

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

FIFTY-EIGHTH PARLIAMENT

FIRST SESSION

ANSWERS TO CONSTITUENCY QUESTIONS

9 December to 9 February 2017

(Extract from book 1)

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By authority of the Victorian Government Printer

The Governor

The Honourable LINDA DESSAU, AC

The Lieutenant-Governor

The Honourable Justice MARILYN WARREN, AC, QC

The ministry

(from 10 November 2016)

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Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Minister for Emergency Services	The Hon. J. A. Merlino, MP
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Minister for Industry and Employment, and Minister for Resources	The Hon. W. M. Noonan, MP
Attorney-General and Minister for Racing	The Hon. M. P. Pakula, MP
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Minister for Finance and Minister for Multicultural Affairs	The Hon. R. D. Scott, MP
Minister for Training and Skills, and Minister for Corrections	The Hon. G. A. Tierney, MLC
Minister for Planning	The Hon. R. W. Wynne, MP
Cabinet Secretary	Ms M. Thomas, MP

Legislative Council committees

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

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

Legislative Council standing committees

Standing Committee on the Economy and Infrastructure — Mr Bourman, #Ms Dunn, Mr Eideh, Mr Elasmr, Mr Finn, Ms Hartland, Mr Leane, #Mr Melhem, Mr Ondarchie, Mr O’Sullivan and #Mr Rich-Phillips.

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

Standing Committee on Legal and Social Issues — #Ms Crozier, #Mr Elasmr, Ms Fitzherbert, #Ms Hartland, Mr Mulino, Ms Patten, Mrs Peulich, #Mr Rich-Phillips, Mr Somyurek, Ms Springle and Ms Symes.

participating members

Legislative Council select committees

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

Joint committees

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

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

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

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

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

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

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*): 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*): Ms Bath and Mr Dalla-Riva. (*Assembly*): Ms Blandthorn, Mr J. Bull, Mr Dimopoulos, Ms Kilkenny and Mr Pesutto.

Heads of parliamentary departments

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

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

Parliamentary Services — Secretary: Mr P. Lochert

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

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The Hon. B. N. ATKINSON

Deputy President:

Mr K. EIDEH

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Ms Dunn, Mr Elasmarr, Mr Finn, Mr Melhem, Mr Morris, Ms Patten, Mr Ramsay

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Deputy Leader of the Government:

The Hon. J. L. PULFORD

Leader of the Opposition:

The Hon. M. WOOLDRIDGE

Deputy Leader of the Opposition:

The Hon. G. K. RICH-PHILLIPS

Leader of The Nationals:

Mr L. B. O'SULLIVAN

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
Bath, Ms Melina ²	Eastern Victoria	Nats	Mulino, Mr Daniel	Eastern Victoria	ALP
Bourman, Mr Jeffrey	Eastern Victoria	SFFP	O'Brien, Mr Daniel David ¹	Eastern Victoria	Nats
Carling-Jenkins, Dr Rachel	Western Metropolitan	DLP	O'Donohue, Mr Edward John	Eastern Victoria	LP
Crozier, Ms Georgina Mary	Southern Metropolitan	LP	Ondarchie, Mr Craig Philip	Northern Metropolitan	LP
Dalidakis, Mr Philip	Southern Metropolitan	ALP	O'Sullivan, Luke Bartholomew ⁴	Northern Victoria	Nats
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 ³	Northern Victoria	Nats	Peulich, Mrs Inga	South Eastern Metropolitan	LP
Dunn, Ms Samantha	Eastern Metropolitan	Greens	Pulford, Ms Jaala Lee	Western Victoria	ALP
Eideh, Mr Khalil M.	Western Metropolitan	ALP	Purcell, Mr James	Western Victoria	V1LJ
Elasmarr, Mr Nazih	Northern Metropolitan	ALP	Ramsay, Mr Simon	Western Victoria	LP
Finn, Mr Bernard Thomas C.	Western Metropolitan	LP	Rich-Phillips, Mr Gordon Kenneth	South Eastern Metropolitan	LP
Fitzherbert, Ms Margaret	Southern Metropolitan	LP	Shing, Ms Harriet	Eastern Victoria	ALP
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	SFFP

² Appointed 15 April 2015

³ Resigned 27 May 2016

¹ Resigned 25 February 2015

⁴ Appointed 12 October 2016

PARTY ABBREVIATIONS

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

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ANSWERS TO CONSTITUENCY QUESTIONS

Answers have been incorporated in the form supplied by the departments on behalf of the appropriate ministers and received by Hansard in the period shown.

9 December 2016 to 9 February 2017

Western Victoria Region

Question asked by: Mr Ramsay
Directed to: Minister for Police
Asked on: 30 August 2016

ANSWER:

The Public Safety Infrastructure Fund, part of the Government's Community Crime Prevention Program, provides grants of up to \$250 000 to local councils to implement urban design initiatives and technology, such as CCTV and lighting, to improve community safety, security and confidence in public places.

This is a highly competitive grants program, and the Department of Justice and Regulation considers each application on its merits using a robust, multi-stage assessment process. An expert panel, including a senior representative from Victoria Police, also considers the applications to determine the final funding recommendations to be made. Grants are awarded to applicants that provided the strongest cases for funding and in locations demonstrating the greatest need.

The department advises me that a single grant application was received seeking funding for CCTV in Drysdale. This was part of a 2015-16 application under the Public Safety Infrastructure Fund from the City of Greater Geelong, which was assessed as unsuitable for funding. The department has advised me that it provided the City of Greater Geelong with detailed feedback on the reasons for this assessment to assist it to strengthen future applications.

Applications for the 2016-17 round of grants closed on 2 September 2016. No application was received for funding to install CCTV in Drysdale.

In regards to Mr Ramsey's comments that Portarlington, Drysdale and Queenscliff stations are closed, I can assure the member that each of these stations is still open to the public, and in cases where an officer is not present because they are undertaking patrols or attending an incident, a 24 hours police response is always available to residents in these areas.

Western Victoria Region

Question asked by: Ms Tierney
Directed to: Minister for Women
Asked on: 31 August 2016

ANSWER:

I would like to thank the Member for her question and for her advocacy on improving outcomes for the women and girls of her community.

I was delighted to join the Member for Western Victorian in Warrnambool for a public consultation as part of the Gender Equality Roadshow. The feedback received from this consultation helped shape the development of Victoria's first Gender Equality Strategy. In particular, this consultation was incredibly valuable in highlighting the value of driving gender equality through sport in regional and rural communities, as well as the importance of investing in initiatives to improve leadership opportunities for women.

I look forward to working closely with the Member for Western Victoria as our government progressively delivers on the founding reforms within the Strategy. It is my hope that this work helps to reduce violence against women and create a gender equal state.

South Eastern Metropolitan Region

Question asked by: Mrs Peulich
Directed to: Minister for Local Government
Asked on: 31 August 2016

ANSWER:

The Andrews Government is committed to ensuring all Victorian councils act with the utmost integrity and probity when making decisions that affect citizens—and has acted on both Ombudsman recommendations to government.

In her report into the matter, the Ombudsman concluded that Casey City Council appeared to have acted contrary to the Local Government Act 1989, including by failing to provide details of the right to object to affected owners for the Market Lane Special Charge Scheme. In these circumstances it was appropriate to appoint a municipal monitor to the Council.

Mr Bill Jaboor was appointed as Municipal Monitor to monitor the Council's processes referred to in the Ombudsman's report and the Council's response to the recommendations and provide a report to me. The Monitor was required to support and provide assistance to the Council in improving the governance processes and practices identified in the Ombudsman's report, addressing the Ombudsman's concerns and recommendations, and ensure good governance and compliance in the future.

Mr Jaboor's report has been publicly released and can be accessed at: www.delwp.vic.gov.au/local-government. His report outlines how the Ombudsman's recommendations and concerns identified in her report have been addressed by the Council. It also provides an assessment of the changes implemented by the Council on Mr Jaboor's recommendation, to ensure similar governance issues do not arise in future.

I welcome Mr Jaboor's report and the actions taken by Casey City Council to improve its practices in relation to this matter.

Western Metropolitan Region

Question asked by: Mr Finn
Directed to: Minister for Roads and Road Safety
Asked on: 25 October 2016

ANSWER:

The Government's business case for the Western Distributor shows this project stacks up, unlike the failed East West Link that would have returned 45 cents to every dollar spent.

It will provide the alternative to the West Gate Bridge that the people who live in the west need now.

In addition travel times will be cut, thousands of trucks will be removed from residential streets and around 5600 jobs created.

This project is vital for Melbourne's ongoing liveability and competitiveness.

Western Metropolitan Region

Question asked by: Mr Finn
Directed to: Minister for Public Transport
Asked on: 26 October 2016

ANSWER:

Bernie Finn and the Liberal opposition have no public transport agenda and are trying to create controversy where this is none. We have no plans to remove services from Sunbury.

Bernie Finn and the former Liberal Government didn't start a single major public transport project, order any regional carriages for two years and ripped \$120 million out of V/Line.

We've already delivered more than 80 extra services to Sunbury, and V/Line trains will continue stopping there in the future.

We've also re-instated and increased funding to V/Line, ordered 48 new carriages and are getting on with delivering the Metro Tunnel, which will provide more services and high-capacity trains to Sunbury.

Eastern Metropolitan Region

Question asked by: Ms Wooldridge
Directed to: Premier
Asked on: 27 October 2016

ANSWER:

Thank you for your question on this very important matter. I'm pleased to hear your support for the Victorian Government's efforts in supporting newly-arrived people from refugee backgrounds.

As you are aware, the Victorian Government is committed to settling up to 4000 Syrian and Iraqi refugees as part of the Federal Government's move to allow another 12 000 refugees into Australia. This is on top of ongoing refugee intake of at least 4000 per year.

