

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

FIFTY-EIGHTH PARLIAMENT

FIRST SESSION

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

22 and 23 August 2017

(Extract from book 14)

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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)

Premier	The Hon. D. M. Andrews, MP
Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Minister for Emergency Services	The Hon. J. A. Merlino, MP
Treasurer	The Hon. T. H. Pallas, MP
Minister for Public Transport and Minister for Major Projects	The Hon. J. Allan, MP
Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade	The Hon. P. Dalidakis, MLC
Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, and Minister for Suburban Development	The Hon. L. D'Ambrosio, MP
Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and Minister for Ports	The Hon. L. A. Donnellan, MP
Minister for Tourism and Major Events, Minister for Sport and Minister for Veterans	The Hon. J. H. Eren, MP
Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing, Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Equality and Minister for Creative Industries	The Hon. M. P. Foley, MP
Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services	The Hon. J. Hennessy, MP
Minister for Local Government, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Minister for Industrial Relations	The Hon. N. M. Hutchins, MP
Special Minister of State	The Hon. G. Jennings, MLC
Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation	The Hon. M. Kairouz, MP
Minister for Families and Children, and Minister for Youth Affairs	The Hon. J. Mikakos, MLC
Minister for Police and Minister for Water	The Hon. L. M. Neville, MP
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
Minister for Agriculture and Minister for Regional Development	The Hon. J. L. Pulford, MLC
Minister for Women and Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence	The Hon. F. Richardson, MP
Minister for Finance and Minister for Multicultural Affairs	The Hon. R. D. Scott, MP
Minister for 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, 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 Barber, Mr Bourman, #Ms Dunn, Mr Eideh, Mr Finn, Mr Gepp, 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 Elasmr, #Ms Hartland, Mr Melhem, #Mr Purcell, #Mr Ramsay, Ms Shing, #Ms Symes and Mr Young.

Standing Committee on Legal and Social Issues — #Mr Barber, #Ms Crozier, #Mr Elasmr, Ms Fitzherbert, #Ms Hartland, Mr Morris, 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.

Fire Services Bill Select Committee — Ms Hartland, Ms Lovell, Mr Melhem, Mr Mulino, Mr O’Sullivan, Mr Rich Phillips, Ms Shing and Mr Young.

Joint committees

Accountability and Oversight Committee — (*Council*): Mr O’Sullivan, 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, Ms Garrett 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 O’Sullivan, Mr Ramsay and Mr Young. (*Assembly*): Mr J. Bull, Ms Halfpenny, Mr Richardson and Mr Riordan.

Family and Community Development Committee — (*Council*): Dr Carling-Jenkins and Mr Finn. (*Assembly*): Ms Britnell, 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 Gepp and Ms Patten. (*Assembly*): Mr Dixon, Mr Howard, Ms Suleyman, Mr Thompson and Mr Tilley.

Public Accounts and Estimates Committee — (*Council*): Ms Patten, 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 — Acting Clerk of the Legislative Assembly: Ms Bridget Noonan

Council — Acting Clerk of the Parliaments and Clerk of the Legislative Council: Mr A. Young

Parliamentary Services — Secretary: Mr P. Lochert

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

President:

The Hon. B. N. ATKINSON

Deputy President:

Mr K. EIDEH

Acting Presidents:

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

Leader of the Government:

The Hon. G. JENNINGS

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 ¹	Eastern Victoria	Nats	Mulino, Mr Daniel	Eastern Victoria	ALP
Bourman, Mr Jeffrey	Eastern Victoria	SFFP	O'Brien, Mr Daniel David ⁶	Eastern Victoria	Nats
Carling-Jenkins, Dr Rachel ²	Western Metropolitan	AC	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 ⁷	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
Gepp, Mr Mark ⁴	Northern Victoria	ALP	Somyurek, Mr Adem	South Eastern Metropolitan	ALP
Hartland, Ms Colleen Mildred	Western Metropolitan	Greens	Springle, Ms Nina	South Eastern Metropolitan	Greens
Herbert, Mr Steven Ralph ⁵	Northern Victoria	ALP	Symes, Ms Jaelyn	Northern Victoria	ALP
Jennings, Mr Gavin Wayne	South Eastern Metropolitan	ALP	Tierney, Ms Gayle Anne	Western Victoria	ALP
Leane, Mr Shaun Leo	Eastern Metropolitan	ALP	Wooldridge, Ms Mary Louise Newling	Eastern Metropolitan	LP
Lovell, Ms Wendy Ann	Northern Victoria	LP	Young, Mr Daniel	Northern Victoria	SFFP
Melhem, Mr Cesar	Western Metropolitan	ALP			

¹ Appointed 16 April 2015

² DLP until 26 June 2017

³ Resigned 27 May 2016

⁴ Appointed 7 June 2017

⁵ Resigned 6 April 2017

⁶ Resigned 25 February 2015

⁷ Appointed 13 October 2016

PARTY ABBREVIATIONS

AC — Australian Conservatives; 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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QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Answers to the following questions on notice were circulated on the date shown.

Questions have been incorporated from the notice paper of the Legislative Council.

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

Headings reflect the portfolio of the minister answering the question.

Tuesday, 22 August 2017

Police

7699. MS PENNICUIK — To ask the Minister for Corrections (for the Minister for Police): How many firearms were registered in Victoria in each licensing category in 2014 and 2015.

ANSWER:

The 2014-15 and 2015-16 Victoria Police Annual Reports have the following data on the number of registered firearms in Victoria, current as at 30 June 2015 and 30 June 2016 respectively:

2014-15 financial year: 767 304 registered firearms

2015-16 financial year: 792 845 registered firearms attached to 211 610 current firearm licences

I am not able to provide more information from Victoria Police about the firearm register. Prior to the 2014-15 year, Victoria Police did not report on the number of registered firearms or number of people in possession of firearms in Victoria.

There are well-established public interest grounds to limit access to government documents relating to firearm possession in the community. This is to ensure law enforcement and other sensitive information regarding firearms is properly protected and used for the purpose for which that information is gathered.

The Chief Commissioner of Police is required to keep a register of each firearm kept within the State in accordance with section 113 of the Firearms Act 1996. This requirement implements Victoria's obligations under the National Firearms Agreement.

The National Firearms Agreement, which sets out minimum standards for firearms regulation and has been agreed by all States and Territories and the Commonwealth, requires the nationwide registration of all firearms. Jurisdictions must record sufficient information to be able to uniquely identify each firearm, including details prescribed by the national information-sharing hub. This nation-wide approach allows law enforcement agencies to track firearms over their lifetime, from import or manufacture, registration and transfer to destruction or legal export. This information is a critical component of law enforcement agencies' intelligence holdings, enabling them to understand the licit and illicit firearms markets and to strengthen their ability to minimise diversion of firearms into the illicit or 'grey' markets.

As you are aware, section 114 of the Firearms Act 1996 provides that the firearms register is an exempt document for the purposes of the Freedom of Information Act 1982, except where a person is applying for information on the firearms register which specifically relates to that person.

Through the National Firearms Agreement, the firearms register along with other firearm related information is part of a national approach to assist police and law enforcement agencies from all jurisdictions to share information on firearms in Australia. These registers are to improve public safety, through national information sharing on registration, licensing and the movement of firearms between States and Territories.

[Question 7699 reinstated by order of President on 23 February 2017. Hansard reference to original answer: 7 February 2017, page 329]

Police

7700. MS PENNICUIK — To ask the Minister for Corrections (for the Minister for Police): How many individuals were licensed to possess one or more firearms in Victoria in each licensing category in 2014 and 2015.

ANSWER:

The 2014-15 and 2015-16 Victoria Police Annual Reports have the following data on the number of Victorian firearm licences, current as at 30 June 2015 and 30 June 2016 respectively:

2014-15 financial year: 214 936 Victorian Firearm Licences

2015-16 financial year: 219 005 Victorian Firearm Licences

I am not able to provide more information from Victoria Police about the firearm register. Prior to the 2014-15 year, Victoria Police did not report on the number of Victorian firearm licences or number of people in possession of firearms in Victoria.

There are well-established public interest grounds to limit access to government documents relating to firearm possession in the community. This is to ensure law enforcement and other sensitive information regarding firearms is properly protected and used for the purpose for which that information is gathered.

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[Question 7700 reinstated by order of President on 23 February 2017. Hansard reference to original answer: 7 February 2017, page 329]

Police

7701. MS PENNICUIK — To ask the Minister for Corrections (for the Minister for Police): How many firearms were registered in Victoria in each licensing category in 1996 and 1997.

