

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

FIFTY-EIGHTH PARLIAMENT

FIRST SESSION

WRITTEN ADJOURNMENT RESPONSES

5, 6 and 7 May 2015

(Extract from book 6)

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

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

Legislative Council standing committees

Economy and Infrastructure Legislation Committee — Dr Carling-Jenkins, Mr Dalidakis, Mr Eideh, Mr Elasmarr, Mr Finn, Ms Hartland, Mr Morris and Mr Ondarchie.

Economy and Infrastructure References Committee — Dr Carling-Jenkins, Mr Dalidakis, Mr Eideh, Mr Elasmarr, Mr Finn, Ms Hartland, Mr Morris and Mr Ondarchie.

Environment and Planning Legislation Committee — Ms Bath, Mr Dalla-Riva, Mr Davis, Ms Dunn, Mr Leane, Ms Shing, Ms Tierney and Mr Young.

Environment and Planning References Committee — Ms Bath, Mr Dalla-Riva, Mr Davis, Ms Dunn, Mr Leane, Ms Shing, Ms Tierney and Mr Young.

Legal and Social Issues Legislation Committee — Ms Fitzherbert, Mr Melhem, Mr Mulino, Mr O'Donohue, Ms Patten, Mrs Peulich, Ms Springle and Ms Symes.

Legal and Social Issues References Committee — Ms Fitzherbert, Mr Melhem, Mr Mulino, Mr O'Donohue, Ms Patten, Mrs Peulich, Ms Springle and Ms Symes.

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 Elasmarr, Mr Melhem and Mr Purcell. (*Assembly*): Mr Crisp, Mr Perera and Ms Ryall.

Electoral Matters Committee — (*Council*): Mr Dalidakis and Ms Patten. (*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*): Mr Battin, Ms Halfpenny, Mr McCurdy, Mr Richardson 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 — 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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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, 5 May 2015

Level crossings

Raised with: Minister for Roads and Road Safety

Raised by: Ms Crozier

Raised on: 11 February 2015

REPLY:

I am informed that, as at the date the question was raised:

The Government has committed to remove 50 of the most dangerous and congested level crossings on the metropolitan rail network over eight years. Twenty of these level crossings will be removed in the first four years.

Removing level crossings will improve safety, reduce congestion on the roads and provide an opportunity to increase train capacity.

Tender proposals to remove four level crossings at Main Road, St Albans, Blackburn Road, Blackburn, Burke Road, Glen Iris and North Road, Ormond, have been received and are being evaluated. These four project sites are being procured in two contract packages.

Work is expected to start on-site in 2015 at Burke Road and Main Road, and in 2016 at North Road and Blackburn Road. All work at both sites is expected to be complete by mid 2017.

The removal of level crossings at Koornang Road, Carnegie and Murrumbeena Road, Murrumbeena, is being considered as part of an unsolicited bid to Government by the Rail Transformation Consortium. This unsolicited bid is currently being assessed and the timing for the commencement of works at these crossings will be determined as part of the assessment.

One hundred million dollars has been announced to establish a dedicated level crossing removal authority and for planning work for the level crossing removal program.

The timing for the removal of level crossings at Centre Road, Bentleigh, Grange Road, Carnegie, McKinnon Road, McKinnon, Poath Road, Hughesdale, and Toorak Road, Kooyong, will be considered as part of this planning work.

The Government will ensure effective consultation with local communities, local councils and other key stakeholders in the process of developing proposals and construction for the removal of all level crossings.

Echuca-Moama bridge

Raised with: Minister for Roads and Road Safety

Raised by: Ms Lovell

Raised on: 25 February 2015

REPLY:

I am very much aware that the search for a new route for a second bridge at Echuca-Moama has been going on for nearly 50 years. I am also appreciative of the support for a new bridge by the Echuca-Moama community.

In fact, during the previous term of the Victorian Labor Government, we were well on the path to finding a solution to this long standing matter. VicRoads undertook detailed planning investigations from 2008-2010 into a potential route for the second Murray River crossing, known as the Mid-West alignment. Based on the findings of the investigations, the Mid-West alignment proved to be an effective option and gained the support of all key stakeholders, including the Shires of Campaspe and Murray, the Yorta Yorta Nations Aboriginal Corporation, and the two State Road Authorities. An EES referral submitted to the Minister for Planning in early 2010 determined that an Environment Effects Statement (EES) was not required.

In 2011, the Mid-West corridor was placed on hold, as the then new Victorian Coalition Government stated that its preferred route for the second crossing of the Murray River at Echuca-Moama was the Mid-West 2 corridor. Resultant studies and extensive community consultation in 2011 and 2012 confirmed 2 alignment options within the Mid-West 2 corridor — options 2A and 2B. In 2013, an EES referral was submitted to the Minister for Planning based on the findings of the investigations, resulting in advice that the preparation of an EES was required, and should include a comparative assessment of the Mid-West options 2A and 2B, and the previously studied Mid-West corridor.