You are probably already aware of the fantastic work both Minister for Health Jill Hennessy and Minister for Mental Health, Martin Foley are doing to ensure that refugees seeking asylum will get the health and mental health support they need to re-settle in Victoria, supported by a new investment of an extra \$11 million. This funding includes paediatric specialist outreach clinics, a catch up immunisation program, language services and child, youth and family refugee mental health programs.

This support will mean new residents will have access to Victoria's first-class health and education systems through specialised programs, counselling, educational support and language services.

I applaud the efforts of CatholicCare and St Vincent's Care Services, both organisations are doing and will continue to do an outstanding job in welcoming and supporting refugees to make Victoria their new home, in partnership with the Victorian Government. While this important work is about providing critical services, it also extends beyond this and helps to restore hope.

We're making sure that people who have fled war-torn countries will have access to the services they need to settle in Victoria, because we have a responsibility to help people in desperate need of a safe and peaceful home.

We are proud of these investments, that's why I was appalled to hear recent and repeated comments made by the Federal Government's Immigration Minister, Peter Dutton that are designed to divide Australians and spread misinformation. Minister Dutton has made remarks about refugees being illiterate and innumerate, that access to Medicare would be 'a huge cost' and that the Fraser Government made mistakes in bringing 'some people in' as part of Australia's immigration policies in the 1970s.

While we have our differences, I think you and I can both agree that refugees, once provided with the opportunity to establish themselves, make important economic, civil and social contributions to Victoria. Victoria is indeed a better place because of the people who have made Victoria their home, and I urge you to stand with the Victorian Government and stand up against the divisive commentary coming from the Turnbull Liberal Government.

South Eastern Metropolitan Region

Question asked by: Mrs Peulich
Directed to: Minister for Local Government
Asked on: 27 October 2016

ANSWER:

If any person has evidence that a candidate at the recent council general elections may have committed an offence under the Local Government Act 1989 — for example a candidate nominated while not being qualified to be nominated — I would encourage them to raise the matter with the Local Government Investigations and Compliance Inspectorate. The Inspectorate is tasked with investigating offences under the Act including where a matter relates to electoral provisions.

Western Metropolitan Region

Question asked by: Mr Finn
Directed to: Minister for Roads and Road Safety
Asked on: 27 October 2016

ANSWER:

The Government's Western Distributor Project is a network wide solution including upgrading the Monash Freeway, access improvements at Webb Dock, and building a second river crossing and tunnel under Yarraville cutting travel times from the west, to the port and city.

The Western Distributor Project is vital for Melbourne's liveability and competitiveness both now, and as the city grows.

Northern Metropolitan Region

Question asked by: Ms Patten
Directed to: Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing
Asked on: 8 November 2016

ANSWER:

I thank the Member for her question and her genuine interest in these matters, as shown by her actions in bringing together sector leaders in a calm and mature way to consider how best to address the complex problem of homelessness.

The question correctly identified substance abuse and mental health concerns as significant drivers for many people's homelessness, and called for funding in the 2017-18 Budget to address a shortage of crisis accommodation for Melbourne's homeless.

I'm pleased to advise that only a few days after the question was asked the Andrews Labor Government was able to announce an unprecedented \$109 million homelessness package to address these concerns. Highlights of the package include funding for new dedicated mental health accommodation facilities, new crisis accommodation facilities, and funding to enable our existing crisis accommodation facilities to move towards a therapeutic service delivery model.

We also know that crisis accommodation is not enough, and we need more dedicated, long-term housing so people can exit crisis accommodation. So I was pleased to add to our \$109 million homelessness announcement with a

further \$185 million to upgrade our existing social housing estates and create at least a 10% uplift in units on each site, and also announce the first stage of a program to upgrade our existing underutilised assets in Melbourne's Western suburbs, which will create up to 100 further additional social housing units.

Whether it is the Director of Housing's assets, broader government assets or private land, the Andrews Labor Government is committed to doing what it can to build more social housing to address the problem of homelessness in Melbourne and Victoria.

Western Metropolitan Region

Question asked by: Mr Finn
Directed to: Minister for Roads and Road Safety
Asked on: 8 November 2016

ANSWER:

The Andrews Labor Government is getting on with delivering the projects Victoria needs.

These include:

- Widening the CityLink Tullamarine motorway to increase capacity and improve travel time reliability by introducing managed motorway technology;
- Construction of a new station at Caroline Springs, to improve access to the entire train network for new estates in Melbourne's north west;
- Significant upgrades to the Ballarat train line, including line duplication and level crossing removal to improve service reliability and frequency, as well as access to stations along the route;
- Constructing the Western Distributor to provide a vital second road crossing of the Yarra River from west Melbourne and improve the resilience of the freeway network of Melbourne for commuter and freight movements;
- Construction of Melbourne Metro rail tunnel to bypass the city loop train line and provide greater capacity and reliability for commuters using the Sunbury and Werribee lines, Regional Rail link and Geelong V/Line; and
- Championing the development of national employment and innovation clusters in Melbourne's north west and west (including Tullamarine, Sunshine and the East Werribee employment cluster) to bring jobs, education and services closer to people's homes to reduce the need to travel long distances.

Western Victoria Region

Question asked by: Ms Tierney
Directed to: Minister for Emergency Services
Asked on: 8 November 2016

ANSWER:

Thank you for the question about the next steps for helping the Carisbrooke and Charlton communities to prepare for and reduce damage from flood events.

The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning has been working in partnership with both Central Goldfields and Buloke Shires to mitigate the impacts of floods on these communities. Funding has been provided to design and implement flood mitigation works in both communities. Local communities are best placed to decide on the flood mitigation works that are best for their communities. To support these local solutions requires extensive community engagement. Central Goldfields, and Buloke Shires are undertaking such consultation now.

The flood warning systems for communities have been improved through upgraded river gauges and flood mapping. These improvements contributed to better community information during these recent flood events.

The Victorian Floodplain Management Strategy, released by the Minister for Environment Climate Change and Water in April 2016, sets a clear framework for flood mitigation works. There is \$25 million to support implementation of the Strategy including flood mitigation works.

In addition to prevention and mitigation works, the State Government has established a Flood Recovery Subcommittee of the State Crisis and Resilience Council to oversee the coordination of impact assessment and the progress of recovery initiatives. The Subcommittee is working with all affected councils to identify assistance required.

The councils responsible for the areas affected are managing and undertaking co-ordination of the recovery, supported by the Department of Health and Human Services regionally, and Emergency Management Victoria at state level, to ensure coordinated government assistance.

Western Victoria Region

Question asked by: Mr Morris
Directed to: Minister for Public Transport
Asked on: 8 November 2016

ANSWER:

As publically stated as part of the release of the new timetable information for regional Victoria on November 21, Ballarat services travelling in peak direction will not stop at Caroline Springs.

I would like to thank the local Member for Wendouree, Sharon Knight and the Member for Buninyong, Geoff Howard for their advocacy in this matter.

Western Metropolitan Region

Question asked by: Mr Eideh
Directed to: Minister for Mental Health
Asked on: 9 November 2016

ANSWER:

This government has acknowledged that Victoria's suicide rate is far too high. As you are aware, in July 2016 the Victorian Government released the Victorian Suicide Prevention Framework 2016-25, to reduce the incidence and impact of suicide in our communities.

The Framework includes new investment of \$27 million over four years, and this investment will trial two flagship suicide prevention initiatives.

The Assertive Outreach initiative will provide support for up to three months for people that have been discharged from hospital following a suicide attempt, as well as providing support to families and carers to help them support their loved one.

The Place Based initiative will enable local communities to develop and implement evidence-based suicide prevention plans. This will involve partnering with Primary Health Networks to coordinate systemic multi-agency strategies across workplaces, schools, families, non-government organisations, hospitals and primary care.

We recognise that suicide is a serious issue across the whole state, and the additional work in these sites will inform, not reduce, efforts in other local government areas. The trials will be complemented by state-wide universal approaches that build community resilience and intervene early for people at risk.

South Eastern Metropolitan Region

Question asked by: Ms Springle
Directed to: Minister for Public Transport
Asked on: 9 November 2016

ANSWER:

The previous route 709 operated between Mordialloc and Waterways at a 60 minute frequency.

Following community consultation the Andrews Labor Government increased frequency on this route delivering an improved service to commuters.

The Government is committed to improving bus services across Victoria investing \$100 million to build a better bus network.

Northern Metropolitan Region

Question asked by: Mr Ondarchie
Directed to: Minister for Roads and Road Safety
Asked on: 9 November 2016

ANSWER:

VicRoads, the Department of Treasury and Finance and the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources have been working on an arterial road upgrade and maintenance program to be put out to tender for an Australian first availability-style Public Private Partnership.

As a result of this process, I am pleased to advise that in November 2016, the Victorian Government announced the \$1.8 billion western package of the Outer Suburban Arterial Roads Program. This includes eight high priority road upgrades in Melbourne's busy outer west. These upgrades will be delivered within five years, with the maintenance and rehabilitation continuing for a further twenty years.

The Victorian Government recognizes the need to improve the network in all key growth areas and, as such, is currently considering similar investments of arterial road upgrades and maintenance for the outer north and the outer south-eastern suburbs.

The State Government recently announced funding of up to \$139.4 million for the upgrade of Plenty Road in Mill Park between McKimmies Road, Mill Park and Bridge Inn Road in Mernda.

Western Metropolitan Region

Question asked by: Ms Hartland
Directed to: Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation
Asked on: 10 November 2016

ANSWER:

Victoria imposes some of the strictest restrictions on the operation of electronic gaming machines in hotels and clubs in Australia. The Andrews Government is further committed to better protecting problem gamblers.