ANSWER:

I am not able to provide the requested information from Victoria Police about the firearm register. Prior to the 2014-15 year, Victoria Police did not report on the number of registered firearms or number of people in possession of firearms in Victoria.

There are well-established public interest grounds to limit access to government documents relating to firearm possession in the community. This is to ensure law enforcement and other sensitive information regarding firearms is properly protected and used for the purpose for which that information is gathered.

The Chief Commissioner of Police is required to keep a register of each firearm kept within the State in accordance with section 113 of the Firearms Act 1996. This requirement implements Victoria's obligations under the National Firearms Agreement.

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Through the National Firearms Agreement, the firearms register along with other firearm related information is part of a national approach to assist police and law enforcement agencies from all jurisdictions to share information on firearms in Australia. These registers are to improve public safety, through national information sharing on registration, licensing and the movement of firearms between States and Territories.

[Question 7701 reinstated by order of President on 23 February 2017. Hansard reference to original answer: 21 February 2017, page 956]

Police

7702. MS PENNICUIK — To ask the Minister for Corrections (for the Minister for Police): How many individuals were licensed to possess one or more firearms in Victoria in each licensing category in 1996 and 1997.

ANSWER:

I am not able to provide more information from Victoria Police about the firearm register. Prior to the 2014-15 year, Victoria Police did not report on the number of Victorian firearm licences or number of people in possession of firearms in Victoria.

There are well-established public interest grounds to limit access to government documents relating to firearm possession in the community. This is to ensure law enforcement and other sensitive information regarding firearms is properly protected and used for the purpose for which that information is gathered.

The Chief Commissioner of Police is required to keep a register of each firearm kept within the State in accordance with section 113 of the Firearms Act 1996. This requirement implements Victoria's obligations under the National Firearms Agreement.

The National Firearms Agreement, which sets out minimum standards for firearms regulation and has been agreed to by all States and Territories and the Commonwealth, requires the nationwide registration of all firearms. Jurisdictions must record sufficient information to be able to uniquely identify each firearm, including details prescribed by the national information-sharing hub. This nation-wide approach allows law enforcement agencies to track firearms over their lifetime, from import or manufacture, registration and transfer to destruction or legal export. This information is a critical component of law enforcement agencies' intelligence holdings, enabling them to understand the licit and illicit firearms markets and to strengthen their ability to minimise diversion of firearms into the illicit or 'grey' markets.

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Through the National Firearms Agreement, the firearms register along with other firearm related information is part of a national approach to assist police and law enforcement agencies from all jurisdictions to share information on firearms in Australia. These registers are to improve public safety, through national information sharing on registration, licensing and the movement of firearms between States and Territories.

[Question 7702 reinstated by order of President on 23 February 2017. Hansard reference to original answer: 21 February 2017, page 956]

Emergency services

10 972. MS WOOLDRIDGE — To ask the Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade (for the Minister for Emergency Services): In relation to Crown-owned land in the electorate of Eltham, relating to the Minister's portfolio —

- (1) what is the description of and where available, the address of all such land; and
- (2) does the Government intend to sell any of this land or acquire and new land in the electorate.

ANSWER:

There is no Crown-owned land in the electorate of Eltham relating to the Emergency Services portfolio.

Police

10 975. MS WOOLDRIDGE — To ask the Minister for Training and Skills (for the Minister for Police): How much has been spent on the Eltham police station in 2014, 2015 and 2016 on annual scheduled maintenance to meet compliance and safety requirements.

ANSWER:

General information about capital and maintenance costs are available in the Victoria Police Annual Report. To break down this information further would represent an unreasonable diversion of Victoria Police's time.

Police

10 976. MS WOOLDRIDGE — To ask the Minister for Training and Skills (for the Minister for Police): How much has been spent on the Greensborough police station in 2014, 2015 and 2016 on annual scheduled maintenance to meet compliance and safety requirements.

ANSWER:

General information about capital and maintenance costs are available in the Victoria Police Annual Report. To break down this information further would represent a unreasonable diversion of Victoria Police's time.

Mental health

11 022. MRS PEULICH — To ask the Minister for Families and Children (for the Minister for Mental Health): In relation to the Department of Health and Human Services contract, C4358, the Aboriginal Metropolitan Ice Partnership Pilot Formative Evaluation, what was the final value of all payments of the contract to LeeJenn Health Consultants Pty Ltd.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

The final value of all payments made to LeeJen Health Consultants (now trading as 360edge) to undertake a formative evaluation of the Aboriginal Metropolitan Ice Partnership Pilot is provided in the 2015-16 Department of Health and Human Services Annual Report and in, the forthcoming 2016-17 Annual Report under details of consultancies

See Link: <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/publications/annual-reports>.

Ambulance services

11 172. MS WOOLDRIDGE — To ask the Minister for Families and Children (for the Minister for Ambulance Services): In relation to ambulance bypass being removed in later 2015 —

- (1) what impact has this removal had on 2016-17 ambulance performance results; and
- (2) how do hospitals respond now when they are swamped with demand, if they cannot activate bypass.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

The Government has been working with Ambulance Victoria and its paramedics on a suite of reforms, supported by significant Government investment, both prior to and following the cessation of hospital bypass. I can advise that since Quarter 1 2015-16 the statewide Code 1 response performance result has improved from 74.6 per cent to 81 per cent in Quarter 4 2016-17.

During periods of high demand, health services initiate their whole-of hospital response to create additional capacity to receive patients and ensure all patients receive timely, quality care. This includes internal escalation protocols that include senior health service executives empowered to authorise necessary responses, including the Chief Executive where appropriate.

Plans also include: triggers for alerting senior emergency department staff when delays in ambulance patient transfer occur; internal hospital strategies to improve emergency department patient flow, create capacity when required; and alert senior hospital executive staff when delays in ambulance patient transfer occur.

The escalation plan also includes clearly documented action to be taken when significant risk to patient safety in the emergency department has been identified. This includes immediate communication of this issue to senior executives and the Chief Executive of the health service.

During periods of high demand, Ambulance Victoria continues to monitor and manage factors to ensure the clustering of ambulance arrivals is mitigated as far as possible and distribute ambulances as appropriate across the system.

Health

11 174. MS WOOLDRIDGE — To ask the Minister for Families and Children (for the Minister for Health): In relation to Small Rural Services, how much was Alexandra District Health paid in 2016-17, on top of their block funding, to reimburse them for the cost of the additional 2016 Christmas Day public holiday.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

Nil.

Health

11 175. MS WOOLDRIDGE — To ask the Minister for Families and Children (for the Minister for Health): In relation to Small Rural Services, how much was Alpine Health paid in 2016-17, on top of their block funding, to reimburse them for the cost of the additional 2016 Christmas Day public holiday.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

Nil.

Health

11 176. MS WOOLDRIDGE — To ask the Minister for Families and Children (for the Minister for Health): In relation to Small Rural Services, how much was Beaufort and Skipton Health paid in 2016-17, on top of their block funding, to reimburse them for the cost of the additional 2016 Christmas Day public holiday.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

Nil.

Health

11 177. MS WOOLDRIDGE — To ask the Minister for Families and Children (for the Minister for Health): In relation to Small Rural Services, how much was Beechworth Health Service paid in 2016-17, on top of their block funding, to reimburse them for the cost of the additional 2016 Christmas Day public holiday.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

Nil.

Health

11 178. MS WOOLDRIDGE — To ask the Minister for Families and Children (for the Minister for Health): In relation to Small Rural Services, how much was Boort District Health paid in 2016-17, on top of their block funding, to reimburse them for the cost of the additional 2016 Christmas Day public holiday.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

Nil.

Health

11 179. MS WOOLDRIDGE — To ask the Minister for Families and Children (for the Minister for Health): In relation to Small Rural Services, how much was Casterton Memorial Hospital paid in 2016-17, on top of their block funding, to reimburse them for the cost of the additional 2016 Christmas Day public holiday.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

Nil.

Health

11 180. MS WOOLDRIDGE — To ask the Minister for Families and Children (for the Minister for Health): In relation to Small Rural Services, how much was Cobram District Health paid in 2016-17, on top of their block funding, to reimburse them for the cost of the additional 2016 Christmas Day public holiday.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

Nil.

Health

11 181. MS WOOLDRIDGE — To ask the Minister for Families and Children (for the Minister for Health): In relation to Small Rural Services, how much was Cohuna District Hospital paid in 2016-17, on top of their block funding, to reimburse them for the cost of the additional 2016 Christmas Day public holiday.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

Nil.