Following review of the study findings for the Mid-West and Mid-West 2A and 2B options in the early stages of the EES, the Mid-West alignment was nominated as the preferred option as it was found to have lesser environmental impact and is the lowest cost option. In July 2014, the former Deputy Premier announced the Mid West as the State Government's preferred option.

The EES report is almost finalised, however, planning approvals for the project are complex in that it requires alignment of the Victorian environmental assessment and approval processes with the relevant NSW and Commonwealth processes. The EES document will be placed on public exhibition with the draft Planning Scheme Amendment documentation for the Mid-West option in Victoria and Referral of Environmental Factors (environmental assessment) documentation in NSW.

Shepparton rail services

Raised with: Premier

Raised by: Ms Lovell

Raised on: 17 March 2015

REPLY:

The Andrews Labor Government is delivering a better transport network for all Victorians.

Unlike the former Liberal Government, who failed to deliver transport improvements for people in regional areas, the Labor Government is improving both public transport and freight transport routes.

The Andrews Labor Government is investing in more regional trains and will soon be activating the Regional Rail Link, a project developed and funded by the last Labor Government.

The government is delivering on the Murray Basin Rail Project, fast-tracking the first stage of this important regional freight project.

We're strengthening country bridges to improve freight efficiency, and investing in a new Safer Country Crossings Program, which will boost safety at 52 regional crossings, as well as 25 pedestrian crossings at 13 priority locations. This program includes 23 road crossing upgrades and three pedestrian crossings upgrades on the standard gauge line between Melbourne and Wodonga.

In particular, Shepparton passengers will benefit from the upgrade of three pedestrian crossings and one road crossing between Melbourne and Seymour. The locations included in this program have been prioritised based on risks according to the Australian Crossing Assessment Model and consultation with the relevant rail operators.

As part of our commitment to improve public transport for all Victorians, the Labor Government is also reviewing current public transport timetables. All services, including to Shepparton, will be considered as part of this process.

Methamphetamine control

Raised with: Premier

Raised by: Mr Ramsay

Raised on: 17 March 2015

REPLY:

I refer to the matter raised regarding the Victorian Government's response to the joint parliamentary committee report on the supply and use of methamphetamines in Victoria.

The Government is grateful to the committee and to all those who contributed, in particular the individuals and families who have experienced firsthand the devastating impacts of ice. The committee's report is comprehensive and provides a strong evidence base that has and will continue to inform the Government's response to ice.

The Government is committed to reducing the impact of ice on individuals, families and communities in Victoria and has wasted no time in meeting our election commitment to deliver an Ice Action Plan for Victoria within 100 days of taking office.

The plan delivers \$45.5 million in new investment to take immediate action on some of the most urgent issues, including \$18 million to expand innovative models of drug rehabilitation in rural and regional Victoria, \$4.7 million in additional support for families, and \$4.5 million to boost forensic intelligence capability to help shut down clandestine laboratories.

These immediate actions are important first steps, but there is more to be done. Future directions for the Government's response to ice are set out in the Ice Action Framework, which underpins the plan. This includes future ongoing work with Victoria Police, industry and the Commonwealth Government on the most effective ways to prevent illicit use of precursor chemicals, continued participation in national discussions regarding organised crime and unexplained wealth laws, and further work with Aboriginal communities to respond to the specific challenges they are facing.

Graffiti

Raised with: Minister for Police

Raised by: Mr O'Donohue

Raised on: 18 March 2015

REPLY:

The government recognises that tackling illegal graffiti is an ongoing challenge for Victorian communities. Funding for the Graffiti Prevention and Removal Strategy, which was initially established by previous Labor Government in 2005–06, is ongoing.

Public housing

Raised with: Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing

Raised by: Ms Springle

Raised on: 18 March 2015

REPLY:

The Victorian Government believes that all Victorians have a right to secure, affordable and appropriate housing, and reliable and accessible services. A strong and sustainable social housing sector is critical to ensuring that all Victorians can access housing that meets their needs. The Victorian Government recognises the distinct but complementary roles played by public housing and community housing in achieving this goal.

I am currently considering opportunities and policy issues which will contribute to stronger and more sustainable social housing in Victoria.

Community consultation will be a key part of progressing any work in this area.

Local government rates

Raised with: Minister for Local Government

Raised by: Mr Davis

Raised on: 18 March 2015

REPLY:

I thank the Member for Southern Metropolitan for his continued interest in the Government's rollout of the Fairer Rating System.

It is not the Government's intention for councils to redirect their revenue raising efforts to fees and charges in the context of restraint in raising rate revenue under a Fairer Rating System.

As you are aware, the Government has commissioned the Essential Services Commission to inquire into the Fairer Rating System implementation framework and to recommend the best way forward. The inquiry will be an opportunity for Victorians and the local government sector to put forward suggestions and ensure that any concerns about unintended impacts are addressed.

ChillOut Festival

Raised with: Minister for Equality

Raised by: Ms Patten

Raised on: 18 March 2015

REPLY:

I would like to thank you for raising this issue.

The lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex communities have a long history of taking the initiative in responding to HIV and developing education campaigns that are effective. The ENUF campaign continues this tradition, and I would like to acknowledge the work and initiative of both Living Positive Victoria and the Victorian AIDS Council in running this important campaign aiming to reduce the stigma of living with HIV.

The burden of stigma carried by people living with HIV is onerous, unfair, and, these days with effective and accessible HIV treatment, more damaging to their health than the virus itself.

According to the HIV Futures 7 Study, in 2013:

- 28 per cent of people living with HIV have experienced less favourable treatment from health providers as result of having HIV;
- 15 per cent have experienced workplace discrimination;

- 7 per cent have experienced less favourable treatment in relation to housing; and
- 23 per cent have experienced less favourable treatment in relation to getting insurances.

Section 19A of the *Crimes Act 1958* only adds to this burden of stigma, while doing nothing to protect the health and safety of all Victorians or improve the lives of people living with HIV. Stigma has repeatedly been demonstrated to do damage to mental and physical health and overall wellbeing. The promotion of good mental health and wellbeing requires its removal.

The Government has introduced a Bill into Parliament to repeal Section 19A. The Government has made this repeal a matter of high priority.

Respite and emergency accommodation

Raised with: Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing

Raised by: Mr Ondarchie

Raised on: 18 March 2015

REPLY:

The Victorian Government is committed to supporting people with a disability to achieve their own goals and aspirations to live, work and enjoy relevant social opportunities.

Respite support affords short-term breaks for carers of people with a disability, while providing a positive experience for the person with a disability either in their own home or away from home.

We are considering the previous Government's announcement of \$3.6 million for the next construction of two five-bed respite facilities in Mitchell and Whittlesea in the context of projected demand of respite services within the roll out of the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

Major event traffic management

Raised with: Minister for Tourism and Major Events

Raised by: Ms Crozier

Raised on: 18 March 2015

REPLY:

Thank you for your question.

Traffic management is routinely undertaken as part of the staging of major events in Victoria. When necessary, alternative traffic routes are prepared and appropriately communicated to road users.

Whilst every effort is made to avoid unnecessary disruption to the local community, incidents do occur that are outside of the control of event organisers.

Fundamentally, the issues described by the Member for Southern Metropolitan Region are a transport coordination issue. I have asked senior officials in the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources (DEDJTR) to note the Member's concerns with senior Transport officials in DEDJTR and senior officials in Melbourne Water.

The Member's request for consideration of better major event transport coordination has been passed onto the Visitor Economy Review team.

Sandringham railway station

Raised with: Minister for Public Transport

Raised by: Ms Fitzherbert

Raised on: 19 March 2015

REPLY:

The Andrews Labor Government has committed \$20 million to unlocking land at or close to train stations to create additional public car parking. This will provide thousands of new parking spaces at stations across Melbourne, with a focus on outer suburbs, utilising existing Government land identified as being both available and appropriate for car parking.

Public Transport Victoria is currently preparing advice on priority stations to include in this program. Sandringham will be considered as part of this metropolitan-wide review.

Melbourne International Film Festival

Raised with: Minister for Creative Industries

Raised by: Ms Pennicuik

Raised on: 19 March 2015

REPLY:

The Melbourne International Film Festival (MIFF) is a highlight of Melbourne's rich and diverse cultural events calendar.

Future State Government funding for the MIFF Premiere Fund is being considered as part of the 2015-16 State Budget process.

West Gippsland Hospital

Raised with: Minister for Health

Raised by: Ms Wooldridge

Raised on: 19 March 2015

REPLY:

The Andrews Labor Government committed to conduct a comprehensive study to identify the health care needs of the growing population of West Gippsland.

More specifically, the study will consider the links between the Casey campus of Monash Health in Berwick, the Latrobe Regional Hospital in Traralgon and the West Gippsland Healthcare Group in Warragul.

An area based strategic services plan will be developed to identify the links between the current health services provided and to identify the emerging health needs of the local communities.

The area based strategic services plan will make recommendations on the scope of health services to be delivered in the short, medium and longer term by the West Gippsland Healthcare Group and neighbouring health providers to best meet emerging health care demands.

Independent consultants will undertake this work with an expected completion date of early 2016.

Royal Children's Hospital gender dysphoria service

Raised with: Minister for Health

Raised by: Ms Patten

Raised on: 19 March 2015

REPLY:

I thank the member for raising the issue of Royal Children's Hospital Gender Dysphoria Service and commend her support for this important service.

In 2014-15, the Royal Children's Hospital will receive \$32.0 million to provide acute specialist clinics including the gender dysphoria service. This is an increase of \$1.1 million or 3.5% on funding received in 2013-14. Health service budgets for 2015-16 will be developed in coming months and I understand this matter will be considered as part of this process.

I am advised the Department of Health & Human Services is working with the Royal Children's Hospital to address immediate demand and access issues for gender dysphoria services.

I understand that the Minister for Mental Health and Minister for Equality, Martin Foley MP, has recently met with Dr Michelle Telfer to discuss these issues, and I look forward to doing so myself.