I recently released a consultation paper seeking feedback on how the current protection measures around electronic gaming machines could be improved to strike the right balance of protecting problem gamblers and ensuring that current rules are up to date.

I am aware of claims being made about the design of certain gaming machines operating in gaming venues and the casino. Whilst I can stress that all gaming machines operating in Victoria must comply with both national and

Victorian gaming machine standards, it would be inappropriate to comment any further on a matter that is before a court.

Western Victoria Region

Question asked by: Mr Purcell
Directed to: Minister for Regional Development
Asked on: 10 November 2016

ANSWER:

I appreciate the inconvenience to Koroit residents and businesses when the Optus mobile base station stopped taking traffic for four days on the 27 October 2016 and services were not restored until the 31 October 2016. Optus advises that this is not their normal time frame for fault resolution and that the delay likely arised due to the lack of available parts for the base station or because there was limited access to the site due to poor weather conditions.

I also can assure you that the Victorian Government is committed to improving mobile coverage across our regions. The government has provided significant funds to provide new mobile coverage across regional Victoria including Western Victoria. I am pleased to note that 17 new mobile base stations are being built across the local government areas of Colac-Otway, Glenelg and Southern Grampians. Mobile base stations in Carlisle River, Digby and Muntham are already constructed and providing services to the community. I also note that Telstra and Optus mobile coverage maps show solid 4G and 3G coverage of Koroit and its near surrounding areas.

I am aware, however, that there are still large geographical areas of regional Victoria with mobile service gaps. The Commonwealth Government has announced a further \$120 million to fund a second and third round of the Mobile Black Spot Programme (MBSP). The Victorian Government has provided further funding to participate in the MBSP.

This will deliver vastly improved mobile coverage for many regional Victorian residents, businesses and visitors, ensuring that they have quality access to mobile communications whether they are at home, at work or commuting.

I believe that wide-spread and affordable access to high speed broadband and mobile services are essential for a prosperous and inclusive Victoria. I will continue to advocate to the Commonwealth Government for better broadband and mobile services for all Victorians.

Northern Victoria Region

Question asked by: Ms Lovell
Directed to: Minister for Health
Asked on: 10 November 2016

ANSWER:

As previous advised, the Government is working with Goulburn Valley Health to implement strategies that will ensure it provides the highest possible level of services within its emergency department. These strategies aim to deliver long term improvement in patient care.

Goulburn Valley Health is employing several approaches to improve emergency department performance which include the introduction of a senior medical staff rapid assessment triage model, a seven day fast track service, increased training of critical care nursing staff, and the strengthening of communications on ambulance handover.

As part of the State Government's record \$16.5 billion investment in health in Victoria, Goulburn Valley Health received \$168.6 million in the 2016-17 State Budget, which is \$10 million or 6.3% more than the previous year. These investments stand in contrast to the \$1 billion in cuts to health inflicted by the previous Liberal Government.

This increase in recurrent funding on top of the \$168.5 million redevelopment is evidence of the commitment of the State Government to meeting the health needs of all of the citizens of the Goulburn Valley.

Improvement in Goulburn Valley Health's Emergency performance was evident in the latest quarterly data. On almost all measures there was significant improvement including:

- Emergency Department patients treated within time rose to 61% in July-Sept 2016.
- Emergency Department category 2 seen within 10 minutes increased to 82% in July-Sept 2016.
- Median time to treatment for triage categories 1-3 dropped to 19 minutes in July-Sept 2016.

Eastern Metropolitan Region

Question asked by: Ms Wooldridge
Directed to: Minister for Roads and Road Safety
Asked on: 10 November 2016

ANSWER:

The Andrews Labor Government is currently reviewing feedback from the community and the Community Reference Group on the Rosanna Road Truck Trial. The community will be advised of the outcome, with the curfews remaining in place in the interim.

Northern Victoria Region

Question asked by: Ms Lovell
Directed to: Premier
Asked on: 22 November 2016

ANSWER:

Following the 11 November 2016 Mildura Storm the Victorian Government acted quickly to provide assistance to the community in Mildura through activating the jointly-funded Commonwealth-State Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements.

The Victorian Government is working with Mildura Rural City Council and supporting the community, businesses, and primary producers to recover from the storms, through a broad assistance package, including emergency relief payments and re-establishment assistance to individuals and households; expanding existing community health services; and support for the Mildura Council to restore essential public assets, such as roads infrastructure.

Recognising the significant impact on the farming community in Mildura, on 1 December the Victorian Government activated concessional low interest rate loans of up to \$200 000 for primary producers, small businesses and not-for-profit bodies who have suffered direct damage or a significant loss of income.

I have now also written to the Prime Minister, requesting his agreement to offer Recovery Grants for up to \$25 000 for all primary producers affected by the 11 November 2016 Storm event in the Mildura Rural City Council.

In the coming weeks the Victorian Government will work closely with the community and the Council to assess what other measures need to be put in place to support their recovery.

Western Metropolitan Region

Question asked by: Mr Melhem
Directed to: Minister for Ambulance Services
Asked on: 22 November 2016

ANSWER:

The Government is spending more money on ambulance services to help improve the ambulance system and make emergency response times quicker.

I recently announced the biggest ever investment in ambulance services with a \$500 million plan to improve ambulance response times. This investment will employ 450 more paramedics, put more new ambulances on the road and build 15 new and upgraded ambulance stations across Victoria. At the heart of this plan will be the establishment of six new super ambulance response centres, housing more than 200 paramedics to meet the demand in Melbourne's outer suburbs.

Specific initiatives in Melbourne's West include:

- a Super Response Centre to service the Western suburbs,
- a new ambulance station in Maribyrnong and a new 24 hour team with 14 full time equivalent paramedics and a new ambulance vehicle,
- a new ambulance station in Wyndham Vale and a new 24 hour team with 14 full time equivalent paramedics and a new ambulance vehicle,
- a new ambulance station in Melton and a new 24 hour team with 14 full time equivalent paramedics and new ambulance vehicles, and
- a new 24 hour team in Bacchus Marsh with 14 full time equivalent paramedics and a new ambulance vehicle.

The extra money will provide better, faster responses and make sure ambulances respond to the right patient, at the right time and with the right care.

Western Metropolitan Region

Question asked by: Ms Hartland
Directed to: Minister for Roads and Road Safety
Asked on: 22 November 2016

ANSWER:

Completion of the Federation Trail 'missing link' is a key part in a program of cycling improvements to be delivered through the Western Distributor Project.

These works will deliver new shared paths, and upgrades to existing infrastructure to improve safety and connectivity.

The final design of the Western Distributor is likely to influence the design of the upgraded Federation Trail, so it's best to build them both together. This approach will:

- Eliminate the risk of needing to re-work the connection if the Western Distributor design is altered in response to technical advice and community feedback
- Reduce overall disruption by doing all work in one area at the same time
- Provide cost efficiencies for the Victorian taxpayer by combining the works.

Other proposed improvements include:

- A new connection from Somerville Road/Whitehall Street to Footscray Road.
- New connections from the Dynon Road shared path to the Capital City Trail, Moonee Ponds Creek Trail and to Spencer Street.
- Grade separating the Footscray Road shared path, so that cyclists do not need to cross intersections at Sims Street, Dock Link Road and Appleton Dock Road.

- Replace existing pedestrian bridges over the West Gate Freeway with new pedestrian bridges that are Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) compliant.

These improvements have been shaped by the many conversations we have had with community members, local councils and bicycle user groups. This is a great outcome for Melbourne's west and for cyclists, who will see the benefits as the Western Distributor Project evolves.

Western Victoria Region

Question asked by: Mr Morris
Directed to: Minister for Emergency Services
Asked on: 22 November 2016

ANSWER:

As I have publicly stated, each fire season the Emergency Management Commissioner and fire agency chiefs determine the appropriate locations of Victoria's firefighting aircraft fleet based on the predicted season, the fire risk in particular areas, and to ensure the best support for the State strategically.

Aircraft generally have a home base but are moved around the State to support other areas as the risk changes. Last summer, when the air-crane was based in Ballarat, it spent the majority of its time assisting fires in other parts of Victoria.

For the first time this summer, Ballarat and more broadly the southwest of Victoria, will have a water bombing helicopter with the capability to respond to fires at the same time as fire trucks. The helicopter has the capability to connect to the pre-determined dispatch system which means, instead of waiting for fire trucks to arrive on the scene and request air support, it arrives around the same time as the fire trucks. Having aircraft which can respond through pre-determined dispatch is a key recommendation of the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission and outcomes supported by both sides of Government.

Thank you for raising this matter with me.

Western Victoria Region

Question asked by: Mr Ramsay
Directed to: Minister for Regional Development
Asked on: 22 November 2016

ANSWER:

Regional Development Victoria (RDV) is working closely with Murray Goulburn in relation to the possible expansion of its Koroit milk processing and dairy products manufacturing site. This is a large and complex project that will require a significant investment in infrastructure, particularly the upgrading of electricity, water and trade waste services.

To date, specialist investment facilitation assistance has been provided regarding the required development approvals and planning for infrastructure upgrades.

However, it is also understood that Murray Goulburn is investigating alternative sites for this project, particularly Laverton in Melbourne, where it has surplus industrial land near its distribution centre.

Assisting businesses in regional Victoria to address regional infrastructure limitations in order to secure new investment, jobs and exports, is central to the Government's \$500 million Regional Jobs and Infrastructure Fund (RJIF).

RDV will continue to work closely with Murray Goulburn in relation to the project and its infrastructure challenges at Koroit.

Western Metropolitan Region

Question asked by: Mr Finn
Directed to: Minister for Planning
Asked on: 22 November 2016

ANSWER:

I understand that the matter Mr Finn has raised relates to Amendments C207 and C208 to the Hume Planning Scheme, which propose to implement the Sunbury South Precinct Structure Plan and Lancefield Road Precinct Structure Plan.