Health

11 182. MS WOOLDRIDGE — To ask the Minister for Families and Children (for the Minister for Health): In relation to Small Rural Services, how much was Dunmunkle Health Services paid in 2016-17, on top of their block funding, to reimburse them for the cost of the additional 2016 Christmas Day public holiday.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

Nil.

Health

11 183. MS WOOLDRIDGE — To ask the Minister for Families and Children (for the Minister for Health): In relation to Small Rural Services, how much was East Wimmera Health Service paid in 2016-17, on top of their block funding, to reimburse them for the cost of the additional 2016 Christmas Day public holiday.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

Nil.

Health

11 184. MS WOOLDRIDGE — To ask the Minister for Families and Children (for the Minister for Health): In relation to Small Rural Services, how much was Edenhope and District Memorial Hospital paid in 2016-17, on top of their block funding, to reimburse them for the cost of the additional 2016 Christmas Day public holiday.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

Nil.

Health

11 185. MS WOOLDRIDGE — To ask the Minister for Families and Children (for the Minister for Health): In relation to Small Rural Services, how much was Heathcote Health paid in 2016-17, on top of their block funding, to reimburse them for the cost of the additional 2016 Christmas Day public holiday.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

Nil.

Health

11 186. MS WOOLDRIDGE — To ask the Minister for Families and Children (for the Minister for Health): In relation to Small Rural Services, how much was Hepburn Health Service paid in 2016-17, on top of their block funding, to reimburse them for the cost of the additional 2016 Christmas Day public holiday.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

Nil.

Health

11 187. MS WOOLDRIDGE — To ask the Minister for Families and Children (for the Minister for Health): In relation to Small Rural Services, how much was Hesse Rural Health paid in 2016-17, on top of their block funding, to reimburse them for the cost of the additional 2016 Christmas Day public holiday.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

Nil.

Health

11 188. MS WOOLDRIDGE — To ask the Minister for Families and Children (for the Minister for Health): In relation to Small Rural Services, how much was Heywood Rural Health paid in 2016-17, on top of their block funding, to reimburse them for the cost of the additional 2016 Christmas Day public holiday.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

Nil.

Health

11 189. MS WOOLDRIDGE — To ask the Minister for Families and Children (for the Minister for Health): In relation to Small Rural Services, how much was Inglewood and Districts Health paid in 2016-17, on top of their block funding, to reimburse them for the cost of the additional 2016 Christmas Day public holiday.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

Nil.

Health

11 190. MS WOOLDRIDGE — To ask the Minister for Families and Children (for the Minister for Health): In relation to Small Rural Services, how much was Kerang District Health paid in 2016-17, on top of their block funding, to reimburse them for the cost of the additional 2016 Christmas Day public holiday.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

Nil.

Health

11 191. MS WOOLDRIDGE — To ask the Minister for Families and Children (for the Minister for Health): In relation to Small Rural Services, how much was Kilmore and District Hospital paid in 2016-17, on top of their block funding, to reimburse them for the cost of the additional 2016 Christmas Day public holiday.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

Nil.

Health

11 192. MS WOOLDRIDGE — To ask the Minister for Families and Children (for the Minister for Health): In relation to Small Rural Services, how much was Kooweerup Regional Health Service paid in 2016-17, on top of their block funding, to reimburse them for the cost of the additional 2016 Christmas Day public holiday.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

Nil.

Health

11 193. MS WOOLDRIDGE — To ask the Minister for Families and Children (for the Minister for Health): In relation to Small Rural Services, how much was Kyneton District Health Service paid in 2016-17, on top of their block funding, to reimburse them for the cost of the additional 2016 Christmas Day public holiday.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

Nil.

Health

11 194. MS WOOLDRIDGE — To ask the Minister for Families and Children (for the Minister for Health): In relation to Small Rural Services, how much was Lorne Community Hospital paid in 2016-17, on top of their block funding, to reimburse them for the cost of the additional 2016 Christmas Day public holiday.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

Nil.

Health

11 195. MS WOOLDRIDGE — To ask the Minister for Families and Children (for the Minister for Health): In relation to Small Rural Services, how much was Maldon Hospital paid in 2016-17, on top of their block funding, to reimburse them for the cost of the additional 2016 Christmas Day public holiday.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

Nil.

Health

11 196. MS WOOLDRIDGE — To ask the Minister for Families and Children (for the Minister for Health): In relation to Small Rural Services, how much was Mallee Track Health and Community Services paid in 2016-17, on top of their block funding, to reimburse them for the cost of the additional 2016 Christmas Day public holiday.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

Nil.

Health

11 197. MS WOOLDRIDGE — To ask the Minister for Families and Children (for the Minister for Health): In relation to Small Rural Services, how much was Mansfield District Hospital paid in 2016-17, on top of their block funding, to reimburse them for the cost of the additional 2016 Christmas Day public holiday.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

Nil.

Health

11 198. MS WOOLDRIDGE — To ask the Minister for Families and Children (for the Minister for Health): In relation to Small Rural Services, how much was Moyne Health Services paid in 2016-17, on top of their block funding, to reimburse them for the cost of the additional 2016 Christmas Day public holiday.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

Nil.

Health

11 199. MS WOOLDRIDGE — To ask the Minister for Families and Children (for the Minister for Health): In relation to Small Rural Services, how much was Nathalia District Hospital paid in 2016-17, on top of their block funding, to reimburse them for the cost of the additional 2016 Christmas Day public holiday.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

Nil.

Health

11 200. MS WOOLDRIDGE — To ask the Minister for Families and Children (for the Minister for Health): In relation to Small Rural Services, how much was Numurkah District Health Service paid in 2016-17, on top of their block funding, to reimburse them for the cost of the additional 2016 Christmas Day public holiday.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

Nil.

Health

11 201. MS WOOLDRIDGE — To ask the Minister for Families and Children (for the Minister for Health): In relation to Small Rural Services, how much was Omeo District Health Service paid in 2016-17, on top of their block funding, to reimburse them for the cost of the additional 2016 Christmas Day public holiday.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

Nil.

Health

11 202. MS WOOLDRIDGE — To ask the Minister for Families and Children (for the Minister for Health): In relation to Small Rural Services, how much was Orbost Regional Health paid in 2016-17, on top of their block funding, to reimburse them for the cost of the additional 2016 Christmas Day public holiday.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

Nil.

Health

11 203. MS WOOLDRIDGE — To ask the Minister for Families and Children (for the Minister for Health): In relation to Small Rural Services, how much was Otway Health and Community Services paid in 2016-17, on top of their block funding, to reimburse them for the cost of the additional 2016 Christmas Day public holiday.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

Nil.

Health

11 204. MS WOOLDRIDGE — To ask the Minister for Families and Children (for the Minister for Health): In relation to Small Rural Services, how much was Robinvale District Health Services paid in 2016-17, on top of their block funding, to reimburse them for the cost of the additional 2016 Christmas Day public holiday.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

Nil.

Health

11 205. MS WOOLDRIDGE — To ask the Minister for Families and Children (for the Minister for Health): In relation to Small Rural Services, how much was Rochester and District Health Service paid in 2016-17, on top of their block funding, to reimburse them for the cost of the additional 2016 Christmas Day public holiday.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

Nil.

Health

11 206. MS WOOLDRIDGE — To ask the Minister for Families and Children (for the Minister for Health): In relation to Small Rural Services, how much was Rural Northwest Health paid in 2016-17, on top of their block funding, to reimburse them for the cost of the additional 2016 Christmas Day public holiday.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

Nil.

Health

11 207. MS WOOLDRIDGE — To ask the Minister for Families and Children (for the Minister for Health): In relation to Small Rural Services, how much was Seymour District Memorial Hospital paid in 2016-17, on top of their block funding, to reimburse them for the cost of the additional 2016 Christmas Day public holiday.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

Nil.

Health

11 208. MS WOOLDRIDGE — To ask the Minister for Families and Children (for the Minister for Health): In relation to Small Rural Services, how much was South Gippsland Health paid in 2016-17, on top of their block funding, to reimburse them for the cost of the additional 2016 Christmas Day public holiday.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

Nil.

Health

11 209. MS WOOLDRIDGE — To ask the Minister for Families and Children (for the Minister for Health): In relation to Small Rural Services, how much was Tallangatta Health Service paid in 2016-17, on top of their block funding, to reimburse them for the cost of the additional 2016 Christmas Day public holiday.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

Nil.

Health

11 210. MS WOOLDRIDGE — To ask the Minister for Families and Children (for the Minister for Health): In relation to Small Rural Services, how much was Terang and Mortlake Health Service paid in 2016-17, on top of their block funding, to reimburse them for the cost of the additional 2016 Christmas Day public holiday.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

Nil.