Essendon level crossing

Raised with: Minister for Public Transport

Raised by: Mr Finn

Raised on: 19 March 2015

REPLY:

As you are aware, the Victorian Government has committed to remove 50 of the most dangerous and congested level crossings in the next eight years. The Buckley Street level crossing is on the list of 50 level crossings to be removed.

The Level Crossing Removal Authority together with VicRoads and Public Transport Victoria have commenced initial investigations of various level crossing sites across Melbourne. These investigations will help the Government to better understand the various issues at the level crossings and to prioritise funding and construction of these level crossings.

Sunbury municipality

Raised with: Minister for Local Government

Raised by: Mr Davis

Raised on: 19 March 2015

REPLY:

The Government remains committed to ensuring a positive outcome for all Sunbury and Hume residents and has recently moved to ensure that a proper process is in place to separate Sunbury from Hume City Council.

The commencement date for a new Sunbury Council set by the previous government of 1 July this year was unachievable and would have left many issues unresolved, putting at risk a seamless transition.

This is why the Government has decided to delay the establishment of Sunbury City Council to 1 July 2016.

I have appointed the Hon Frank Vincent AO QC and Mr John Watson as transition auditors to review all of the issues and make recommendations to me. The transition auditors will work closely with Hume City Council and the community to ensure the necessary planning is undertaken and local residents are fully informed of all of the implications of the separation.

Cultural Diversity Week

Raised with: Minister for Multicultural Affairs

Raised by: Mrs Peulich

Raised on: 19 March 2015

REPLY:

Victoria is a proudly multicultural and multi-faith state and Victorians lead the nation in respect for difference and rejection of intolerance. Victoria enjoys bipartisan support for Multiculturalism.

Cultural Diversity Week this year ran from 14–22 March 2015. It was a fantastic celebration of Victoria's diversity, where I had the opportunity to speak to hundreds and mingle with thousands of people. The VIVA Victoria festival alone attracted over 45 000 individuals.

The press release I sent out prior to the week commencing highlighted just how important it is.

I along with many of my colleagues cross the political divide, wore our orange ribbons proudly as we recognised the successes of our multicultural state.

In my time as Minister for Multicultural Affairs so far, I have had the opportunity to meet with community groups from many different backgrounds. I have heard their stories, listened to their concerns and advocated for their needs.

The Andrews Labor Government has already provided funding and grants for many different projects and, as we await the budget, more announcements around funding in the Multicultural Affairs portfolio can be expected.

I take much pride in the fact that Multiculturalism has enjoyed bipartisan support by the Victorian Government, regardless of which party is in power.

Liquor licensing fees

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

Raised by: Mr O'Donohue

Raised on: 14 April 2015

REPLY:

The previous government announced its intention to increase the licence fee for packaged liquor outlets with a floor space greater than 1000m² from \$1800.80 to \$10 000 but did not implement this proposal. I am currently considering whether it is appropriate to impose this fee increase.

Labor believes that a comprehensive and multi-layered approach needs to be taken to address these issues. The Salvation Army's Youth Street Teams program is a joint initiative between the City of Melbourne and Victoria Police with funding provided by the City of Melbourne. I have met with the Salvation Army and will continue to discuss this initiative and its proposal for a possible extension to other areas.

I have been advised that the Salvation Army's Youth Street Teams program initially received Commonwealth funding of \$180 000 in 2012 from the then Gillard Government. This funding was cut, as with many funding programs by the callous Abbott Government, on 30 June 2014. State funding was promised by the former Minister for this portfolio, but only on the very eve of the election as yet another example of the previous government's inaction.

I understand that Step Back Think is currently funded by the department. The government will consider the future of funding arrangements for Step Back Think.

Zoe Support Australia

Raised with: Minister for Training and Skills

Raised by: Ms Symes

Raised on: 14 April 2015

REPLY:

I am informed as follows:

I visited Zoe Support Australia earlier this year and was delighted to see the good work they are doing helping young mums complete secondary and tertiary studies whilst developing their parenting skills.

It is through the hard work of many organisations, including Zoe Support Australia, that many young, disengaged people transition from school into work and from unemployment into jobs or further training.

In February of this year Zoe Support Australia was offered an operational support grant of \$50 000 followed by a further grant of \$20 000 for Business Planning.

The main purpose of these grants is to ensure continuity of current service delivery to teenage mothers while Zoe Support Australia develops a sustainable model of service delivery and Business Plan for the future.

It is anticipated this targeted funding will provide Zoe Support with a sustainable organisational model allowing the continued provision of a pathway for young mums to engage or re-engage with their educational and vocational aspirations.

The Victorian Government is committed to working with, and supporting organisations like Zoe Support Australia, providing even more opportunities for participation in education and training, equipping Victorians to better determine their future.