In August 2010, the State Government confirmed changes to the Urban Growth Boundary in Melbourne, which resulted in the inclusion of the Sunbury South and Lancefield Road Precincts (to which the PSPs apply) within the Sunbury Growth Corridor.

Hume City Council, through the preparation of its Sunbury Hume Integrated Growth Area Plan (2014), has worked closely with affected landowners, government agencies and interested parties since this land was designated for urban growth. Extensive consultation was undertaken for the Growth Area Plan in 2011.

While every precinct structure plan is formally exhibited to gain public views, engagement with the community and other non-statutory authorities often occurs earlier in the process to understand and reconcile diverse needs, particularly in confirming the strategic issues and determining the preferred urban structure. I am confident that every effort has been made by the VPA to ensure the local community has been kept up to date with the progress of these long-term strategic plans including prior to the recent council election.

Formal exhibition of Amendments C207 and C208 commenced on 24 November 2016 and the closing date for submissions has been extended beyond the minimum requirement of one calendar month to 6 February 2017.

South Eastern Metropolitan Region

Question asked by: Mrs Peulich
Directed to: Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change
Asked on: 22 November 2016

ANSWER:

The Member for Eastern Metropolitan Region would be well advised to direct her question to the Minister for Planning, under which this matter falls.

Eastern Victoria Region

Question asked by: Ms Bath
Directed to: Minister for Training and Skills
Asked on: 22 November 2016

ANSWER:

Thank you for your question relating to TBM Training. I am concerned to hear about your constituents' experience with their training.

TBM Training entered voluntary liquidation on 14 April 2016 and ceased trading on the same day. The Department of Education and Training (the Department) took immediate action to assist students affected by the closure. This included writing to all affected Victorian Training Guarantee (VTG) students to provide assurance that their VTG entitlement was not affected and to provide information on how to continue their study at a TAFE. This letter advised that students who had paid up front fees should contact the liquidator, Mr Salvatore Algeri of Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu, by email on tbmtraining@deloitte.com.au or by phone on (03) 9671 7060 or (03) 9671 7809, to register as a creditor.

The Victorian Registration and Qualification Authority secured copies of student records and, where possible, issued students with statements of attainment to enable them to transition to another provider and have the competencies achieved at TBM Training recognised.

I appreciate your invitation to visit the Latrobe Valley to speak to your constituents. The Department has arranged for the Skills and Jobs Centre in Morwell to assist these students.

Eastern Metropolitan Region

Question asked by: Ms Wooldridge
Directed to: Minister for Training and Skills
Asked on: 23 November 2016

ANSWER:

In September 2015, the Andrews Government delivered on a key election commitment to establish one-stop-shop Skills and Jobs Centres across Victoria.

The Andrews Labor Government has dedicated \$16 million in funding for Skills and Jobs Centres to help all our TAFEs build on those vitally important links with industry.

The Skills and Jobs Centres you describe were completed using the Skills and Job Centres Funding.

These Centres are hubs, designed to be the first point-of-call for students looking to start training, workers needing to re-skill, unemployed workers needing support for retraining and work placement and for employers.

The decision as to where to place the Skills and Jobs Centre was left to the TAFE, given their understanding of local need.

The \$10M is for the purpose of reopening Melbourne Polytechnic Greensborough. A reasonable use of some of this funding could include marketing costs to attract students and ensure the community is aware that the campus is reopening.

After the neglect of the 4 years of Liberal government, which saw unemployment skyrocket to 6.8 per cent, our government is committed to making sure Victorians have quality access to training to make sure they get the skills they need to find a job.

Eastern Metropolitan Region

Question asked by: Mr Leane
Directed to: Minister for Families and Children
Asked on: 23 November 2016

ANSWER:

In March 2016, The Royal Commission into Family Violence made 227 recommendations to transform the response to, and prevention of family violence in Victoria. The Government has committed to implementing all of these recommendation and the 2016-17 Victorian State Budget included \$572 million over three years to begin responding to the 65 most urgent recommendations from the Royal Commission.

The Government recently released its 10-year plan to achieve the vision of a Victoria free from family violence; Ending Family Violence: Victoria's Plan for Change. It can be viewed at www.vic.gov.au/familyviolence.

The Government has also recently published a status update for all 227 recommendations. This can be viewed at www.vic.gov.au/familyviolence/recommendations, and I would encourage your stakeholders to visit the site for an a comprehensive overview of the progress of all the recommendations.

In September 2016, the Government allocated \$87 million over two years to address demand across the sector, to support further design work and implementation of the Royal Commission's recommendations. In the inner and outer-eastern Melbourne regions (which form part of the Member's electorate) \$10.5 million over two years was allocated for specialist counselling, case management and flexible support packages for victims of family violence, counselling and support for victims of sexual assault support services, and men's behaviour change programs.

In addition, in Minister Foley's portfolio, the Rapid Housing Assistance Family Violence initiative has provided \$5.3 million for the acquisition of 14 properties, and a further six leases, in the local government areas of Banyule, Maroondah and Yarra Ranges. These properties will provide accommodation support to women and children fleeing family violence.

Our Government is working closely with community organisations to implement the Royal Commission's recommendations. I thank you for your personal commitment and energy towards this collective effort and look forward to continuing to inform you of further progress.

Southern Metropolitan Region

Question asked by: Ms Pennicuik
Directed to: Minister for Planning
Asked on: 23 November 2016

ANSWER:

The provision of affordable housing in Fisherman's Bend is a key priority for the Andrews Labor Government and careful consideration was given to how affordable housing could be secured when the interim controls were introduced in November 2016.

These interim controls, which will apply until 2018, will assist in securing some affordable housing whilst the Fisherman's Bend Taskforce undertakes further strategic work and consultation with the community to develop new permanent controls to guide the development of the area, including a review of the affordable housing requirements.

The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning's Planning, Building and Heritage group are currently working on how Victoria can provide more affordable housing through the Victorian planning system. The means of achieving this is being formulated, and a number of options are being considered, including the requirements for consultation. This work may allow for more prescriptive requirements in respect of affordable housing provision in new developments in the future.

Western Victoria Region

Question asked by: Mr Purcell
Directed to: Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change
Asked on: 23 November 2016

ANSWER:

Our government has undertaken productive consultations with all relevant stakeholders regarding the Belfast Coastal Reserve. Through this process we have developed a better approach to managing commercial horse training and the protection of Hooded Plover nesting sites.

Details can be found at:

<http://www.delwp.vic.gov.au/news-and-announcements/belfast-coast-horse-announcement>.

Southern Metropolitan Region

Question asked by: Mr Davis
Directed to: Special Minister of State
Asked on: 23 November 2016

ANSWER:

Infrastructure Victoria's (IV) final 30-Year Infrastructure Strategy was publicly released on Thursday 8 December 2016. Its development was informed by extensive public consultation, including calls for public submissions, citizen juries and online discussions.

IV was established in 2015 as an independent statutory authority, supported by all parties in the Victorian Parliament. As you would be aware, the Government cannot direct its operations.

As required by legislation, the Government will deliver its Response to IV's recommendations, as well as a 5-year Infrastructure Plan, by December 2017.

Western Metropolitan Region

Question asked by: Mr Melhem
Directed to: Minister for Creative Industries
Asked on: 23 November 2016

ANSWER:

Under Creative State, Victoria's four year creative industries strategy from 2016-2020, Creative Victoria has established and resourced a formal partnership with the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) over four years to work with local councils across the State on the growth of creative industry organisations and activities. A new Arts and Cultural Policy Adviser position within MAV has been created to support the partnership. It is envisaged that this role will operate as a conduit to identify and promote opportunities to increase the impact of the creative industries at a local level.

Creative State includes a further priority action, Creative Suburbs, which invests in opportunities for Melbourne's outer metropolitan communities to engage with, and participate in, high quality arts and creative experiences. Working in partnership with local councils, the program will build on local creative strengths to maximise participation and relevance. It will complement existing arts and culture programs focused on regional communities to ensure access and cultural participation for all Victorians.

There are 16 targeted outer metropolitan local governments which can apply to Creative Suburbs to deliver new project and programs which extend their existing arts and creative activity. This includes four in the Western Metropolitan Region: Brimbank City Council, Hume City Council, Melton City Council and the Wyndham City Council. These partnerships with local governments will increase local capacity for arts and cultural engagement, enhance liveability and build the value of arts and culture in outer metropolitan community life.

Western Victoria Region

Question asked by: Mr Morris
Directed to: Minister for Public Transport
Asked on: 23 November 2016

ANSWER:

The timetables were made available online on November 28, as announced in the media release on November 21.

On the Ballarat line, the Andrews Government has added 115 services and extended another 10 to Maryborough, compared to the previous government, which added 12 new services to the Ballarat line and not one on the Maryborough line.

Northern Metropolitan Region

Question asked by: Mr Elasmar
Directed to: Minister for Sport
Asked on: 23 November 2016

ANSWER:

I refer to your constituency question regarding my announcement on 16 November 2016.

These facilities are being delivered through the Inner City Netball Program, which will deliver 64 competition compliant netball courts across the Cities of Melbourne, Moreland, Darebin, and Yarra. The program will fill a much needed gap in facility provision across the inner city, creating more opportunities for women and girls to participate in sport.

My Department is working with the Department of Education and Training, and Darebin City Council to deliver three projects at Thornbury High School, Northcote High School, and Fairfield Primary School. Planning is advanced at all three sites and the courts will be delivered within this term of Government.

The projects are:

Northcote High School

- The design and construction of one new competition compliant netball court with lighting, and an upgrade of the existing court to meet Netball Victoria's requirements for competition netball (including lighting).