Health

11 211. MS WOOLDRIDGE — To ask the Minister for Families and Children (for the Minister for Health): In relation to Small Rural Services, how much was Timboon and District Health Care Services paid in 2016-17, on top of their block funding, to reimburse them for the cost of the additional 2016 Christmas Day public holiday.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

Nil.

Health

11 212. MS WOOLDRIDGE — To ask the Minister for Families and Children (for the Minister for Health): In relation to Small Rural Services, how much was Upper Murray Health and Community Services paid in 2016-17, on top of their block funding, to reimburse them for the cost of the additional 2016 Christmas Day public holiday.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

Nil.

Health

11 213. MS WOOLDRIDGE — To ask the Minister for Families and Children (for the Minister for Health): In relation to Small Rural Services, how much was West Wimmera Health Service paid in 2016-17, on top of their block funding, to reimburse them for the cost of the additional 2016 Christmas Day public holiday.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

Nil.

Health

11 214. MS WOOLDRIDGE — To ask the Minister for Families and Children (for the Minister for Health): In relation to Small Rural Services, how much was Yarram and District Health Service paid in 2016-17, on top of their block funding, to reimburse them for the cost of the additional 2016 Christmas Day public holiday.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

Nil.

Health

11 215. MS WOOLDRIDGE — To ask the Minister for Families and Children (for the Minister for Health): In relation to Small Rural Services, how much was Yarrawonga District Health Service paid in 2016-17, on top of their block funding, to reimburse them for the cost of the additional 2016 Christmas Day public holiday.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

Nil.

Health

11 216. MS WOOLDRIDGE — To ask the Minister for Families and Children (for the Minister for Health): In relation to Small Rural Services, how much was Yea and District Memorial Hospital paid in 2016-17, on top of their block funding, to reimburse them for the cost of the additional 2016 Christmas Day public holiday.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

Nil.

Health

11 218. MS WOOLDRIDGE — To ask the Minister for Families and Children (for the Minister for Health): In relation to Safer Care Victoria —

- (1) what is the total full time equivalent (FTE) allocation at Safer Care Victoria;
- (2) how many FTE at Safer Care Victoria are new positions;
- (3) how many FTE are existing positions transferred from other parts of Department of Health and Human Services and other Departments;
- (4) do these numbers include contractors and consultants;
- (5) how many contractors and consultants does Safer Care Victoria employ; and
- (6) what is the establishment and operational cost, including governance, of Safer Care Victoria in 2016-17 and 2017-18.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

The Andrews Labor Government is determined that the devastating consequences of chronic underfunding and poor management of the health system, revealed in the investigation prompted by avoidable stillbirths or deaths of babies at Djerriwarh Health Services in 2013 and 2014, should not be repeated.

To this end, in 2016–2017 the Victorian Government provided \$17 million to strengthen oversight of quality and safety. The 2017-18 Victorian Budget allocated a further \$215 million to implement the recommendations of the report Targeting Zero: supporting the Victorian hospital system to eliminate avoidable harm and strengthen quality of care, including the establishment, operationalisation, and governance of Safer Care Victoria and the Victorian Agency for Health Information. Better Care Victoria is part of Safer Care Victorian.

As at May 2017, these organisations were staffed by approximately 100 full time equivalent (FTE) staff. This includes ongoing and time limited positions. A majority of these positions have been transferred from other parts of the Department of Health and Human Services and other Departments.

Health

11 219. MS WOOLDRIDGE — To ask the Minister for Families and Children (for the Minister for Health): In relation to Better Care Victoria —

- (1) what is the total full time equivalent (FTE) allocation at Better Care Victoria;
- (2) how many FTE at Better Care Victoria are new positions;
- (3) how many FTE are existing positions transferred from other parts of Department of Health and Human Services and other Departments;
- (4) do these numbers include contractors and consultants;
- (5) how many contractors and consultants does Better Care Victoria employ; and
- (6) what is the establishment and operational cost, including governance, of Better Care Victoria in 2016-17 and 2017-18.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

The Andrews Labor Government is determined that the devastating consequences of chronic underfunding and poor management of the health system, revealed in the investigation prompted by avoidable stillbirths or deaths of babies at Djerriwarh Health Services in 2013 and 2014, should not be repeated.

To this end, in 2016–2017 the Victorian Government provided \$17 million to strengthen oversight of quality and safety. The 2017-18 Victorian Budget allocated a further \$215 million to implement the recommendations of the report Targeting Zero: supporting the Victorian hospital system to eliminate avoidable harm and strengthen quality of care, including the establishment, operationalisation, and governance of Safer Care Victoria and the Victorian Agency for Health Information. Better Care Victoria is part of Safer Care Victorian.

As at May 2017, these organisations were staffed by approximately 100 full time equivalent (FTE) staff. This includes ongoing and time limited positions. A majority of these positions have been transferred from other parts of the Department of Health and Human Services and other Departments.

Health

11 222. MS WOOLDRIDGE — To ask the Minister for Families and Children (for the Minister for Health): The Department of Health and Human Services Public Accounts and Estimates Committee 2017-18 Budget Estimates Questionnaire reports that Allied Health Professionals full time equivalent (FTE) have decreased by 14 per cent —

- (1) in which area(s) of the Department have Allied Health FTE been reduced; and
- (2) why have Allied Health FTE reduced.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

Reduction of Allied Health FTE has occurred in areas that have transitioned to the National Disability Insurance Scheme and where department staff employed under this classification have transferred to the National Disability Insurance Agency, as agreed in the Commonwealth and Victorian Bilateral Agreement for Transition to the National Disability insurance Scheme.

Premier

11 230. MS WOOLDRIDGE — To ask the Special Minister of State (for the Premier): Gareth Goodier has been appointed Executive Chair of the Parkville Biomedical Precinct, according to the Melbourne Health annual report (2015-16 page 74), Dr Goodier, as CEO of Melbourne Health, was on an income band of \$530 000-\$539 999 —

- (1) has he been employed as Executive Chair on an equivalent amount; and
- (2) how many days per week is Dr Goodier working.

ANSWER:

Details about employee information will be published in the Annual Reports as is standard practice.

Further information about public appointments can be found at <http://www.publicboards.vic.gov.au>.

Planning

11 237. MR BARBER — To ask the Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade (for the Minister for Planning): In relation to the issue of properties with solar panels installed having their solar panels overshadowed by new developments for all or part of the day, thus depleting their energy, environmental, and financial value:

- (1) can the Minister outline plans to clarify guidance in the Planning Scheme that fails to offer direction on solar panel overshadowing;
- (2) does the Minister acknowledge that “unreasonableness” is not a clear enough terminology to guide Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal decisions on solar panel overshadowing;
- (3) will the Minister amend the Planning Scheme to address solar panel overshadowing; and
- (4) in the meantime, will the Minister provide guidance to local councils on how to deal with permit applications with the potential to overshadow solar panels.

ANSWER:

I have directed the Planning Group of the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning to prepare planning scheme amendments and new guidance documents to provide clarity and consistency regarding assessment of solar panel overshadowing.

These changes will draw on the advice provided through several Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal decisions on solar panel overshadowing and will be finalised by the end of the 2017.

The approach being adopted is aimed at supporting informed decision making and to strike a balance between recognising the environmental benefits of utilising solar energy, and sustainable planning objectives aimed at controlling urban sprawl and enabling more people to live in proximity to train, tram and bus services, and in walking distance to jobs.

For this reason, the changes will not provide a veto on development to protect solar panels, but introduce clearer guidance and better information.

Families and children

11 253. MS CROZIER — To ask the Minister for Families and Children: In relation to children living in Residential care, as at 31 December 2016 —

- (a) how many were under 12 years old;
- (b) how many were under 15 years old;
- (c) how many had entered Residential care from the Youth Justice System;
- (d) how many had entered the Youth Justice System from Residential care;
- (e) how many were male;
- (f) how many were female;
- (g) what was the longest length of time a child had been living in Residential care;
- (h) what was the average length of time a child had been living in Residential care; and
- (i) how many had returned to Residential care having been the recipient of a Targeted Care Package.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

Data relating to the number of children and young people in residential care by quarter is available on the Department's website.

I am advised that the number who had entered residential care from the youth justice system is not reported and that the number who entered the youth justice system from residential care is not reported.

In March 2015, the Andrews Labor Government announced \$43 million for Targeted Care Packages which aim to move children out of residential care and into home-based care.

A further \$19 million was allocated in October 2015 with a view to preventing children and young people coming into residential care in the first place. The 2017-18 budget allocated \$17.3 million in funding for a further 100 Targeted Care Packages.

