

**PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA**

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES  
(HANSARD)**

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL  
FIFTY-SIXTH PARLIAMENT  
FIRST SESSION**

**WRITTEN ADJOURNMENT RESPONSES**

**14, 15, 16 and 17 September 2010**

**(Extract from book 14)**

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Leane, Mr Shaun Leo	Eastern Metropolitan	ALP	Vogels, Mr John Adrian	Western Victoria	LP

<sup>1</sup> Appointed 3 February 2009

<sup>2</sup> Appointed 9 March 2010

<sup>3</sup> Resigned 1 March 2010

<sup>4</sup> Resigned 9 January 2009



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**WRITTEN ADJOURNMENT RESPONSES**

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

**Tuesday, 14 September 2010**

**Regional and rural Victoria: government fees**

**Raised with:** Minister for Regional and Rural Development

**Raised by:** Mrs Petrovich

**Raised on:** 24 February 2010

**REPLY:**

Thank you for your question regarding changes to liquor licensing. The matter you have raised falls within the portfolio responsibility of the Minister of Consumer Affairs. This matter should be referred accordingly.

**Royal Botanic Gardens: plant selection**

**Raised with:** Minister for Environment and Climate Change

**Raised by:** Mrs Coote

**Raised on:** 14 April 2010

**REPLY:**

The Royal Botanic Gardens (RBG) is rich in cultural, historical, botanic and scientific significance. The *Royal Botanic Gardens Act 1991* aims (among other things) to conserve, protect and improve the botanic gardens; to increase public knowledge and awareness of plants and plant communities; and to provide for the use of the botanic gardens for education, public enjoyment and tourism.

At RBG Melbourne, there are 26 plant collections on display, ranging from large trees to colourful perennials. There is no intent to change the nature of RBG Melbourne as a whole, and ongoing efforts are made to preserve the special qualities of the RBG Melbourne landscape.

**Guilfoyle's Volcano project intent**

The opening of Guilfoyle's Volcano in March 2010 (first constructed as a reservoir in 1876) as a landscape feature and water storage reservoir saw completion of the first component of a major multistage water management project — the Working Wetlands project. This project aims to provide the RBG Melbourne with more sustainable water resources.

The development of sustainable landscapes is an important element of the RBG Strategic Water Plan, as is plant selection. Waterwise plants are used in the Guilfoyle's Volcano landscape design, and are accompanied by interpretive messages about water conservation, garden design and planting for both local conditions and a changing climate.

The intention of the Guilfoyle's Volcano project was not to restore the site as a replica of the original 1870's planting, but to present it in a way that respects William Guilfoyle's design style, while being suitable for current and future climates.

**Planting and Guilfoyle's original plans**

The Guilfoyle's Volcano area includes both Australian native and non-native plants. This mix has always been a feature of RBG Melbourne — during and since Guilfoyle's time. The 1997 RBG Melbourne Masterplan and its subsequent 10-Year Review document (2007) underline this point.

The plants in the Guilfoyle's Volcano design were selected for a number of reasons:

- The main arid collection is adjacent to the Volcano on its north-western edge and many of the arid plants on the Volcano cone create a seamless connection into the Arid Garden.
- The south-eastern edge of the Volcano project adjoins RBG Melbourne's native collection and there is a strong emphasis on native plants in this area.
- The plants used are very drought-tolerant, with minimal need for irrigation. The project provided an opportunity to show visitors how these plants can be used, which makes sense in the context of Melbourne's changing climate.
- Many of the plants used were part of the landscape that Guilfoyle created between 1873 and 1908.

There are no precise records of what Guilfoyle did with the landscaping around the Volcano, although the RBG has some of his yearly journal notes, all of which were consulted during the Volcano project. In these journal notes Guilfoyle makes mention of the 'large drifts of succulents planted on the cone that could be seen from miles away'.

The current planting design is a contemporary interpretation of Guilfoyle's theme, and uses succulent and arid plants, which are contrasted against each other for maximum design effect. Guilfoyle's plantings at RBG Melbourne included plants similar to many of those chosen for the Volcano project — early photos show planting including aloes and yuccas in rockeries in many parts of the Gardens.

The current Guilfoyle's Volcano project was never about recreating what was once there. The planting is different, but so is the way that water is now used within the reservoir, and the way the public can now access the Volcano (Guilfoyle never allowed the general public to walk up to the cone).