Thornbury High School

- The design and construction of three new competition compliant netball courts with lighting.

Fairfield Primary School

- The design and construction of a competition compliant netball court with lighting.

Western Metropolitan Region

Question asked by: Mr Finn
Directed to: Minister for Roads and Road Safety
Asked on: 23 November 2016

ANSWER:

The Andrews Labor Government is committed to addressing safety and congestion issues in Melbourne's growing northern suburbs.

Northern Victoria Region

Question asked by: Ms Lovell
Directed to: Minister for Roads and Road Safety
Asked on: 23 November 2016

ANSWER:

I thank the Member for Northern Victoria for her question.

As communicated in my letter dated 9 November, the Government is making prudent investment decisions with the funds available following the successful lease of the Port of Melbourne.

Eastern Metropolitan Region

Question asked by: Ms Wooldridge
Directed to: Minister for Roads and Road Safety
Asked on: 24 November 2016

ANSWER:

VicRoads has commenced the process to declare Bolton Street and is currently considering options to fund this process. VicRoads advises that the decision to declare Bolton Street as an arterial road will not affect the ability to deliver the outcomes of the \$10.5 million upgrade.

As part of the Bolton Street upgrade planning process, two options were developed by VicRoads and presented to the local community and the Banyule and Nillumbik councils for comment. The supported option (Option 1) will provide improved safety and operational benefits along Bolton Street, as well as its connections with Bridge Street to the north and Main Road to the south.

Western Metropolitan Region

Question asked by: Dr Carling-Jenkins
Directed to: Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing
Asked on: 24 November 2016

ANSWER:

On the 9th of December, the Andrews Labor Government announced a \$15 million investment working with the H3 Wyndham Alliance to help more than 1700 people facing housing crisis in the Wyndham area.

A range of measures have been funded, including a focus on housing support through construction of self-contained units for young people at risk of homelessness and the purchase of other housing units for people facing chronic homelessness. Wrap-around services will be delivered, including mental health and drug and alcohol counselling, family violence support, youth support services and legal and financial help.

These new investments in accommodation with targeted support services in the Wyndham area are part of the recently announced package of \$109 million for people experiencing homelessness.

Eastern Victoria Region

Question asked by: Ms Shing
Directed to: Minister for Public Transport
Asked on: 24 November 2016

ANSWER:

After years of inadequate investment by the previous Liberal Government, the Andrews Labor Government is committed to improving bus services in Gippsland.

Bus network improvements are scheduled in early 2017 for regions along the Gippsland Line, including Warragul, Drouin and the Latrobe Valley. Extensive community consultation sessions on proposed network improvements were undertaken in each region.

Major improvements include extending bus services to growth areas, better coordination with train services, and improved frequencies and services hours. These changes will give residents more options to travel within Gippsland as well as to and from Melbourne, creating better access to employment, education and social services.

Western Victoria Region

Question asked by: Mr Ramsay
Directed to: Minister for Agriculture
Asked on: 24 November 2016

ANSWER:

The Domestic Animals Amendment (Puppy Forms and Pet Shops) Bill 2016 has not been withdrawn.

The Legislative Council's Economy and Infrastructure Committee recently tabled its report on the Bill.

It is clear from this report that the Bill is unlikely to pass the Parliament in its current form. I intend to reassess this legislation to enable our election commitments to be delivered.

Amendments will be developed in the new year, in consultation with stakeholders, and considered by the Parliament in the first half of 2017.

We remain determined to stamp out puppy farms, and we're not prepared to back the Liberal-National Coalition's moves to keep puppy farming in Victoria.

Southern Metropolitan Region

Question asked by: Ms Pennicuik
Directed to: Minister for Planning
Asked on: 24 November 2016

ANSWER:

I would like to thank Ms Pennicuik, Member for Southern Metropolitan Region, for her question on the proposed redevelopment of the Markham Housing Estate in Ashburton.

The Department of Health and Human Services has partnered with Places Victoria to deliver the proposal which comprises 62 public housing dwellings and 190 private dwellings. If approved, the proposal would result in a ten per cent increase in public housing on the land.

Places Victoria has requested that I facilitate the redevelopment of the Markham Housing Estate, Ashburton by making a decision on the proposal in 2017. I understand that Places Victoria has been engaging with the local community on the proposal. I have also written to Boroondara City Council seeking its views.

I have not yet made a decision on the matter. In making my decision, I will take into consideration the views of council and the community, as well as all relevant planning matters in the Boroondara Planning Scheme.

Northern Victoria Region

Question asked by: Ms Lovell
Directed to: Minister for Roads and Road Safety
Asked on: 24 November 2016

ANSWER:

There has been significant damage to the Daylesford-Malmsbury Road pavement during September and October of 2016 resulting from much higher than usual rainfall. Extensive pavement repairs have been carried out, but are still ongoing, and are programmed to be completed in early 2017.

Northern Metropolitan Region

Question asked by: Ms Patten
Directed to: Minister for Planning
Asked on: 24 November 2016

ANSWER:

I considered the development under the interim built form controls of Amendment C262, which included mandatory podium height and setback requirements and a discretionary site plot ratio control of 24:1.

The site plot ratio is a flexible mechanism designed to enable a permit to be granted if a proposal delivers public amenity improvements.

I approved the development at 383 La Trobe Street as the development will provide a number of public amenity improvements including a video art arcade, a publicly accessible through-block link, and a laneway connecting La Trobe Street with Queen and Little Lonsdale Streets.

Melbourne City Council also supported the development.

I note that the tower will be setback more than 12 metres from the site boundaries of both the former Royal Mint and the Republic Tower in order to provide privacy, daylight access and outlook to these adjoining sites.

Northern Victoria Region

Question asked by: Mr O'Sullivan
Directed to: Minister for Agriculture
Asked on: 24 November 2016

ANSWER:

The Andrews Labor government have stood with the people of Mildura and the Northern Mallee right from the time the storm hit and done everything in our power to assist those affected.

The impact of this storm event has been significant on both the community and the horticulture sector, with damage to the farming sector estimated to be between \$77.6 million and \$156.8 million.

On Saturday 12 November (am) senior government ministers and departmental staff were briefed and acted swiftly to ensure the strongest possible support. Departmental officials were on the ground assessing damage over the weekend.

On Monday 14 November, Minister for Emergency Services and Deputy Premier James Merlino visited Mildura and Merbein to thank emergency service staff and volunteers for their efforts in keeping the community safe, to offer support to residents affected by the extreme weather, and to announce Emergency Relief Assistance.

On 18 November 2016, Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Victoria Danielle Green travelled to Mildura to meet with staff at the Incident Control Centre and the Agriculture Victoria Incident Management Team, and to inspect vine damage in Red Cliffs.

On 21 November 2016, I met with affected farmers, industry stakeholders and industry association representatives in the region to see the damage and hear directly of the impacts.

Emergency response structures were established quickly to provide a whole of government emergency response. Agriculture Victoria engaged with 1358 primary producers in the region to determine and assess damage and it is clear that there has been significant impacts for some growers. These impact assessments took some time, because of the scale of damage and the number of properties affected. It was necessary for the impact assessments to be complete before further government assistance was available under the Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements (NDRRA).

After assessing the impacts of the November Storm event the Commonwealth and State Governments have worked closely to ensure that additional assistance is provided to help the Mildura community get back on their feet as soon as possible.

A broad range of Commonwealth and Victorian Government assistance is available to help affected communities recover from the major storm event that impacted people and properties in the northern Mallee on 11 November 2016.

The Victorian Government is providing the following support, as per the Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements, in consultation with the Commonwealth Government:

- Emergency Relief Assistance Payments: up to \$1300 per eligible household to help meet immediate needs;
- Emergency Re-establishment Grants: up to \$32 500 per eligible household experiencing financial hardship who have been affected at their primary place of residence; and
- Emergency Relief and Recovery Assistance for the Mildura Rural City Council is available, including expanding existing community health services.

Unlike Mr O’Sullivan, who probably still hasn’t found the time to visit affected farmers in his own electorate, on 1 December 2016 I continued to work for farmers and the community, and alongside the Federal Minister for Justice, Victorian Minister for Emergency Services, and Federal Member for Mallee, I announced additional disaster assistance for affected communities in the Mildura Rural City.

This additional assistance will provide concessional low interest rate loans of up to \$200 000 to primary producers and small businesses, and \$100 000 for not-for-profit bodies suffering direct damage or a significant loss of income.

Affected individuals, farm families and small businesses in the Northern Mallee can also access a range of ongoing support, including:

- North West Rural Financial Counselling Service (RFCS), which provides free, independent and confidential support to primary producers, fishers and small rural businesses experiencing financial hardship.
- Small Business Financial Counsellors in the North West RFCS, who provide free independent and confidential support to small businesses experiencing financial hardship.
- The Commonwealth Government’s Farm Household Allowance, which provides income support payments for eligible farmers experiencing financial hardship.
- Technical advice and information for farmers, provided by Agriculture Victoria.
- Mental health and wellbeing support, provided through Sunraysia Community Health Service, Mallee Family Care, Golden City Support Services, Lifeline and Beyond Blue, and Heywire in Mildura.

On 23 December, after receiving the further impact assessment reports, I jointly announced the activation of a Community Recovery Fund and Recovery Grants for eligible primary producers. Recovery Grants of up to \$25 000 for primary producers, and a Community Recovery Fund of \$120 000 to the Mildura Rural City Council are being provided through the jointly-funded Commonwealth-State Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements (NDRRA).

The Victorian Government is continuing to work with and support communities in the northern Mallee to understand the impacts of the storm event and will support the region in its recovery into the future.