As at 30 June 2017, 386 young people have moved from residential care into home-based care and are now with foster carers, extended family or their parents.

Families and children

11 254. MS CROZIER — To ask the Minister for Families and Children: In relation to children living in Residential care, as at 31 March 2017 —

- (a) how many were under 12 years old;
- (b) how many were under 15 years old;
- (c) how many had entered Residential care from the Youth Justice System;
- (d) how many had entered the Youth Justice System from Residential care;
- (e) how many were male;
- (f) how many were female;
- (g) what was the longest length of time a child had been living in Residential care;
- (h) what was the average length of time a child had been living in Residential care; and
- (i) how many had returned to Residential care having been the recipient of a Targeted Care Package.

ANSWER:

Data relating to the number of children and young people in residential care by quarter is available on the Department's website.

I am advised that the number who had entered residential care from the youth justice system is not reported and that the number who entered the youth justice system from residential care is not reported.

In March 2015, the Andrews Labor Government announced \$43 million for Targeted Care Packages which aim to move children out of residential care and into home-based care.

A further \$19 million was allocated in October 2015 with a view to preventing children and young people coming into residential care in the first place. The 2017-18 budget allocated \$17.3 million in funding for a further 100 Targeted Care Packages.

As at 30 June 2017, 386 young people have moved from residential care into home-based care and are now with foster carers, extended family or their parents.

Families and children

11 255. MS CROZIER — To ask the Minister for Families and Children: In relation to children absconding or missing from Residential care or other Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) short term rental accommodation —

- (1) how many were reported to DHHS to date in the 2016-17 financial year;
- (2) how many does DHHS estimate are not reported;
- (3) how much was spent in retrieving absconders in Victoria; and
- (4) how much was spent in retrieving absconders from interstate.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

A young person who is absent or missing from care is reported in Category One incident data that is reported on a quarterly basis on the department's website. This is a new level of transparency introduced by our government.

It is of concern when any child is reported missing from care. The risks children are exposed to while missing vary greatly and relate to where the child or young person is spending time. As out of home care is not confined, children and young people exercise their right of movement as would be expected in any home environment. In some instances children and young people may be reported as missing where the out of home care service understands where the young person has gone to, such as when they return to see their family, and will maintain some phone contact with their carer allowing them to establish they are safe. In this circumstance the out-of-home care service will be required to register an incident report reporting the child or young person is absent from care without permission.

The department does not collect information on the cost of locating a missing child. Direct responses to locate and support the safe return of missing children is part of the role of community service organisations, police and child protection practitioners.

Processes are in place, including support from an interstate liaison officer, to identify an appropriate course of action where a missing child is suspected to have left the state.

In March 2014, the Victorian Auditor-General found that "... there has been a fundamental failure to oversee and ensure the safety of children in residential care". At a time when serious issues relating to residential care facilities was made public, the former Coalition Government failed to take measures to keep children living in residential care safe.

The report found that a sharp increase in the number of Category one incidents, mainly due to absent/ missing persons reports. He further noted that "missing children are at a heightened risk of sexual exploitation."

In 2015, the Andrews Labor Government allocated \$16 million to increase staff in residential care units including for stand-up overnight staff. A further \$35.9 million was allocated in 2016. For the first time, \$1.5 million in

funding was also made available for spot audits of residential care facilities. Our Government has also funded four child protection senior practitioners dedicated to addressing sexual exploitation. They work collaboratively with child protection, Victoria Police and members of the non-government sector and have led to an increased knowledge and understanding of child sexual exploitation and greater identification of children and young people at risk of sexual exploitation.

The Andrews Labor Government has acted to enhance safety for children and young people and is getting on with the task of reforming the child protection and out of home care system.

Families and children

11 256. MS CROZIER — To ask the Minister for Families and Children: In relation to Targeted Care Packages —

- (1) how many children moved from Residential care to Foster care or Kinship care through Targeted Care Packages to date in the 2016-17 financial year;
- (2) how many evaluations of Targeted Care Packages post funding have been undertaken to date;
- (3) list all items, assets and services available for funding under Targeted Care Packages;
- (4) how much was spent on motels or other short term rental accommodation for children leaving Residential care who did not yet have a permanent placement to date in the 2016-17 financial year; and
- (5) as at 31 March 2017, how many children were living in short term rental accommodation, and what were their ages.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

In March 2014, the Victorian Auditor-General found that "... there has been a fundamental failure to oversee and ensure the safety of children in residential care."

Despite admitting in Parliament in 2014 that she was aware of children being sexually exploited in residential care as far back as 2012, it is unconscionable that the former Minister did not implement any measures to address these issues.

In March 2015, the Andrews Labor Government announced \$43 million for Targeted Care Packages which aim to move children out of residential care and into home-based care. These packages are an innovative and flexible solution that will lead to better supported placements and better life outcomes for the children and young people in care. An additional \$19 million was also provided in September 2016 to support children and young people and their families or carers to prevent them from needing to enter residential care. The 2017–18 budget has provided additional funding for a further 100 targeted care packages.

As at 30 June 2017, 386 young people have moved from residential care into home-based care and are now with foster carers, extended family or their parents.

All children and young people on Targeted Care Packages are monitored on a regular basis with a formal review occurring at least once each financial year. Packages are further reviewed and adjusted as the needs of the child or young person change.

Targeted care packages provide for an allocation of funding to provide individualised and flexible wrap-around supports that better meet the needs of children and young people in the out-of-home care system. All supports purchased to support transition from residential care or to prevent entry into residential care are determined by case-by-case assessment of the child or young person's needs, best interests and desired outcomes.

Short-term rental accommodation is not a living arrangement supported by targeted care packages.

Families and children

11 260. MS CROZIER — To ask the Minister for Families and Children: In relation to child protection funding in the 2017-18 Budget and the 450 additional child protection workers next year —

- (1) how much in total has been allocated to recruiting and funding an additional 450 child protection workers;
- (2) how much has been allocated for recruitment agency fees;
- (3) how many team managers or Level 5 child protection practitioner workers are included in the number to be recruited;
- (4) how many Level 4 child protection practitioner workers are included in the number to be recruited; and
- (5) how many Level 3 child protection practitioner workers are included in the number to be recruited.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

Data relating to the employment of child protection workers is published in the Department’s Annual Report.

The 2017-18 Budget includes \$72.2 million to fund 450 new child protection practitioners across the state. This is the largest ever expansion of our child protection workforce. The recruitment and allocation of new staff is responding to demand. The mix of staff recruited will include an appropriate allocation across classifications.

The previous coalition government only funded 192.3 new positions over their entire four years despite rising demand. In our first three budgets we have funded 610.8 new child protection positions.

Families and children

11 261. MS CROZIER — To ask the Minister for Families and Children: In relation to child protection practitioners at all levels leaving the child protection system —

- (1) how many have left the system since 31 December 2015;
- (2) how many have left the system to date in the 2016-17 year;
- (3) how many Level 5 child protection practitioner workers or team managers left the system to date in the 2016-17 year;
- (4) how many Level 4 child protection practitioner workers or team managers left the system to date in the 2016-17 year; and
- (5) how many Level 3 child protection practitioner workers or team managers left the system to date in the 2016-17 year.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

Data relating to the employment of child protection workers is published in the Department’s Annual Report.

In June 2015 there were 1403 child protection practitioners, and in June 2016 there were 1510. At 1 May 2017, there were 1590 child protection practitioner FTE employed across the state. That represents a 13% increase in our term of government to date.

The 2017-18 Budget includes \$72.2 million to fund 450 new child protection practitioners across the state. This is the largest ever expansion of our child protection workforce. The recruitment and allocation of new staff is responding to demand. The mix of staff recruited will include an appropriate allocation across classifications.

The previous coalition government only funded 192.3 new positions over their entire four years despite rising demand. In our first three budgets we have funded 610.8 new child protection positions.

Families and children

11 266. MS CROZIER — To ask the Minister for Families and Children: In relation to child protection workers' case-loads, as at 31 March or the latest data reporting date —

- (1) what was the average caseload for all levels of child protection workers; and
- (2) what was the highest number of cases assigned to a child protection worker.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

The Victorian Ombudsman released a report in 2011 slamming the previous Coalition government for “the pursuit of numerical targets overshadowing the interests of children” by closing large numbers of child protection reports, often on a single day, to reduce the number of children on allocation waiting lists.

As the Member has been advised on a number of occasions, data relating to the average rate of unallocated cases by Division is available on the Department's website for the first time, something the previous Coalition Government failed to do. It is also available in the Department's Annual Report.

