from 2015/16 to 2018/19. Details of the continued program are currently being finalised, however the Gippsland Community Leadership Program will continue to be funded as one of the ten leadership programs across regional Victoria under this commitment. The Gippsland Community Leadership Program has been a great example to other programs across the state and celebrates its 20th year this year.

Family violence

Raised with: Attorney-General

Raised by: Ms Springle

Raised on: 26 February 2015

REPLY:

The Crimes Amendment (Protection of Children) Act 2014 created two new Crimes Act 1958 offences. New section 49C, the failure to protect offence, relates to a child under 16 years of age within a relevant organisation. A person in authority in the organisation, who knows of a substantial risk that the child will become a victim of a sexual offence committed by another adult associated with the organisation, must not negligently fail to reduce or remove that risk. This offence has not yet commenced.

The failure to disclose offence in section 327 is not limited to organisations. The offence requires an adult, who reasonably believes that a sexual offence has been committed against a child under 16 years of age by another adult, to disclose that information to police, unless they have a reasonable excuse for not doing so. This offence commenced on 27 October 2014.

As we made clear during the Parliamentary debate on these amendments last year, the Government is concerned to ensure that the failure to disclose offence is able to deal adequately with the complexity of family violence situations, to avoid criminalising victims of family violence. Addressing family violence is a key priority for the Labor Government and that is why we have established a Royal Commission on Family Violence with broad terms of reference. The Commission can look at a range of issues including the most effective ways to prevent family violence, improve early intervention to identify and protect those at risk and support victims. The Commission may consider and make recommendations in relation to the failure to disclose offence.

In the meantime, the Government is monitoring the operation of the offence.

WRITTEN ADJOURNMENT RESPONSES

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

Wednesday, 18 March 2015

Shepparton rail services

Raised with: Minister for Public Transport

Raised by: Ms Lovell

Raised on: 10 February 2015

REPLY:

The Andrews Labor Government is committed to improving public transport services for people living in and visiting regional Victoria.

The Coalition did not release a comprehensive plan to improve regional rail services during their time in Government. They rushed to the election with a series of proposals that lacked clarity, adequate costings or detailed implementation timeframes.

The Coalition announced a target to double V/Line train patronage in twenty years. However, under the last Coalition Government, V/Line rail patronage actually went backwards. In the twelve months ending September 2011, V/Line trains carried 13.63 million passengers. In the twelve months to September 2014, they carried 13.00 million passengers.

Regional Victoria has endured four wasted years. Fewer people used rail services even as the population of Victoria increased.

Unlike the Coalition, an Andrews Labor Government is committed to growing V/Line patronage.

In 2004/5, V/Line carried approximately 6.4 million rail passengers. Labor was able to double the number of V/Line rail passengers in approximately five years with projects such as Regional Fast Rail, the construction of Southern Cross Station and the new V/Locity trains.

The priorities for new services will be determined through a process of widespread consultation. This will lead to Public Transport Victoria preparing a Network Development Plan for Regional Victoria.

We understand that the people of Shepparton deserve better public transport services, and unlike the Coalition, we look forward to delivering a service that more people choose to use.

St Albans level crossing

Raised with: Minister for Public Transport

Raised by: Mr Eideh

Raised on: 11 February 2015

REPLY:

I am pleased to confirm that the Andrews Labor Government is committed to removing 50 of the most dangerous and congested level crossings across our rail network, and has fast-tracked funding to progress planning works and establish the Level Crossing Removal Authority, which will deliver the Level Crossing Removal project as soon as possible.

The inaction of the former Coalition Government for four years to remove level crossings to help get Victorians home safer and sooner was made clear in St Albans. The former Government refused \$90 million from the Commonwealth to fix the St Albans level crossing and failed to get this important project underway.

The removal of the Main Road, St Albans level crossing involves lowering the railway under Main Road and building a new premium train station. The train station car park will be moved and a new bus interchange and pedestrian overpass will be created.

A range of benefits will be delivered to the community including improved safety, reduced congestions and economic uplift of the activity area.

VicRoads has worked closely with Brimbank City Council, the local community, Public Transport Victoria, VicTrack and Metro Trains Melbourne, during the project's development.

Early works have commenced at Main Road. The existing rail stabling facilities at St Albans have been relocated to the proposed Calder Park Stabling Yard to make room for construction. This work was completed in December 2014. Work is currently underway to relocate services and utility lines in the rail reserve including rail signal cables, electricity lines and telecommunication cables with major construction expected to commence in mid-2015 and be completed December 2016.

The Andrews Labor Government is getting on with it to remove 50 of our most dangerous and congested level crossings. An initiative of historic significance to Melbourne's road and rail network, the Level Crossing Removal project will create 4500 jobs, with approximately 100 people to be employed for the life of each level crossing removal.

St Albans level crossing

Raised with: Minister for Public Transport

Raised by: Mr Finn

Raised on: 11 February 2015

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Ballarat rail fares

Raised with: Minister for Public Transport

Raised by: Mr Morris

Raised on: 24 February 2015

REPLY:

The regional fare structure is broadly based on distance travelled, so a trip from Ballarat to Melbourne is charged at 118km, or 120 charging units.

When a customer travels on V/Line from Melbourne to Ballarat they travel across 8 zones including Zone 2, which stretches 60km from Melbourne CBD.

It should be noted that the example cited by the Member is a case that occurs when a customer buys a V/Line single ticket at a peak rate for \$19.20.

Public Transport Victoria (PTV) offers a discounted V/Line fare for regular Ballarat travellers as low as \$10.78 per day when buying a myki Pass.

PTV is also working to identify how a simpler fare structure can be implemented that will promote patronage growth whilst maintaining revenue.

Country Fire Authority Wodonga station

Raised with: Minister for Emergency Services

Raised by: Ms Lovell

Raised on: 26 February 2015

REPLY:

I refer to the matter you raised in the Adjournment Debate in the Legislative Council on 26 February 2015 in relation to the Country Fire Authority (CFA) Wodonga Station.

The Victorian Government acknowledges the vital contribution made by volunteer and career firefighters in the CFA's Wodonga Brigade, who on average respond to over 500 emergency calls per year, ranging from bushfires and structure fires to car accidents and hazardous material incidents. The brigade has a long history spanning over 100 years and has a strong focus on engaging with the community and local business to ensure they are well informed, prepared and resilient.

The Victorian Government has committed to a range of firefighting initiatives, including the recruitment of 350 CFA career firefighters; new CFA stations and upgrades; installation of toilet and washroom facilities at up to 100 rural CFA stations; delivery of 50 Medium Tankers; and expansion of the Emergency Medical Response program.

I am advised the CFA is currently negotiating to acquire a site for a new fire station for Wodonga.

I encourage the brigade to continue to work with the CFA to identify options for a new fire station for Wodonga.

Thank you for your interest in this matter.