Western Metropolitan Region

Question asked by: Ms Hartland
Directed to: Minister for Ports
Asked on: 24 November 2016

ANSWER:

I thank the Member for Western Metropolitan for her question. The Lonsdale Consortium has recently been appointed to operate the Port of Melbourne's commercial operations for a term of 50 years. It will be required to produce a Rail Access Strategy within three years, which will consider options, including a Port Rail Shuttle (PRS), for improved rail access to the Port of Melbourne and will include extensive stakeholder consultation. Elements of this strategy must then be able to be implemented within five years after the strategy has been prepared. Earlier implementation of rail improvements at the Port are not precluded. It is within this context that a PRS would be considered in the future.

I understand that in parallel to this, private operators are investigating earlier commencement of rail services from at least some of the facilities you have nominated ahead of any port rail upgrades.

Western Metropolitan Region

Question asked by: Mr Finn
Directed to: Minister for Planning
Asked on: 24 November 2016

ANSWER:

In August last year, I directed the Victorian Planning Authority (VPA) to engage with the community and stakeholders to develop a master plan for the former Victoria University campus in Sunbury. Victoria University owns the site and will be an important stakeholder in the development of the master plan.

We know the community cares deeply for Jacksons Hill and the Victorian Government is committed to conducting meaningful consultation with residents and current users of the site to develop the master plan. The VPA invites interested persons to subscribe to the mailing list on its website at www.vpa.vic.gov.au on the Jackson Hill Master Plan page to receive progress updates.

The VPA is undertaking detailed background studies and from February 2017 it will begin talking to the community about the potential uses for the site. The VPA is also working with: Heritage Victoria to ensure any master planning preserves heritage listed buildings; the Department of Education and Training on securing future education uses; and Hume City Council in relation to opportunities for community facilities.

As part of the master planning process, the VPA will carefully consider the need for affordable housing as well as issues such as interfaces with neighbouring residential areas, schools and the Western Water treatment land. Further information is available on the VPA website.

Southern Metropolitan Region

Question asked by: Mr Davis
Directed to: Minister for Agriculture
Asked on: 24 November 2016

ANSWER:

The Legislative Council's Economy and Infrastructure Committee recently tabled its report on the Domestic Animals Amendment (Puppy Farms and Pet Shops) Bill 2016.

It is clear from this report that the Bill is unlikely to pass the Parliament in its current form.

I intend to reassess this legislation to enable our election commitments to be delivered.

Amendments to this effect will be developed in the new year, in consultation with stakeholders, and considered by the Parliament in the first half of 2017.

We remain determined to stamp out puppy farms, and we're not prepared to back the Liberal-National Coalition's moves to keep puppy farming in Victoria.

Northern Victoria Region

Question asked by: Ms Lovell
Directed to: Minister for Health
Asked on: 6 December 2016

ANSWER:

The Andrews Labor Government will invest \$10 million to redevelop Goulburn Valley Health's Waranga Campus in Rushworth, co-locating all of its health and aged care services under-one-roof.

This funding was announced on 15 December from the first round of the new \$200 million Regional Health Infrastructure Fund. This fund, the largest of its kind in Victorian history, will rebuild rural and regional hospitals to ensure all Victorians can access the high quality care and facilities they need.

Goulburn Valley Health will receive \$10 million to redevelop the Waranga Aged Care Hostel into a one-stop-shop for all of Rushworth's acute, aged care, primary care and community health services as part of a fully-integrated, state-of-the-art hospital facility.

This redevelopment will secure the future of the town's health services and make a real difference to the lives of patients and aged care residents who will benefit from modern, safe facilities and better connected care.

Western Metropolitan Region

Question asked by: Mr Melhem
Directed to: Minister for Education
Asked on: 6 December 2016

ANSWER:

We have set an ambitious agenda to make Victoria the Education State, where every child gets the chance to be their best, regardless of their background. Improving the quality of teaching is recognised as the single biggest thing we can do to improve outcomes for children and young people.

The new higher entry standards will not exclude students from disadvantaged backgrounds. We also want to make sure that our teachers reflect Victoria's diverse community. To do this we are making sure there are high-quality alternate pathways into teaching courses so that school leavers and others who do not meet the minimum ATAR, can demonstrate that they meet the benchmark standard and gain entry into a teacher education course.

Alternate pathways into teaching courses already exist, and include VET certificates, university diplomas and associate degrees. Examples are the Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care, the Diploma in Educational Studies at Victoria University and the Associate Degree in Education at Deakin University in Geelong.

We will make sure that all existing pathways into teaching courses are of a high-quality.

Students can also study an undergraduate degree before applying to do a postgraduate teaching qualification. For example, a student with an ATAR below 70 could currently do a Food Technology and Nutrition degree at RMIT University, an Arts degree at La Trobe University, or Accounting and Finance at Australian Catholic University, and then do a Master of Teaching at a number of universities across Melbourne.

In addition, the Department, together with the Victorian Institute of Teaching, will support the development of new, high quality pathways into teacher education courses.

For example a new VET accredited course will provide practical, hands-on experience in an education setting and provide an excellent pathway for career changers with existing expertise. It will also offer credentialed exit points for students who do not wish to continue into an undergraduate teacher education course. This new pathway will be available in 2018.

Western Metropolitan Region

Question asked by: Mr Finn
Directed to: Minister for Roads and Road Safety
Asked on: 6 December 2016

ANSWER:

The Victorian Government's Western Distributor is Melbourne's much-needed second river crossing. When major incidents occur on the West Gate Bridge, the Western Distributor will provide a high capacity alternative. This will significantly reduce the traffic disruption and gridlock that can occur now. In addition, motorists will have an efficient alternative and not be forced to rely on local roads.

The Western Distributor will give people in the west an entry point to the northern suburbs and the CBD's western fringe. This will help ease pressure on the M1 by distributing traffic across the network, contributing to a smoother and more reliable daily run along the entire M1 corridor.

Upgrading the West Gate Freeway from four lanes to six in each direction will also make the motorway more resilient and manageable. This is because "express" lanes will be created by separating traffic that is travelling to and from different locations, allowing the three inside lanes to run express from the M80 all the way to the West Gate Bridge.

The Western Distributor will also improve traffic flow along the West Gate Freeway and the M1 through 24/7 real-time traffic management measures, including lane use signs, variable speed limits, automatic incident detection and enhanced incident response services. This will result in seamless network integration between Melbourne's freeways.

A transport network impact assessment is being prepared for the Environment Effects Statement (EES), which will provide detailed traffic modelling. The EES will be on public exhibition in 2017.

During construction, the contractor is required to maintain all freeway lanes during peak times so that traffic can keep moving when works are underway.

Eastern Metropolitan Region

Question asked by: Ms Dunn
Directed to: Minister for Planning
Asked on: 6 December 2016

ANSWER:

Knox City Council is the responsible and planning authority under the Planning and Environment Act 1987 for the administration of the Knox Planning Scheme, and as such it is responsible for the planning for Blind Creek.

The proposed Amendment C149 to the Knox Planning Scheme seeks to implement the objectives and strategies of the Knox Central Structure Plan 2016, through the application of local policy, zones and overlays.

The proposed Amendment C149 is undergoing a full amendment process. The amendment has recently finished public exhibition, which was held between 7 November 2016 and 7 December 2016, giving all stakeholders and the community an opportunity to make a submission.

Once submissions from this exhibition period have been considered, council will resolve whether to refer the amendment to an independent planning Panel. After this, Council will resolve whether to adopt or abandon the amendment. If adopted, the amendment must be submitted to me for approval. My decision on the amendment will be based on its merits and take into account a number of matters. This includes the views of all parties concerned, the panel's recommendations and submissions received to the exhibition process.

Eastern Victoria Region

Question asked by: Mr Mulino
Directed to: Minister for Public Transport
Asked on: 6 December 2016

ANSWER:

As part of VicTrack's \$20 million station car park upgrades program, 150 additional spaces will be built at Officer station on the Pakenham line.

The level crossing at Clyde Road, near Berwick station will be removed as part of the government's Level Crossing Removal Program. The program provides opportunities to improve access to stations post construction.

Western Metropolitan Region

Question asked by: Mr Eideh
Directed to: Minister for Tourism and Major Events
Asked on: 6 December 2016

ANSWER:

Victoria continues to succeed in attracting international air services. From October 2017, LATAM Airlines will commence a direct service between Chile and Victoria. LATAM is the only carrier to offer this route, providing a tri-weekly service.

The Victorian Government recognises the importance of air services to growing the state's visitor economy and we will continue to work with Melbourne Airport and Avalon Airport to improve air connections to and from Victoria.

As of 28 November 2016, Victoria has 31 international airlines flying directly in and out of Melbourne Airport, Australia's second largest airport. More visitors than ever before can come here from right around the world and see for themselves everything Victoria has to offer.

For the 2015-16 financial year, 33.9 million passengers passed through Melbourne Airport's terminals. Of these, 9.2 million were international passengers, which represents an increase of 9.5 per cent on the previous financial year.

The Melbourne International Airport Master Plan projects passenger movements through Melbourne Airport to increase to 64 million annually by 2033.

Improving access into and around Victoria is a key priority of the Victorian Visitor Economy Strategy (the Strategy). The Strategy identifies nine priorities to help reach the goal of increasing visitor spending to \$36.5 billion by 2025 and employment in the sector to 320 700 jobs.

Securing more direct international flights is a key component of the priorities identified in the Strategy. We are committed to increasing air service connections and maintaining a curfew-free status for Melbourne airports. We will also work with Melbourne Airport to support the implementation of its 20 year Master Plan.

In addition to improved air services, the establishment of Visit Victoria is a key plank underpinning the Strategy's implementation. The new entity brings together marketing, major events and business events attraction into a single, unified organisation with a focused goal of ensuring that Victoria remains the number one tourism and events destination in Australia.