**Andrew Laidlaw's Statement**

Mrs Coote appears to refer to a statement in an article by Denise Gadd in *The Age* (page 7, 30 March 2010). In the article, Ms Gadd makes a statement, following two direct (and correctly quoted) comments by Mr Laidlaw. Her statement paraphrases what Mr Laidlaw actually said, which was that 'William Guilfoyle may not have approved of this planting', not 'would not have approved of the planting that is there'. While Mr Laidlaw has made such a statement in a number of talks he has given, he also makes a point of telling the public that the RBG does not set out to directly copy Guilfoyle's work (in the Volcano area, or anywhere else in the Gardens).

The plants have been deliberately grouped in a contemporary 21st century style, and Guilfoyle may, or may not, have approved of such an approach — we will never know.

**Kananook Creek: management plan**

**Raised with:** Minister for Environment and Climate Change

**Raised by:** Mrs Peulich

**Raised on:** 14 April 2010

**REPLY:**

I wish to acknowledge the good work of the Kananook Creek Association in improving the environmental and landscape values along the creek corridor.

I understand there are issue regarding jetties and other infrastructure along the creek and some conflict over the long term objectives for public land along the creek. However, there are some questions over land status that must be clarified before action can be taken to address these issues.

Parks Victoria, Melbourne Water, Frankston City Council and my Department are working co-operatively to create a 'place management' model for Kananook Creek.

The aim is for the City of Frankston to become the committee of management for the Crown land along and surrounding the creek, with the aim of enabling it to manage the jetties and other infrastructure along the creek.

To achieve this outcome land status along Kananook Creek must be determined. This is a complex matter as the land along the creek, in places, were sub-divided prior to 1880s and residual rights in law must be clearly understood before decisions are made.

To ensure the rights of people who live along the creek are met and the aspirations of the Association are met, due process must be followed. What may appear to be a straight forward matter is in fact quite complex and must be correctly handled through the cooperative process which is under way.

### **Lake Charm Primary School: building program**

**Raised with:** Minister for Education

**Raised by:** Ms Lovell

**Raised on:** 5 May 2010

#### **REPLY:**

I am informed as follows:

Lake Charm Primary School was awarded \$265 000 for renovation works through the *Primary Schools for the 21st Century* program and \$25 000 under the *National School Pride* program.

Students at Lake Charm Primary School are enjoying their newly refurbished facilities thanks to the school's BER project.

I have been advised that the refurbishment works on the school's art room were discussed with the school and it was agreed that these works be delayed until Term 2. I understand that this is a small room detached from the two classrooms at the school and had not been used for some time. The works in this room did not affect the schools daily operations and these works have now been completed.

In relation to the canopy between the school building and the toilet block, it was agreed with the school that this work be done out of school hours, due to the excavations required close to the school building. These works commenced on 23 April and the builder worked over the long weekend to complete the major works. The remaining works were completed by 12 May 2010.

I am advised that work on the new kitchen was completed and ready for the school to use by the beginning of Term 2 on 12 April 2010.

I am also advised that the electronic whiteboard was repositioned at the request of the school and this unfortunately resulted in the projector arm not being fit for purpose. This has been replaced and is now fully functional.

I am further advised that the project manager was made aware of the defect in the carpet on 23 March 2010 and this was rectified within one week.

The Department and project manager worked closely with the school to finalise the school's BER project and to achieve the best possible outcome for the Lake Charm school community.

**Parks Victoria: Mallacoota office**

**Raised with:** Minister for Environment and Climate Change

**Raised by:** Mr P. Davis

**Raised on:** 25 May 2010

**REPLY:**

I have been informed the Mallacoota Parks Victoria Office and depot are fully staffed with five rangers and Field Support Officers as well as a part-time administration officer. A further three rangers from the same team work from the Cann River office and two half-time Lightstation Keepers alternate at nearby Gabo Island. The team is generally operational from 8.00 a.m. to 4.30 p.m. Monday to Friday as well as being rostered to patrol the parks on busy weekends. However, the Ranges and Field Officers may be absent from the office from time to time attending to field-based matters and undertaking field based works. To respond to enquiries from the public, the office reception area is staffed from 11:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday to Friday. The Parks Victoria Information Centre is contactable seven days per week on 131 963, to respond to enquiries when the office is unattended.