It is important that the case allocation rate is understood in the context of the increase in reports to child protection, fuelled in part by heightened community awareness of the harms inflicted on children as a result of child abuse and family violence.

This is why the Andrews Labor Government moved quickly on coming to office to increase the child protection workforce.

Each of our budgets to date has boosted the child protection workforce.

The 2017-18 Budget includes \$72.2 million to fund 450 new child protection practitioners across the state. This is the largest ever expansion of our child protection workforce. The recruitment and allocation of new staff is responding to demand. The mix of staff recruited will include an appropriate allocation across classifications.

The previous coalition government only funded 192.3 new positions over their entire four years despite rising demand. In our first three budgets we have funded 610.8 new child protection positions.

Families and children

11 270. MS CROZIER — To ask the Minister for Families and Children: In relation to recruitment fees, according to the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) 2017-18 Budget Estimates Questionnaire, page 74, the Department spent \$33 363 861 from July 2016 to March 2017 on labour recruitment —

- (a) how much of that was for frontline staff for service delivery;
- (b) how much of that was for administrative and back office staff;
- (c) how much of that was spent on recruitment for child protection workers;
- (d) how much of that was spent on recruitment for foster carers;
- (e) how much of the total was spent on actual recruitment agency fees;
- (f) how many workers were funded by that amount;
- (g) how many days work was produced from that amount;
- (h) how much of that amount was paid to employees for recruitment referrals; and
- (i) how much of that was paid to employees for other services.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

The figures reported include all Department of Health and Human Services costs associated with the provision of temporary staff engaged through labour recruitment firms. The reason agency recruitment is not recorded on the general ledger, include: agency staff backfilling both temporary and ongoing positions for direct care and non-direct care, Youth Employment Scheme Trainees, and Technical Specialists primarily in Information Technology.

It is not possible to determine how much of the total was spent on actual recruitment agency fees as the recruitment labour firms do not separately identify this amount on their invoices. The invoices include the hourly rate paid to the labour recruitment firm which is inclusive of the rate paid to the agency staff person, salary oncosts such as Work cover, Payroll Tax and Superannuation and any Agency fee.

The department spent \$12 322 959.83 in recruitment fees for frontline staff for service delivery. The labour recruitment costs were \$202 891.50 for recruitment for child protection workers.

The labour recruitment, costs were \$13 798 664.31 for information technology and projects and \$7 242 237.17 for other administrative and back office staff, including Youth Employment Scheme Trainees.

There was no recruitment fees spent on foster carers from July 2016 to March 2017.

In respect of questions (e) to (i), I am advised that the department does not record this level of information in payment or General Ledger systems.

Families and children

11 274. MS CROZIER — To ask the Minister for Families and Children: In relation to drug and alcohol counselling, as at 31 March 2017, how many children or parents under child protection were on a waiting list and what was the average length of time on a waiting list.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

This information is contained in individual client records. A manual review of every client record would be required to provide this information.

The Andrews Labor Government has invested \$17 million over four years on additional drug treatment services for parents seeking support to help them to resolve issues that have led to a child being removed from their care. This initiative will provide stronger access to treatment services for up to 3800 parents each year to help them meet court requirements and reunify their families.

Families and children

11 275. MS CROZIER — To ask the Minister for Families and Children: In relation to other counselling services such as psychiatric and behavioural services, as at 31 March 2017, how many children or parents under child protection were on a waiting list and what was the average length of time on a waiting list.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

This information is contained in individual client records. A manual review of every client record would be required to provide this information.

Public transport

11 305. MS WOOLDRIDGE — To ask the Minister for Agriculture (for the Minister for Public Transport): Could the Minister please provide detail for the \$5 million set aside for investigations into the future track duplication between Greensborough and Eltham —

- (a) how long will the investigations take; and
- (b) will the public be consulted.

ANSWER:

I thank the Member for Eastern Metropolitan for her continued interest in the Andrews Labor Government's investments along the Hurstbridge line as we are planning ahead for more long term solutions for the northeast.

In response to the advocacy by the local Member for Eltham, the 2017-18 Budget provides approximately \$5 million for planning and development for the second stage of the Hurstbridge line upgrade, with a focus on addressing the single track between Greensborough and Eltham.

As part of these works, the Level Crossing Removal Authority will consult with a range of key stakeholders, including local Council, transport agencies, and environmental agencies.

Police

11 312. MS WOOLDRIDGE — To ask the Minister for Training and Skills (for the Minister for Police): How many incidents were recorded involving Protective Service Officers at Eltham railway station in the twelve months up to May 2017.

ANSWER:

The most recent data available from the Crime Statistics Agency is for the twelve months to 31 March 2017. Between 1 April 2016 and 31 March 2017, there were 42 offences recorded at Eltham railway station.

On 1 July 2015, Victoria Police introduced data recording processes which allow them to record whether an incident was recorded or detected by a police officer or protective services officer (PSO). However, the Crime Statistics Agency has advised that due to insufficient data, they are unable to determine how many offences were dealt with by PSOs specifically during this time.

As at 21 June 2017, there were 1128 transit PSOs deployed across the rail network.

Transit PSOs play an important role in keeping the community safe on the train network at night. PSOs address crime, violence and anti-social behaviour and help people feel safe on the train network. The Justice Legislation Amendment (Protective Services Officers and Other Matters) Bill 2017, which was introduced into the Parliament in May this year, will enhance transit PSOs' ability to reduce harm and improve public safety and perceptions of safety by giving PSOs a more active policing role where they are already stationed.

The Bill will give transit PSOs the flexibility to respond to incidents both at and in the vicinity of a designated place, such as a train station. The Bill will also expand the circumstances in which transit PSOs may request a person's name and address, issue an infringement notice, apprehend a person and search a person or thing. Specifically, transit PSOs will have the power to apprehend a child under an emergency care warrant, arrest a person where their parole has been breached or cancelled, conduct warrantless searches for drugs of dependence and search members of the public as part of planned or unplanned control of weapons operations.

This reform complements the government's \$2 billion Community Safety Statement, which includes funding for an additional 100 mobile PSOs who will be rolled out across the public transport network.

Police

11 313. MS WOOLDRIDGE — To ask the Minister for Training and Skills (for the Minister for Police): How many incidents were recorded involving Protective Service Officers at Greensborough railway station in the twelve months up to May 2017.

ANSWER:

The most recent data available from the Crime Statistics Agency is for the twelve months to 31 March 2017. Between 1 April 2016 and 31 March 2017, there were 15 offences recorded at Greensborough railway station.

On 1 July 2015, Victoria Police introduced data recording processes which allow them to record whether an incident was recorded or detected by a police officer or protective services officer (PSO). However, the Crime Statistics Agency has advised that due to insufficient data, they are unable to determine how many offences were dealt with by PSOs specifically during this time.

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This reform complements the government's \$2 billion Community Safety Statement, which includes funding for an additional 100 mobile PSOs who will be rolled out across the public transport network.

Police

11 314. MS WOOLDRIDGE — To ask the Minister for Training and Skills (for the Minister for Police): How many incidents were recorded involving Protective Service Officers at Montmorency railway station in the twelve months up to May 2017.

ANSWER:

The most recent data available from the Crime Statistics Agency is for the twelve months to 31 March 2017. Between 1 April 2016 and 31 March 2017, there was 1 offence recorded at Montmorency railway station.

On 1 July 2015, Victoria Police introduced data recording processes which allow them to record whether an incident was recorded or detected by a police officer or protective services officer (PSO). However, the Crime Statistics Agency has advised that due to insufficient data, they are unable to determine how many offences were dealt with by PSOs specifically during this time.

As at 21 June 2017, there were 1128 transit PSOs deployed across the rail network.

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This reform complements the government's \$2 billion Community Safety Statement, which includes funding for an additional 100 mobile PSOs who will be rolled out across the public transport network.

Consumer affairs, gaming and liquor regulation

11 317. MR BARBER — To ask the Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade (for the Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation): Why is rental bidding not banned and does the Minister have plans to ban the practice of rental bidding.

ANSWER:

The Victorian Government is currently reviewing the Residential Tenancies Act 1997 (RTA). Information and updates about the review are published on the Fairer Safer Housing website, available at: engage.vic.gov.au/fairersaferhousing.

The Victorian Government is committed to residential tenancy laws that balance the interests of all participants in the rental sector, and rental bidding was one of issues raised for consideration in the most recent public options discussion paper Heading for Home. Specifically, Option 7.8A sought comment on a proposed requirement that rental properties be advertised at a fixed price, and that the practice of requesting rental bids be prohibited. Option 7.8B contemplated further prohibiting landlords and agents from accepting rental bids, even where they may be offered without solicitation.