Visit Victoria is actively promoting some of Western Melbourne's best known tourism attractions like the Werribee Mansion, Werribee Open Range Zoo, Scienceworks, and the Spring Racing Carnival at Flemington Racecourse. Visit Victoria's new website also has neighbourhood guides for the popular western suburbs of Williamstown, Yarraville, Werribee and Footscray, and promotes events and activities in these areas.

The area is well positioned to take advantage of its proximity to Melbourne and will benefit from increased visitation to events held around Melbourne.

Northern Victoria Region

Question asked by: Mr O'Sullivan
Directed to: Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change
Asked on: 6 December 2016

ANSWER:

The boat ramp off Woodbine Drive in Lower Moira has been highlighted as a safety concern by residents due to the deterioration and unevenness of the concrete.

Parks Victoria has determined that the site is not a suitable launching area due to its regular inundation, steep banks and limited access.

Parks Victoria has discussed boat ramp access in this area with the local Nathalia Angling Club and will seek input and advice from VRFish to identify a more appropriate location for a boat ramp in this area.

The closest alternative boat ramp that provides access to this stretch of river is seven kilometres upstream in Barmah township. Parks Victoria also provides boating access in the nearby Barmah National Park.

Western Metropolitan Region

Question asked by: Mr Eideh
Directed to: Minister for Health
Asked on: 7 December 2016

ANSWER:

I wrote to the Commonwealth Minister for Health in November 2016 seeking her assurance of continued Commonwealth investment in public dental services from 1 January 2017.

Just days before Christmas the Commonwealth Minister for Health confirmed what we feared, that the Turnbull Liberal Government was willing to use all means possible to strip away dental funding from Victoria. Not only that, they are prepared to strip away dental funding for kids, strip away dental funding for 30 000 adults and rip out \$11.7 million from public dental care in our state.

This represents a 30 per cent reduction on the National Partnership Agreement funding provided to Victoria previously.

This decision follows the Turnbull Government's bungling of an earlier attempt to tear money away from dental services through legislation, resisted by Federal Labor and Senate crossbenchers and as a result, now junked.

This is a Government that has never cared about Victorians and this is just the latest hit they've sent our way.

When it comes to hurting Victorians, the Turnbull Liberal Government just can't stop.

The Andrews Labor Government is investing \$206.2 million in the Victorian Dental Health Program in 2016-17 because good oral health is critical to health and wellbeing. I will continue to advocate for the Commonwealth to maintain its current level of investment in public dental services for Victorians.

Northern Metropolitan Region

Question asked by: Mr Ondarchie
Directed to: Minister for Planning
Asked on: 7 December 2016

ANSWER:

The Victorian Government is committed to providing a world class education system, appropriate housing for some of our most vulnerable Victorians, as well as recreation and sporting facilities that meet the needs of our growing and changing communities. Richmond is a diverse and growing precinct with competing needs and interests, and it is my desire to ensure we deliver the best outcome for this vibrant area.

The Swan Street site in Richmond is owned by the Department of Education and Training (DET) and leased to Yarra City Council. DET has determined that the site is surplus to its operational requirements. I have referred DET's proposal for the Swan Street site to the Government Land Standing Advisory Committee, which I have appointed pursuant to Part 7, Section 151 of the Planning and Environment Act 1987, to consider and to make recommendations on the proposed changes to the planning provisions on the Swan Street site.

Following submissions from the Council, the community and interested parties, the Advisory Committee has recently submitted its report to me. I will now carefully consider the report before making a decision on the matter.

DET is working closely with Netball Victoria, Sport and Recreation Victoria (SRV), and the Richmond Netball Association to design the new recreation facilities at Richmond High School. The new school facilities at Richmond High School will include four new competition-standard netball courts, with one court indoors and all outdoor courts will be floodlit. Netball users will also have access to new facilities, including showers and toilets, a canteen and administration area. SRV and DET are committed to supporting the Richmond Netball Association in their transition to their new facilities.

As part of the Inner City Netball Program, the State Government has recently announced three new netball courts at Melbourne Girls College and two new netball courts at Richmond West Primary School. The new courts will be floodlit to allow for evening games and will be built to competition standard.

Southern Metropolitan Region

Question asked by: Ms Pennicuk
Directed to: Minister for Roads and Road Safety
Asked on: 7 December 2016

ANSWER:

VicRoads advises me that it has been working closely with the school, council and Victoria Police to improve safety at this location. Since meeting in March 2015 and December 2015, vegetation trimming, linemarking refreshment and an LED signal lantern upgrade on 31 March 2016 to the pedestrian-operated signals have been undertaken to provide motorists with improved sightlines. Victoria Police was also requested to provide increased enforcement.

VicRoads has investigated the request for electronic speed signs on Booran Road. VicRoads determined that the existing static school speed signs are in accordance with the current Speed Zoning Guidelines and are appropriate and consistent with other locations on similar roads across the state.

VicRoads undertook on-site observations on 12 October 2016 and found general compliance from motorists with both the speed limit and the pedestrian crossing.

Eastern Victoria Region

Question asked by: Ms Bath
Directed to: Treasurer
Asked on: 7 December 2016

ANSWER:

The brown coal royalty is paid by mine operators to access, use and extract Victorian brown coal resources that they manage on behalf of the community. Royalty payments are a product of lignite extracted in a particular year, the energy content of that lignite, and the royalty rate of that year. Therefore, it is not possible to accurately calculate royalties paid by an individual organisation based on aggregates reported in the State Budget.

Prior to the 2016-17 Budget Victoria's coal royalty rate had not changed since 2005. The increase was effective 1 January 2017. The change brings Victorian coal royalties into line with royalties in New South Wales and Queensland, applicable to black coal, when standardised for energy content. The increase will ensure Victorians are being paid their fair share.

The rate increased three-fold from 7.6 cents to 23 cents per gigajoule unit of lignite. It will have a minimal impact on consumers. The profitability of the brown-coal electricity generators is sufficiently high to absorb some of the costs. Further, Victoria will continue to enjoy the lowest cost of energy production in Australia.

The Victorian Government will always look to keep tax rates as low as practical, balanced with the need to raise revenue to fund infrastructure investment and the delivery of essential services.

Western Victoria Region

Question asked by: Mr Morris
Directed to: Minister for Emergency Services
Asked on: 7 December 2016

ANSWER:

The locations of Victoria's firefighting aircraft fleet are operational matters determined by the Emergency Management Commissioner and fire agency chiefs. In determining the locations of the aircraft fleet, the Air-Crane's competencies and limitations were considered with the outlook for the season and the fire risk in particular areas before determining their locations.

The aircraft fleet are strategically positioned across the state so they are available for a range of different types of fires and terrain to provide the best aerial firefighting response for the community.

The introduction of a fleet of world class rapid response mid-size helicopters that are highly manoeuvrable, fast, carry significant loads of retardant, and can be deployed easily and quickly around regions and the state, are the way forward in helicopter aerial response. These aircraft combined with the fixed wing current turbo prop fire bombers gives Victoria one of the best, most efficient aerial fighting fleets in the world. The replacement of the Erickson Air-Crane in Ballarat with rapid response mid-sized aerial firefighting helicopters will enhance protection within the region.

This summer, Ballarat and southwest Victoria will, for the first time, be protected by a water-bombing helicopter which can be dispatched to respond to fires at the same time as fire trucks. Unlike the Air-Crane, this helicopter is connected into the pre-determined dispatch system so that, instead of waiting for the fire trucks to arrive on the scene and then requesting air support, it arrives around the same time as the fire trucks. This allows for a faster attack on fires to ensure small fires remain small.

Having aircraft which can respond through pre-determined dispatch was a key recommendation of the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission, the implementation of which enjoyed bipartisan support.

Western Victoria Region

Question asked by: Mr Ramsay
Directed to: Minister for Emergency Services
Asked on: 7 December 2016

ANSWER:

Every one of our firefighters, career and volunteer, are among the best in the world and they are fiercely committed to keeping the state safe. The role of volunteers in our fire services is protected and has not changed.

Victoria's emergency management sector is well prepared for the summer season. Pre-season briefings for more than 1880 emergency management personnel at 28 regional and 12 state meetings were held to ensure the sector fully understands the seasonal outlook, knows the risks, and is prepared to respond and work with communities to protect their safety. Almost 170 Regional Controllers and State Response Controllers have undertaken extensive training and exercises together to ensure emergency management personnel are well prepared.

Emergency Management agencies have already put their skills to the test while responding to spring and summer flood and storm events, and to the fire events we have already experienced this summer season, highlighting the sector's joined-up approach in working as one to respond to emergencies.

Western Metropolitan Region

Question asked by: Mr Finn
Directed to: Minister for Public Transport
Asked on: 7 December 2016

ANSWER:

The former Liberal Government broke their promise to build a rail link to Melbourne Airport. They also promised to build rail lines to Avalon Airport, Rowville and Doncaster. None of these or any other major public transport projects were undertaken by the former Liberal Government. In contrast, the Andrews Labor Government is delivering on its promises, including the Metro Tunnel project which was scrapped by the previous Government but is required before a train to the airport is built. The Liberal Party's decision to scrap this project set back the opportunity to provide a rail link to the airport. Work is also proceeding on the Government's Citylink Tullamarine project to increase capacity, ease congestion and improve safety to the airport.

It is noted that the Member for Western Metropolitan claims there is a need for an alternative motor vehicle access to the airport but proposes no such thing.

Northern Victoria Region

Question asked by: Ms Lovell
Directed to: Minister for Roads and Road Safety
Asked on: 7 December 2016

ANSWER:

The Andrews Labor Government has guaranteed funding of at least \$1 billion over eight years for the upgrade and repair of unsafe and congested roads and level crossings across regional Victoria. The Government is also committed to working with local councils to identify road infrastructure needs in local communities.