Street harassment

Raised with: Minister for Police

Raised by: Ms Patten

Raised on: 14 April 2015

REPLY:

I thank you for your efforts to highlight the Meet Us on the Street campaign during International Anti-Street Harassment Week. I also note your comments regarding the death of Ms Masa Vukotic, and acknowledge the distress and grief felt by all Victorians following this incident.

Every Victorian has a right to safety. I can assure you that Victoria Police takes violence, particularly violence against women, very seriously.

In addressing violence, as a society, it is imperative that we focus on the needs of the victim and challenge the behaviour of the offender. The comments you refer to, made by Inspector Mick Hughes during the early stages of the Victoria Police investigation into the death of Ms Vukotic, were made as a precautionary measure, at a time when a serious offender had not yet been apprehended.

Any death is a traumatic event and police face the very difficult task of investigating these crimes. I appreciate the work of the Victoria Police Homicide Squad and the role that they play in apprehending such violent offenders.

Thank you for raising this matter with me.

Melbourne Regional Landfill

Raised with: Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water

Raised by: Mr Melhem

Raised on: 14 April 2015

REPLY:

The Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water has asked the Environment Protection Authority to urgently investigate odour issues reported by many members of the local community over recent weeks.

The issue of odours associated with this area is certainly not a new one. EPA has issued two pollution abatement notices to local industry over the last 12 months but more action must be taken.

EPA has begun a second round of odour surveillance monitoring that will run across autumn 2015, so that monitoring results can be compared with the same seasonal period in the previous year. EPA has also arranged for their landfill expert to inspect the Western landfill site to ensure the new operator has not changed operational practices.

The Andrews Labor Government remains committed to 'calling in' any new application to expand the Western Landfill. If an application is received we will appoint an independent advisory committee to consider the application, to make sure the local community gets a say.

The Andrews Government has also committed to undertaking a public inquiry into the EPA in light of community concerns regarding issues such as air and water quality and site contamination. Community engagement will be a key part of this process.

Melbourne Regional Landfill

Raised with: Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water

Raised by: Mr Finn

Raised on: 14 April 2015

REPLY:

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The issue of odours associated with this area is certainly not a new one. EPA has issued two pollution abatement notices to local industry over the last 12 months but more action must be taken.

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The Andrews Government has also committed to undertaking a public inquiry into the EPA in light of community concerns regarding issues such as air and water quality and site contamination. Community engagement will be a key part of this process.

South Melbourne security cameras

Raised with: Minister for Police

Raised by: Ms Fitzherbert

Raised on: 14 April 2015

REPLY:

The government understands the impact crime has on local traders and residents and believes that a comprehensive and multi-layered approach needs to be taken to prevent crime. One of the most important approaches to keep our communities safe is to provide young people with opportunities to encourage them to make positive choices for their future, through education, training, jobs and appropriate support, instead of being caught in a cycle of crime and incarceration.

I understand that the Port Phillip Council has previously publicly indicated that its preferred approach was to adopt urban design and Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design approaches to crime prevention in preference to the installation of CCTV. I also note that the Port Phillip Council has never applied for grant funding that was available under the Community Crime Prevention Program to support Councils to install CCTV.

Victoria Police conducts tasked patrols in the South Melbourne area, including Coventry Street, aimed at reducing crime and keeping the community safe. Local police complete both overt and covert patrols on foot, bicycle and car, focusing on locations such as the South Melbourne Market, retail strips, liquor outlets and undercover car parks.

The Victorian Government is tackling the root causes of crime, including our \$40 million Royal Commission into Family Violence and our \$45.5 million Ice Action Plan.

In addition, providing a quality education and TAFE system, as well as appropriate housing are key in the prevention of crime.

The Parliamentary Secretary for Justice will lead a review of the Victorian Government's approach to crime prevention programs to help inform options for future evidence-based strategies and initiatives within the Justice & Regulation portfolio.

Thank you for raising this matter with me.

Crime prevention

Raised with: Minister for Police

Raised by: Mr O'Donohue

Raised on: 15 April 2015

REPLY:

Crime increased every year under the previous government, with a significant impact on Victorian communities and increased demands on the criminal justice system.

The government believes crime prevention is a whole-of-government activity. We are tackling the root causes of crime on a number of fronts, including:

- \$40 million for the Royal Commission into Family Violence to focus on preventing family violence, increasing early intervention, improving victim support, making perpetrators accountable and helping agencies better coordinate their response
- \$45 million for the Ice Action Plan to reduce the supply of ice on our streets, support families and communities, and to treat users to make our community safer.

In addition, providing a quality education and TAFE system as well as appropriate housing and jobs are key to the prevention of crime.

I confirm that funding for the Graffiti Prevention and Removal Strategy, which was initially established by previous Labor Government in 2005–06, is ongoing.

However, a number of other community crime prevention programs were left with an uncertain funding future, due to the former government's failure to continue to ensure their funding in the forward estimates.

In March 2015, I asked the Parliamentary Secretary for Justice to lead a review of the Victorian Government's approach to crime prevention programs. This will inform options for future evidence-based strategies and initiatives within the Justice & Regulation portfolio.