The options discussion paper was published to facilitate public input into potential reform options, and does not represent a settled Victorian Government position on what legislative changes should be made to the RTA. The submissions received from stakeholders are currently being considered by the Government in the development of a comprehensive reform package. This package will form the basis of new legislation for residential tenancies, to be considered by the Victorian Parliament in 2018.

Families and children

11 356. MS SPRINGLE — To ask the Minister for Families and Children: In relation to the transition of young people out of Residential Care Units and where they have gone —

- (a) how many young people have been transitioned out of Residential Care Units through Targeted Care Packages in the current financial year and the two years preceding;
- (b) does the Department keep data about where those young people have been transitioned to and the success of those transitions;
- (c) where have those young people been transitioned to (e.g. Foster care, Kinship care, returned home and other); and
- (d) have any of the young people transitioned out of Residential Care through Targeted Care Packages returned to Residential Care.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

Data relating to the number of children and young people in residential care by quarter is available on the Department's website.

In March 2015, the Andrews Labor Government announced \$43 million for Targeted Care Packages which aim to move children out of residential care and into home-based care.

A further \$19 million was allocated in October 2015 with a view to preventing children and young people coming into residential care in the first place. The 2017-18 budget allocated \$17.3 million in funding for a further 100 Targeted Care Packages.

As at 30 June 2017, 386 young people have moved from residential care into home-based care and are now with foster carers, extended family or their parents.

Families and children

11 364. MS SPRINGLE — To ask the Minister for Families and Children: In relation to the proportion of youth justice clients under community based supervision, next year's budgeted proportion of 89 per cent is the same as this year's budgeted outcome: If the proportion of youth justice clients under community based supervision remains the same, on what basis are resources being reallocated from community-based programs toward custodial services.

ANSWER:

There has been no reallocation of funds from community based supervision to custodial services.

There has been no reduction in the youth justice community based services budget. Rather, as part of the machinery of government changes the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) retained approximately \$20.3 million (from the community based services output) for three programs, corporate overheads and depreciation, which has more than offset an increase of \$10.6 million which includes funding for the new intensive bail supervision and youth control order initiatives.

The Youth Justice Custodial Services budget for 2017-18 shows an increase of \$13.6 million.

This includes funding for new initiatives of \$14.7 million for a strengthened youth justice workforce, strengthening youth justice precincts, and an improved intelligence function at the precincts.

Families and children

11 367. MS SPRINGLE — To ask the Minister for Families and Children: In relation to bed capacity in youth forensic mental health services: The 2017-18 Budget Papers stated that 'forensic mental health services and support will be expanded for youth justice clients through the establishment of a two-bed secure forensic mental health unit within the Ursula Frayne Centre in Footscray' —

- (1) including these two additional beds, how many beds are now available to youth justice clients who are detained in Victoria's youth justice centres;
- (2) on what basis was it determined that the number of additional beds available to youth justice clients experiencing mental health issues would be two; and
- (3) does the 2015-16 Youth Parole Board Annual Report rely on self-reporting in relation to mental health issues and clients with a history of self-harm or suicidal ideation.

ANSWER:

I am informed that:

Youth justice clients currently access the existing mental health services, including inpatient beds, in Victoria. There are 57 mental health acute child and adolescent beds throughout Victoria and 16 specific youth mental health acute beds at Orygen Youth Health. The two-bed unit will be the first dedicated secure forensic mental health unit in Victoria servicing young people in youth justice custody.

In regards to the specific determination of the quantity of additional beds available to young people in custodial services experiencing mental health, this output sits under the Minister for Mental Health's portfolio.

The 2017-18 Victorian State Budget has provided investment into a range of services for youth justice clients experiencing mental health issues. This includes:

\$3.16 million over four years to establish a Forensic Youth Mental Health Service, including an early intervention problem behaviour program, for young people with mental illness and violent, threatening and/or sexualised behaviours and a high risk of offending in the North and West Metropolitan Region and South Metropolitan Regions of Melbourne

\$4.15 million over four years to enhance clinical mental health assessment, treatment and support services for young offenders in the youth justice system

\$3.9 million of capital funding for 2-bed secure forensic mental health sub-unit within a youth mental health inpatient unit.

This commitment is a start to building capacity specifically to support young people. The proposed two beds are expected to meet current demand and the suite of services enables the delivery of safe, responsive and recovery oriented forensic mental health services. It means that we can intervene early to treat young Victorians and increase the likelihood that they will recover and stay well in the community.

The Youth Parole Board Annual Report summarises the results of the Youth Justice Client Survey. The survey is completed annually by youth justice staff. Results reflect information provided by young people, together with observations made by youth justice staff and their knowledge of a young person's history.

Families and children

11 368. MS SPRINGLE — To ask the Minister for Families and Children: In relation to the decision to build a new youth justice facility and forecasting expenditure of funds allocated to the project: The Minister has said that the decision to build a new youth justice facility was taken on the advice of Mr Neil Comrie, the former Chief Commissioner of Police —

- (1) what other evidence or advice did the Minister or the Department rely on before making the decision to build a new facility;
- (2) does Mr Comrie have any expertise in design principles for centres aimed at the trauma-informed therapeutic treatment of young people who exhibit criminal behaviour; and
- (3) does Mr Comrie have any expertise in design principles for centres aimed at the rehabilitation of young people who exhibit criminal behaviour as an effect of trauma, neglect, disability, brain injury, mental health and drug dependence.

ANSWER:

A comprehensive business case was prepared to inform the Government's decision to build a new youth justice facility. An overview of this business case can be found on the engage.vic.gov.au website. The full business case is unable to be released given the commercially sensitive nature of the material contained within it.

Neil Comrie AO APM was engaged by the Department of Health and Human Services to review and report on:

the incidents at the Parkville Youth Justice Precinct on 12 to 14 November 2016

any specific or safety issues arising from the construction and design of the Precinct, including its grounds, that impede the proper supervision of young people and/or provide a risk to staff and young people, and

whether the Precinct's buildings comply with relevant standards for the design and construction of custodial facilities.

In considering these issues, Mr Comrie was required to provide advice on the overall adequacy of the Precinct for its intended purpose, not to provide detailed designs for youth justice facilities. Mr Comrie's advice relating to security imperatives in the design are non-negotiable.

The design for the new youth justice facility will be informed by the recommendations from various reviews and feedback from the Community Advisory Group and the Reference Group formed of key stakeholders involved in the rehabilitation of young people who will provide advice to the Department of Justice and Regulation.

Families and children

11 369. MS SPRINGLE — To ask the Minister for Families and Children: In relation to the decision to build a new youth justice facility and forecasting expenditure of funds allocated to the project, the figures from the 2017-18 Budget appear to show that the actual construction of the new youth justice centre is not envisaged to take place until 2018-19 —

- (1) is that correct;
- (2) what is the \$1 million being spent on during the current 2015-16 financial year;
- (3) how is it envisaged that the \$27 million will be spent next year;
- (4) will the design of the new facility be put out for tender and when;
- (5) will the Government be mandating any design principles and if so, what are those principles;
- (6) will all apposite reviews of the youth justice system be completed before the design of the new facility is finalised and will the design of the new facility take into account reviews currently underway;
- (7) is it envisaged that the new centre will be a 'secure facility' first and foremost, and then any rehabilitation or treatment that happens will happen to the extent that it can inside that secure facility; and
- (8) is it envisaged that the design of the new centre will incorporate evidence-based best-practice principles in terms of how the design itself can facilitate treatment and rehabilitation.

ANSWER:

The construction of the facility is due to commence in 2018.

The \$1m in 2016-17 went toward costs of consultancies and related works for the cultural heritage, environmental surveys and early analysis and design for site works.

The \$27m will enable the commencement of design and early site works. The design for the facility has already gone to tender.

Design of the facility will take into account recommendations from the Comrie and Ogloff/ Armytage reviews and feedback from the Reference Group and Community Advisory Group being formed to provide advice to the department.

The design of the new facility will create a safe and secure environment for both staff and offenders and support the delivery of rehabilitative services. It is appalling that the member thinks security is an insignificant consideration in a custodial facility.

Families and children

11 370. MS SPRINGLE — To ask the Minister for Families and Children: In relation to the decision to build a new youth justice facility and forecasting expenditure of funds allocated to the project and media releases about the new facility have mentioned that it will incorporate a 12 or 16 bed maximum-security 'Behaviour Management Unit', which is also what other notorious youth justice centres had, notably, Don Dale —

- (1) what is meant by maximum-security 'Behaviour Management Unit'; and
- (2) is it envisaged that the 'Behaviour Management Unit' will essentially see young people who are detained there locked down in cells for most of the day.