Parks Victoria considers an extension of front office hours and business support at Mallacoota is not required at present. Parks Victoria will monitor the need for additional staff at the office in consultation with the community.

In regards to road management, Parks Victoria manages a number of roads in the area and will continue to do so to the standard required in accordance with the *Road Management Act 2004*. Parks Victoria is in the process of carrying out routine maintenance on the Betka Road.

Parks Victoria has delivered the highly successful 'Protecting the Best' landscape-scale weed initiative with over \$1 million expended for over 30 projects. As part of this weed initiative, wild seedlings of Monterey Pines were poisoned by external contractors. Unfortunately mature Monterey Pines located nearby the former Lakeview hotel site were also inadvertently poisoned.

Parks Victoria has publicly acknowledged this mistake and apologised through the media on several occasions. Parks Victoria has committed to review the circumstances leading to the tree poisoning to improve practices and ensure such errors do not occur again.

Parks Victoria has noted the need to engage with the Mallacoota community and has now established a Mallacoota Parks Community Forum involving a range of community representatives and local Government.

The forum met on 5 July 2010 and those involved have shown interest in it continuing on a regular basis. At the forum the group agreed to establish a separate smaller Lakeview group to work with Parks Victoria on planning the future of the Lakeview site. The first meeting is planned for early August.

Parks Victoria will continue to review their budgets to meet priorities in the East Gippsland area taking into account the number of reserves and assets they manage. The resources required to maintain assets managed by Parks Victoria and provide services to the community is continually reviewed. Parks Victoria will discuss resourcing issues further with the Mallacoota Community Forum group.

I am confident the Parks Victoria staff located in the Mallacoota district will strengthen relationships with the community over the coming months.

**Kindergartens: federal policy**

**Raised with:** Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development

**Raised by:** Mrs Peulich

**Raised on:** 25 May 2010

**REPLY:**

I am informed as follows:

In November 2008 it was agreed at the Council of Australian Governments' (COAG) meeting that all States and Territories would commit to universal access by 2013. This would ensure that every child has access to an affordable, quality kindergarten program, in a range of settings, in the year before school for 15 hours per week. The Commonwealth has committed \$970 million over five years for this reform. Victoria will receive \$210.6 million.

The first phase of the implementation of universal access in Victoria was municipal planning. Each local council was funded to assess the capacity of services within their municipality to implement universal access. One aspect of this planning was the consideration of the impact that universal access might have on other programs such as activity groups or kindergarten for three-year-old children and playgroups. The outputs of this planning will inform the next steps in implementation and the rollout of universal access by 2013

The 2009–10 Children's Capital Program included grants to support kindergarten programs expand physical facilities and support workforce development.

Alongside planning, pilots and trials are an important part of the implementation. Pilots of 15-hour programs have recently been funded in 20 kindergarten programs across the state to further inform service models for the delivery of universal access, including settings which provide services for both three and four-year-old children.

The National Partnership Agreement allows for a review of implementation across all jurisdictions after 18 months. The review has now begun and will be reporting back in early 2011. Included within the scope is a review of the adequacy of funding to achieve specified outcomes and outputs and the appropriateness of the timelines.

**Mallacoota: airport access**

**Raised with:** Minister for Environment and Climate Change

**Raised by:** Mr P. Davis

**Raised on:** 10 June 2010

**REPLY:**

On 1 July 2010 the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) received the final vegetation management plan and associated assessments from the East Gippsland Shire Council (EGSC). These reports were required to enable DSE to assess the vegetation removal proposed by EGSC to enable the upgrade and safe operation of the Mallacoota Airport.

Further, on 5 July 2010 I received a request from EGSC for an exemption from native vegetation offset requirements related to these works. In the same letter a request was made to the Minister for Planning for a general exemption for future works associated with airports.

The request for an exemption from the requirement for offsets is not supported.

The request for an exemption (for airports) from the council is not supported. There are a number of existing specific exemptions in the *Victoria Planning Provisions* to enable agencies and industries to clear native vegetation

without a permit. These exemptions are used primarily to allow for maintenance activities rather than for new infrastructure developments.

It is acknowledged that further minor native vegetation removal will be required at Mallacoota Airport. It is appropriate that these works be undertaken by EGSC with the approval of the relevant public land managers and DSE. DSE and Parks Victoria will continue to facilitate the necessary works to enable the upgrade and safe operation of the airport.