To support this commitment, the Government has provided \$260 million to repair and upgrade unsafe and deteriorating roads across regional Victoria. The Government recently announced more than \$40 million to repair and rehabilitate arterial roads across north and north eastern Victoria to make regional roads safer and more reliable for drivers. A number of sites will receive major repairs and maintenance works including the Hume Highway, Goulburn Valley Highway, Mclvor Highway, Kiewa Valley Highway, Midland Highway and key rural roads including Benambra-Corryong Road, Benalla-Yarrawonga Road and Bacchus Marsh-Gisborne Road.

The Federal Government also provides direct funding to local councils for the maintenance of local roads and bridges. These programs include the Roads to Recovery Programme and the Bridges Renewal Programme. The Federal Government also provides financial assistance grants to local councils that can be used for roads and for general purposes.

In addition to this maintenance expenditure, I recently approved \$2.18 million for an enhanced maintenance program to address road pavement conditions on roads favoured by motorcyclists. Many of these roads are in the northern Victoria electorate. In addition, eleven motorcycle specific projects totalling \$13 million to improve safety of road infrastructure have been approved in 2016. These projects include work to keep gravel off the road and improve the safety of existing guardrail with the fitting of rubrail guards, specifically designed for motorcyclist safety. Further motorcycle specific projects funded from the Motorcycle Safety Levy will be prepared for approval in 2017.

Eastern Metropolitan Region

Question asked by: Ms Wooldridge
Directed to: Minister for Emergency Services
Asked on: 8 December 2016

ANSWER:

I congratulate the Eltham Country Fire Authority (CFA) Brigade for its official opening on 19 November 2016. The Eltham CFA Brigade has been serving the community since 1926 and this modern facility will help its members continue their dedicated work.

I was unable to attend the official opening due to prior commitments and was represented by the Member for Eltham, Ms Vicki Ward. I was pleased to visit the brigade on 2 December and meet with a number of its outstanding firefighters.

Northern Metropolitan Region

Question asked by: Mr Elasmarr
Directed to: Minister for Multicultural Affairs
Asked on: 8 December 2016

ANSWER:

Sporting clubs across Victoria play an important role in bringing together local communities, and creating a sense of belonging and inclusion amongst people from diverse backgrounds.

On 17 November 2016, the Victorian Government announced a \$4 million funding boost to support women and young people from culturally diverse communities to participate in a range of sports.

The Multicultural Sports Funds Grants Program will work in partnership with the AFL, Cricket Australia, Football Federation Victoria and other sporting bodies to help local sporting clubs boost participation among women and culturally diverse groups.

This grants program is a key component of the Labor Government's Whole of Sport Sector Multicultural Participation Strategy, being developed with a range of sporting and multicultural peak bodies, to ensure equal access and community involvement in sport.

Major sporting partners will also be matching funding or providing in-kind contributions for initiatives across a wide range of activities, including sporting events, camps, coaching clinics, internships, leadership and mentoring programs.

This initial funding, as well as the additional contributions from major sporting codes and peak bodies, will help to break down barriers to participation faced by many Victorians from culturally diverse backgrounds.

The first grants round will open in early 2017.

Western Victoria Region

Question asked by: Mr Purcell
Directed to: Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change
Asked on: 8 December 2016

ANSWER:

The Nuclear Activities (Prohibitions) Act 1983 prohibits the development of nuclear power stations in Victoria.

The Portland region has many unique attributes when it comes to renewable energy resources. The Andrews Labor Government has announced renewable energy generation targets of 25% by 2020 and 40% by 2025. These targets have provided the policy certainty to drive investment in the renewable energy sector which will deliver an estimated \$2.5 billion of investment and create up to 4000 additional jobs in the peak year of construction, along with 11 000 jobs in construction projects. Portland, and the surrounding region is well placed to attract a large share of this investment and economic growth.

Existing renewable investment in the area includes Pacific Hydro's 148MW Portland wind farm, while an hour from Portland the 420 MW Macarthur wind farm includes 80 towers manufactured by Keppel Prince. The area also hosts the Point Fairy bio wave pilot project supported by the Victorian Government and ARENA. These investments, combined with local capabilities demonstrate the opportunities available in taking advantage of the growing investment opportunities in Victoria.

The Andrews Labor Government will continue to work with the community of Portland to identify and harness renewable energy investment, and new energy technology opportunities which will deliver sustained economic activity and jobs in the region.

Eastern Metropolitan Region

Question asked by: Mr Leane
Directed to: Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change
Asked on: 8 December 2016

ANSWER:

There are opportunities for more Victorian Energy Compare forums to be held in your electorate and other electorates in Victoria in 2017. The forums are currently being delivered at the request of MPs and community groups across the state. The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning will continue to respond to these requests throughout 2017.

The Andrews Labor Government is committed to helping Victorians save money on their energy bills and the Victorian Energy Compare website is a key tool consumers can use to identify the retailers which have the most competitive offers for them. A typical user can save \$330 on electricity and \$250 on gas annually. We will continue to support this website and a range of activities, including information forums, will be delivered in 2017 and beyond. This will ensure the awareness of the Victorian Energy Compare website, and savings to Victorian consumers, continues to grow.

If you would like to host a Victorian Energy Compare forum in your electorate please contact my office and they will put you in touch with the manager of the website.

Southern Metropolitan Region

Question asked by: Ms Crozier
Directed to: Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change
Asked on: 8 December 2016

ANSWER:

As a result of Engie's decision to close Hazelwood power station, energy prices are expected to increase by an average of 3.5 per cent per annum for the next two years. However from 2018–2019, Victorians are expected to experience a price reduction as more renewable energy is built in the State.

The Government has announced a bipartisan review into electricity and gas retail markets in Victoria with a particular focus on retailers' profit margins.

The review will consider whether action is required to improve retail energy markets in Victoria. It will also consider whether retailers are unreasonably taking advantage of the impending closure of the Hazelwood power station to increase prices to consumers.

It is important to remember however that there are significant price differences in the energy market offers of Victoria's energy retailers and differences between standing offers and market offers. Consumers who engage in the market and switch retailers can make significant savings on their energy bills. Victorians can visit the Government's independent price comparison website, Victorian Energy Compare, to find and compare electricity, solar and gas prices.

Southern Metropolitan Region

Question asked by: Ms Fitzherbert
Directed to: Minister for Education
Asked on: 8 December 2016

ANSWER:**Background**

The redevelopment of South Melbourne Park Primary School was a 2014 election commitment, with \$8.4 million allocated from the 2016-17 State Budget. The school will be a co-educational Prep-6 school built for 550 students and open Term 1, 2019. Gray Puksand Architects are completing the Design Development phase, which incorporates the active reuse of existing buildings, including the Mess Hall, the Drill Hall, the East and West Residences, and features a new 2 storey building with an entitled gymnasium.

The masterplan and project design will be released for public consultation in February 2017. A community engagement plan will be developed and include community forum, website development, social media post and facts sheets distributed to key stakeholders and local community in February 2017.

Orchestra Victoria's administration has been relocated to premises in South Melbourne, and the Orchestra itself is utilising various venues until accommodation is secured that is suitable for both the administration and the Orchestra. Parks Victoria has relocated to accommodation at 15A Aughtie Drive in the Albert Park Precinct.

The completion of the design documentation is due February 2017 and tender documentation in April 2017. The current program of work is on track and the completion of construction will be met by the end of 2018. The school is currently on schedule to open Term 1, 2019.

Southern Metropolitan Region

Question asked by: Mr Davis
Directed to: Minister for Planning
Asked on: 8 December 2016

ANSWER:

The Andrews Labor Government is about to finalise Plan Melbourne. This strategy articulates the preferred city structure for Melbourne.

As you know, the government has created Infrastructure Victoria to provide independent and expert advice about Victoria's current and future infrastructure needs and priorities to support improved social, economic and environmental outcomes for the state.

Infrastructure Victoria has delivered their 30-Year Infrastructure Strategy to assess the current state of infrastructure in Victoria and identify Victoria's infrastructure needs and priorities. Government's response to this strategy is currently being prepared.

Northern Victoria Region

Question asked by: Ms Lovell
Directed to: Minister for Health
Asked on: 8 December 2016

ANSWER:

The Andrews Labor Government is working with Goulburn Valley Health to implement strategies that will ensure it provides the highest possible level of services within its emergency department.

Until the \$168.5 million redevelopment of the Shepparton campus is complete, Goulburn Valley Health is working hard to improve emergency department performance.

Measures include the introduction of a senior medical staff rapid assessment triage model and a seven day fast track service, increased training of critical care nursing staff, and the strengthening of communications on ambulance handover, along with the correcting of technical issues with data entry.

In addition, Goulburn Valley Health will receive an extra \$2.02 million in 2016-17 as part of the recently announced \$500 million funding increase for improvement of ambulance performance. The extra funding will:

- establish a new emergency department assessment and streaming model;
- enable the purchase of eight new cardiac monitors, an ECG machine and an ultrasound machine;
- increase the emergency department workforce by four specialist doctors and two extra nurses; and
- ensure a physiotherapist, nurse practitioner and radiographer are on site seven days per week.

This will enable Goulburn Valley Health to assess and treat patients more quickly in the emergency department; reducing waiting times and improving ambulance performance.

As part of the Andrews Labor Government's record \$16.5 billion investment in health in Victoria, Goulburn Valley Health received \$168.6 million in the 2016-17 State Budget, which is \$10 million or 6.3 per cent more than the previous year.

These investments stand in stark contrast to four years of cuts and neglect by the former Liberal government.

The Andrews Labor Government is ensuring that the people of Shepparton and district will have a modern, state of the art hospital which will treat more patients than ever before.