ANSWER:

The new youth justice facility will be a highly secure custodial facility providing an environment focussing on rehabilitation and reducing reoffending. The new centre will have an intensive supervision unit, 224 beds for remand and sentenced clients and a mental health unit.

The project for the construction of Cherry Creek is still in the early stages and there is significant work to be done on the detailed design within the facility and operating models of the new youth justice centre.

The intensive supervision unit will provide a secure environment to safely manage complex and challenging young offenders. A multi-disciplinary approach tailored to the specific needs of the young person will be delivered by staff with specialist training. The unit will provide intervention and prevention strategies and specially tailored programs for individuals, therefore reducing the likelihood for their behaviour to escalate.

Families and children

11 373. MS SPRINGLE — To ask the Minister for Families and Children: In relation to the decision to build a new youth justice facility and forecasting expenditure of funds allocated to the project —

- (1) does the reallocation of funds anticipate that the proportion of youth justice clients in custody will increase;
- (2) on what specific items will the increased allocation to custodial services be spent; and
- (3) are there exact budgeted figures for —
 - (a) staffing numbers; and
 - (b) training for staff.

ANSWER:

There has been no reallocation of funds to support the project to deliver a new youth justice facility. The \$288.7 million budgeted for the new fit-for purpose youth justice facility in the vicinity of Cherry Creek is for its construction.

The project to deliver a new youth justice facility is still at an early stage. As part of this project, an operating model for the facility will be developed which will inform the staffing model, related training and associated costs.

The Youth Justice Custodial Services budget for 2017-18 shows an increase of \$13.6 million which is unrelated to the building of a new youth justice facility. This includes funding for new initiatives or \$14.7 million for a strengthened youth justice workforce, strengthening youth justice precincts, and an improved intelligence function at the precincts.

Families and children

11 375. MS SPRINGLE — To ask the Minister for Families and Children: In relation to ‘strengthening works’ at the Parkville and Malmsbury youth justice centres, what does the Government mean by ‘strengthening works’ as referred to in the 2017-18 Budget Papers.

ANSWER:

The existing facilities at the Parkville and Malmsbury Youth Justice Precincts were not built to modern custodial standards and have not been designed to the changing profile of young offenders. For security reasons, it would be inappropriate to provide specific detail of these works, however I can advise that the works include internal secure fencing and strengthening windows and doors to prevent a forcible breach.

Families and children

11 376. MS SPRINGLE — To ask the Minister for Families and Children: In relation to ‘strengthening works’ at the Parkville and Malmsbury youth justice centres, and the Ministers’ statement that the Parkville youth justice precinct was not ‘fit for purpose’, why was Parkville ‘fit for purpose’ 25 years ago but not now.

ANSWER:

As I have explained on numerous occasions, the young offenders coming into custody are more violent, with a larger proportion of young people being convicted for violent offences against the person.

There has been a dramatic increase in the numbers of young people on remand, and this is a more volatile and unsettled population who often come into custody affected by, or withdrawing from drugs and alcohol.

The Parkville Precinct was built to residential grade standard which is not fit for purpose for these types of young offenders. Strengthened infrastructure and appropriate internal fencing is required to support the safety and security of the centre and young people.

I would suggest to the member that she refer to the publicly released executive summary of the review by Neil Comrie AO APM of the Parkville precinct.

Roads and road safety

11 395. MS WOOLDRIDGE — To ask the Minister for Agriculture (for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety): What traffic modelling and work needs to be completed by VicRoads before the Government moves to ease congestion on Fitzsimons Lane in Eltham.

ANSWER:

VicRoads advises me that further analysis of Fitzsimons Lane is required to determine any improvement options. As such, additional data collection and appropriate traffic modelling is required to better understand the issues and accurately reflect the current and predicted performance. This work is currently being undertaken.

Energy, environment and climate change

11 399. MR BARBER — To ask the Special Minister of State (for the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change): In relation to the invasive Indian Myna bird populations across Victoria —

- (1) does the Government have a plan to contain Indian Myna bird populations across Victoria; and
- (2) will the Government provide support to local councils and communities to assist in trapping and control efforts of Indian Myna birds.

ANSWER:

Common mynas, also known as Indian Mynas, have spread through eastern Australia since their introduction to control insect pests in the 1860s. Common mynas are now widespread throughout urban environments in Victoria.

Common mynas often nest in highly modified habitats and artificial structures, rather than in native vegetation. Common mynas therefore have little competitive impact on the resources used by native bird species.

There are no practical means available for the broad-scale control of these birds.

Community-led initiatives that respond to local priorities are the most appropriate method for managing the local impacts of introduced birds.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Answers to the following questions on notice were circulated on the date shown.

Questions have been incorporated from the notice paper of the Legislative Council.

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

Headings reflect the portfolio of the minister answering the question.

Wednesday, 23 August 2017

Planning

11 390. MR BARBER — To ask the Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade (for the Minister for Planning): In relation to the development of 488 La Trobe Street, Melbourne —

- (1) does the Minister have the power to grant heritage protection or controls over 488 La Trobe Street;
- (2) has there been an application for heritage protection to 488 La Trobe Street; and
- (3) if there has been an application for heritage protection, what is the status of that application.

ANSWER:

In June 2016 Melbourne City Council requested that I apply interim heritage controls to a number of properties in West Melbourne, including 488 La Trobe Street, as part of Melbourne Planning Scheme Amendment C273.

I did not approve the application of interim heritage controls to 488 La Trobe Street as part of this amendment, as the council had issued a Notice of Decision for the redevelopment of the site which would result in total demolition of the building.

The application of interim heritage controls to properties identified as having heritage significance is appropriate where no decision has been made on a live planning permit application. It was open to the council to refuse the application. Given this, I will not be reconsidering my decision to not apply interim heritage controls to 488 La Trobe Street.

In December 2016, Melbourne City Council was authorised to prepare Melbourne Planning Scheme Amendment C258 to apply permanent heritage controls to those properties included in Amendment C273, including 488 La Trobe Street. This amendment was exhibited in March 2017 and submissions closed on 12 May 2017. The amendment is currently with Melbourne City Council for consideration.

Premier

11 476. MR RICH-PHILLIPS — To ask the Special Minister of State (for the Premier): How many full time equivalent ministerial staff (including those working on secondment from departments or agencies) were working within the Premier's office, as of 1 July 2017.

ANSWER:

I am advised that:

Budget allocation of staff is reported as per past practice.

It is ironic that the member has asked fishing questions to Ministers including questions about female employment, given the Coalition only has three women sitting on the front bench in each house of Parliament.

The Andrews Labor Government is proud to stand in contrast to the Coalition on its record of hiring and promoting women into leadership positions.

This is demonstrated by our Government's policy to ensure women are better represented on boards—with a requirement of reaching 50 per cent representation. This pledge has increased the number of women appointed to paid boards in Victoria from 38 per cent to over 50 per cent in just two years.

In addition, Victoria's first female Minister for Agriculture Jaala Pulford announced funding from the 2017/2018 Victorian Budget to re-establish the much loved Victorian Rural Women's Network. It speaks volumes that the former Coalition Government cut this vital service.

Minister Neville, Victoria's first female Minister for Police, recently honoured Madge Connor, Victoria's first policewoman, to recognise her role as a pioneer for women in the force. In 2017, Victoria Police is proud to have more than 4000 women serving as police officers, and many more public servants, Protective Services Officers and Police Custody Officers. A third of all police recruits are female and the current recruitment drive for 3135 new police encourages women to sign up, as part the Labor Government's push through the Community Safety Statement to improve gender equality within Victoria Police.

These are just some of the many examples of our Labor Government's commitment to pursuing the interests of all Victorians.

Premier

11 498. MR RICH-PHILLIPS — To ask the Special Minister of State (for the Premier): How many female ministerial staff (including those working on secondment from departments or agencies) were working within the Premier's office, as of 1 July 2017.

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ANSWER:

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These are just some of the many examples of our Labor Government's commitment to pursuing the interests of all Victorians.

Premier

11 565. MR RICH-PHILLIPS — To ask the Special Minister of State (for the Premier): How many new employees commenced work within the Premier's office (including those working on secondment from departments or agencies) between 1 July 2015 and 1 July 2016.

ANSWER:

I am advised that:

Budget allocation of staff is reported as per past practice.

It is ironic that the member has asked fishing questions to Ministers including questions about female employment, given the Coalition only has three women sitting on the front bench in each house of Parliament.

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