Country Fire Authority Fiskville facility

Raised with: Minister for Emergency Services

Raised by: Mr Ramsay

Raised on: 16 April 2015

REPLY:

A number of inaccurate statements from this adjournment debate must be corrected. In contrast with the former government, the Andrews Government's first priority is the health and safety of all career and volunteer Country Fire Authority (CFA) members. Following a unanimous decision by the CFA Board on 26 March 2015, the Andrews Government moved decisively to permanently close the Fiskville training facility. On-site testing for the toxic chemical PFOS (Perfluorooctane Sulfonate), showed that while the drinking water and showers were clear of contamination, high levels of PFOS were present around the fire training area and a completely new zone at the site where the chemical had not been previously identified, despite millions of dollars spent under the former government in attempting to remediate the site.

The welfare of the CFA members affected is paramount and CFA is providing appropriate support to those affected. Case managers have been working with impacted workers, and skill development support workshops have taken place. Training and wellbeing support for workers and the community is ongoing. A number of staff have been relocated and will continue to work from other locations.

CFA has established an internal working party tasked with the comprehensive oversight of the closure of the site. The working party has adopted a number of "in-principle" commitments including:

- all affected staff will be treated equitably, irrespective of their employment status
- actively exploring re-training and re-deployment options within the Moorabool Shire
- providing dedicated case workers to liaise and consult with staff.

CFA has advised that it is looking to identify an appropriate training site within the Central Highlands area of Victoria.

In addition to studying the pollution, contamination and unsafe practices from the 1970s to the present time, the current Parliamentary inquiry into Fiskville will:

- consider the health impacts on employees, residents and visitors over that time and examine the role of the past and present executive management at Fiskville
- assess the feasibility of decontaminating or rectifying the site
- make recommendations, as necessary to mitigate on-going harm, and provide justice to victims and their families.

An interim report is due by 30 June 2015, with a final report to be provided by 1 December 2015.

Thank you for raising this matter with me.

National Youth Week

Raised with: Minister for Youth Affairs

Raised by: Mr Mulino

Raised on: 16 April 2015

REPLY:

In March 2015, I was pleased to announce the recipients of National Youth Week 2015 grants totalling \$182 945. Ninety-two organisations from across Victoria received funding to plan, organise and deliver a National Youth Week event in their community.

This included ten organisations in the Eastern Victoria Region receiving \$2000 each as outlined below:

Organisation	Project Name	Project Location
Bass Coast Shire Council	No Talent Required 2015-Bass Coast Youth Talent and Art Show	Wonthaggi Town Hall-Baillieu St, Wonthaggi
Cardinia Shire Council	Cardinia Shire National Youth Week Festival	PB Ronald Reserve, Pakenham
Dandenong Ranges Music Council	ANZAC Band Bootcamp	Upwey High School-1451 Burwood Highway, Upwey
East Gippsland Shire Council	Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust Fishing Day & Cultural Expo	Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust
Gippsland Lakes Community Health	East Gippsland Youth Week Festival	Nicholson St Mall, Bairnsdale, Victoria
Latrobe City Council	Come 'n Try Skateboarding	Main Street, Yinnar and Main Street, Glengarry
Mornington Peninsula Shire Council Youth Services	Health and Wellbeing- 'Bus Stop Brekkie!'	Various Locations across Mornington
Sale College-Guthridge Campus	Year 9 Mental Health Awareness	Sale College-Guthridge Parade, Sale
Western Port Secondary College	Mind Body and Soul: Youth Week@WPC	Western Port SC-215 High St, Hastings
Yarra Ranges Shire Council Youth Services	Yarra Ranges Youth Summit 2015	Discovery Church-89 Monbulk Road, Mt Evelyn

As National Youth Week was held between 10 to 19 April 2015, organisations that received funding will submit a report in June about their event, including participation figures.

Based on the outcomes from previous years, it is anticipated that over 20 000 young people will have participated in National Youth Week 2015 events across Victoria, with a further 2000 young people involved in the planning and delivery of local events.

Medical LSD

Raised with: Attorney-General

Raised by: Ms Patten

Raised on: 16 April 2015

REPLY:

The matter you raised in the Adjournment Debate does not fall within the portfolio responsibilities of the Attorney-General as it relates to Part II of the Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Act 1981 (the Act), which is administered by the Minister for Health.

Part II of the Act sets down controls relating to specified drugs and poisons including prescription medicines, pharmacy-only medicines, drugs of dependence and many household, industrial and agricultural chemicals. These controls include authorisations, licences and permits which limit the manufacture, distribution and use of drugs and poisons to those manufacturers, distributors and health professionals who are properly trained and equipped. Any request to use a drug of dependence for research, medical or other legal purposes is a matter for consideration under Part II of the Act.

Autism spectrum disorder

Raised with: Minister for Police

Raised by: Mr Finn

Raised on: 16 April 2015

REPLY:

The rescue of Luke Shambrook is testament to the wonderful dedication and training of Victoria's police, fire crews, ambulance and State Emergency Service members. It is important to recognise the efforts of the 350 emergency service workers and volunteers who spent four days searching for Luke in bushland at Lake Eildon.

Victoria Police prepares its members for dealing with vulnerable members of the community, by requiring that they complete relevant training. This helps police members to improve their communication techniques, while increasing their awareness of vulnerable persons.

Victoria Police advises that it is in the process of finalising an Accessibility Action Plan to improve the outcomes of people with personality, mental or developmental disorders who come into contact with police. The plan will seek to develop good practice guidelines and further strengthen training and education programs for police.

Ladybug House may submit a training proposal to the Acting Chief Commissioner of Police, for consideration, in line with other suggested training programs for police.

I am assured that Victoria Police continues to review its health training to ensure that operational members are well versed in responding to the needs of all members of the community.

Kindergarten funding

Raised with: Minister for Families and Children

Raised by: Ms Symes

Raised on: 16 April 2015

REPLY:

I appreciate the intensive efforts from service providers and local governments in implementing 15 hour kindergarten programs in Victoria. These efforts have resulted in 99.9 per cent of Victorian kindergarten services delivering 15 hour programs in 2015.

As you are aware, the Commonwealth Government extended the National Partnership Agreement on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education by 12 months for the 2015 calendar year. I am aware that the lack of Commonwealth commitment to ongoing funding beyond 2015 is causing significant uncertainty for the sector, with kindergarten services already planning their budgets, timetables, enrolments and staffing needs for 2016.

At the Education Council meeting on 5 March 2015, I made direct representations to Commonwealth Ministers on the need to urgently commence discussions on future Commonwealth funding arrangements beyond 2015. I have also written to my Commonwealth counterparts and the Premier has written to the Prime Minister about the importance of continuing the National Partnership Agreement.

I reiterated these concerns at a meeting with the Hon Scott Ryan, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Education and Training on 20 March 2015.

As you point out, the final report of the Productivity Commission's Inquiry into Child Care and Early Childhood Learning noted the success of Universal Access and recommended that the Commonwealth Government continues to provide funding. The Commonwealth has not, however, committed to a timeline for making a decision on its funding contribution.

The Victorian Government is committed to ongoing advocacy for the continuation of Commonwealth Government funding to build on Victoria's achievements.

Victorian Multicultural Commission

Raised with: Minister for Multicultural Affairs

Raised by: Mrs Peulich

Raised on: 16 April 2015

REPLY:

The Victorian Government is committed to maintaining a harmonious multifaith and multicultural Victoria that celebrates diversity. Our vibrant multicultural community is showcased throughout the year in many cultural and faith celebrations.

The multicultural affairs budget, which includes funding for festivals and events, will be announced in the 2015-16 State Budget.

I understand that the organisation you referred to has recently applied for funding for the Mernda Diwali Festival of Lights through the Victorian Multicultural Commission's Festivals and Events program.

WRITTEN ADJOURNMENT RESPONSES

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

Wednesday, 6 May 2015

VicRoads Ballarat relocation

Raised with: Premier

Raised by: Mr Morris

Raised on: 18 March 2015

REPLY:

The Victorian Government is considering its options for the relocation of the VicRoads Head Office from its Kew site.

The Government agrees that this is a very important matter and will be assessing the costs and benefits of all options.

The Government is committed to providing certainty for VicRoads staff and the community as soon as practicable.

Glenormiston College site

Raised with: Minister for Education

Raised by: Mr Ramsay

Raised on: 14 April 2015

REPLY:

I am informed as follows:

The Department of Education and Training is currently advising the Government on the status of vacant sites, including the former Glenormiston College. The Sweett report forms part of the advice currently being considered by the Government.

The Department continues to staff the property to ensure it is maintained and to facilitate the hiring of the functions rooms, hall, equine arenas and accommodation blocks.

There are a number of long and short term leases that continue on the site. The Department is in regular contact with all of its tenants. All tenants are encouraged to contact either the Department or the Glenormiston Property Manager, should they have any queries or concerns.

The Department is not aware of any restrictions placed on the property by the Black Family.

Wattle Park Primary School

Raised with: Minister for Education

Raised by: Mr Dalidakis

Raised on: 15 April 2015

REPLY:

I am informed as follows:

Investment in education and school infrastructure is a priority for the Victorian Government and we have committed to spend \$530 million on school infrastructure projects between 2015-18, to ensure that schools have the facilities they need.

I am pleased to advise that Wattle Park Primary School has received funding of \$37 000 to replace the school's perimeter fence. I acknowledge the efforts of the school community in advocating for the needs of Wattle Park Primary School. Strong school communities are a crucial part of being successful and delivering the best possible educational outcomes for students.

WRITTEN ADJOURNMENT RESPONSES

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

Thursday, 7 May 2015

Costerfield antimony mine

Raised with: Minister for Energy and Resources

Raised by: Ms Symes

Raised on: 19 March 2015

REPLY:

I would like to thank the Council Member for Northern Victoria for her question regarding Mandalay Resources. The Government is committed to ensuring Mandalay Resources, the operator of the Costerfield mine, complies with environmental and operational requirements and acknowledges the concerns of local residents.

In 2014 the Earth Resources Regulation Branch directed Mandalay Resources to undertake a number of improvements in the management of dust generated on site. These improvements have been carried out and have resulted in a significant reduction in emissions.

A whole of government working group has been established to ensure that appropriate monitoring and assessment is undertaken to determine any potential health risks to the neighbouring residents. The group includes the Department of Health and Human Services, the Environment Protection Authority and the City of Greater Bendigo.

Independent sampling of soil, residential rain water tanks and dust levels has been undertaken to better understand any potential health risks. The Department of Health and Human Services has advised that there is no immediate health risk to the community.

Staff from the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources and staff from the Department of Health and Human Services have met with all residents involved in the sampling program and provided them with the test results from their properties. Testing continues to ensure there are no health risks resulting from activity at Mandalay's Costerfield mine.

In addition, I recently appointed an independent facilitator to liaise with local residents in Costerfield so that all issues can be clearly identified and addressed. The independent facilitator will report directly to me in the coming months with recommendations to improve the way agendas, government and mining companies interact with communities.

Goulburn Valley Health

Raised with: Minister for Health

Raised by: Ms Lovell

Raised on: 14 April 2015

REPLY:

The local community and their representatives have been calling out for improvements to Shepparton campus at Goulburn Valley Health for a number of years and the Andrew Labor Government has listened to their concerns. I am pleased that the 2015-16 Victorian budget confirmed an investment of \$1 million to ensure that Goulburn Valley Health can plan for its future.

This Government acknowledges that Goulburn Valley Health needs to improve its facilities. A \$1 million investment will allow Goulburn Valley Health to undertake the work required to determine how they can deliver better services to their local community.

It is essential that this planning work is done to prepare a business case for the Shepparton redevelopment. I note this is work the former government failed to do during its period in office.

Indeed, the former government significantly under-invested in acute health capital right across the state and cut \$1 billion out of the health budget.

In contrast, our commitment to progress planning for a Goulburn Valley Health redevelopment is part of our government's \$560 million health capital program funded in the 2015-16 Budget.

PRONTO! HIV testing centre

Raised with: Minister for Health

Raised by: Mr Davis

Raised on: 14 April 2015

REPLY:

I am delighted to report that the Andrews Labor Government has committed \$2.24 million in the 2015-16 Budget towards PRONTO! program. This is more funding than was provided in previous budgets under the former Government.

Investment in sexual health is vital and we recognise the need to fund an innovative program which provides free, confidential and fast HIV and syphilis tests.

This funding will assist PRONTO! to continue its great work as a non-clinical, patient centred program, delivered in partnership with the Victorian AIDS Council and the Burnett Institute.

Ice Action Plan

Raised with: Minister for Police

Raised by: Mr Eideh

Raised on: 15 April 2015

REPLY:

As you have indicated, ice and the crime that goes with it are hurting our community. That is why drug related crime is a key focus for police, especially across the Police Service Areas that encompass the Western Metropolitan Region. I recently visited Wyndham North Police Station on 24 April 2015 where I had the opportunity to speak with local police about their experiences out in the community.

The Ice Action Plan, announced on 5 March 2015, is an important first step in addressing the complex challenges presented by ice. As you have indicated, the government has committed \$45.5 million in new investment. This investment and associated actions target the things that cannot wait to reduce the supply, demand and harm of a drug that's ruining lives.

The Ice Action Plan draws on internationally recognised harm minimisation principles that focus on three complementary pillars of demand reduction, supply reduction and harm reduction.

In terms of addressing ice related violence and crime, the Ice Action Plan will provide greater resources to Victoria Police to take drug affected drivers off our roads and help catch the criminals manufacturing and distributing this deadly drug.

The government will also introduce tough new laws to stop dealers by targeting people who deal ice to school children on or around school premises. New offences will also deal with the publication of instructions for how to make ice, allowing a premises to be used as a clandestine drug laboratories and using violence or threats to force another person to deal ice.

In relation to drug treatment coverage, the Ice Action Plan included a commitment of \$18 million in innovative models of rehabilitation over four years to expand drug treatment and rehabilitation, allowing more people to get the help they need sooner.

To help prevent the uptake of ice, the government has committed to investigating community awareness and education campaigns about the risks and harms of ice, and where to get help. Campaigns will be informed by the evidence on 'what works' in community education, focusing on credible, targeted messaging for the groups most at risk.

Recognising the heavy toll that substance abuse places on families, and the crucial role they play in supporting a loved one's recovery, the plan includes \$4.7 million in additional support for families. Over 1000 families per year are expected to benefit from this investment. Tenders are now open with the Department of Health and Human Services for the development and delivery of the government's new Family Drug Education Program.

The government has also established a new Ice Help Line — 1800 ICE ADVICE (1800 423 238) — to direct users and families to the treatment and support services they need, and provide general information to the community about ice and its effects.

I trust this information is of assistance for your electorate.