### **Buses: route 504**

**Raised with: Minister for Public Transport**

**Raised by: Mr Barber**

**Raised on: 23 June 2010**

#### **REPLY:**

Bus Route 504 (Clifton Hill–Moonee Ponds via Brunswick Road) has been reviewed under the recently completed Banyule/Darebin/Moreland Bus Service Review. This Review forms part of an extensive survey of all metropolitan bus routes completed by the Department of Transport (DOT) over the past four years.

The Review evaluated the appropriateness of Route 504, including its hours of operation, service frequency, connectivity and functionality. DOT is considering the findings and developing service recommendations. Any recommendations to upgrade the service levels on Route 504 will be considered within the limit of available funding.

The Blue Orbital SmartBus Route was proposed to run between Sandringham and Williamstown via St Kilda, Clifton Hill, Moonee Ponds, Highpoint Shopping Centre and Footscray. This potential inner metropolitan route is already well-serviced by trains, trams and buses.

The Government is currently committed to rolling out the SmartBus network in areas where it is needed most as a high priority.

The Blue Orbital SmartBus Route is not currently funded under *The Victorian Transport Plan* but may be considered for funding in future reviews.

### **Consumer affairs: telemarketing**

**Raised with: Minister for Consumer Affairs**

**Raised by: Mr Koch**

**Raised on: 23 June 2010**

#### **REPLY:**

I am advised that there are provisions under the *Fundraising Act 1998* (the Act) which address the situation you have outlined. The Act prohibits the making of false statements while seeking donations and imposes information disclosure requirements on paid phone canvassers. The Act also allows the Director of Consumer Affairs Victoria (CAV) to impose additional conditions relating to the conduct of registered fundraisers.

I am advised that CAV is aware of the issues raised in this Adjournment Debate matter, having received a complaint regarding a specific paid phone canvasser in your area. I am advised that CAV is engaging with the parties involved, including the paid phone canvasser, the event organiser and the community organisation, to work towards aligning their practices with requirements under the Act and to address consumer concerns. This includes:

- reviewing the script used by the phone canvasser;
- imposing strict additional information disclosure conditions in line with public interest; and
- advising all parties of their obligations and the consequences of non-compliance.

CAV will continue to monitor this situation to ensure disclosure conditions are being met and there is compliance with the Act.

Thank you for bringing this matter to my attention.

### **Transport Accident Commission: claims management**

**Raised with:** Minister for Finance, WorkCover and the Transport Accident Commission

**Raised by:** Mr Rich-Phillips

**Raised on:** 24 June 2010

#### **REPLY:**

I am informed as follows:

The TAC requires clients to provide pharmacy receipts accompanied by a pharmacy declaration form in order for approved medication payments to be reimbursed. This ensures that TAC clients are appropriately reimbursed for their compensable medications.

In Ms Mitchell-Cook's case, I am advised the TAC received an outstanding pharmacy account totalling \$32.80 on 21 July 2009. This was authorised for payment on 24 July 2009 and Ms Mitchell-Cook received reimbursement for the account on 29 July 2009.

The process of verification conducted by the TAC was entirely appropriate. Indeed, it was via the TAC verification process that it was revealed that Ms Mitchell-Clark had claimed reimbursement twice on the same invoice. One invoice was promptly paid, while the other was declined as, apparently, a duplicate submission.

Ms Mitchell-Cook's case is in fact a particularly good example of precisely why the TAC applies appropriate scrutiny to submitted accounts.

In relation to the suggestion that the Chemist Warehouse store in Clayton does not dispense claims from TAC clients, this is a plain fiction. The pharmacy in question in fact direct bills the TAC on behalf of a number of TAC clients. Ms Mitchell-Cook has a history of claiming reimbursement for medications that have not been determined to be related to her transport accident. This can create difficulties for pharmacies in receiving payment for medications that are not covered by the TAC, which is amongst the reasons Ms Mitchell-Clark is not a suitable candidate for a direct billing arrangement.

This is not the first occasion on which Mr Rich-Phillips has used the adjournment debate to raise matters that seek to use the personal and private circumstances of constituents to launch a broader attack on the TAC and WorkSafe. On occasion he frames his contributions in a manner that compels me to shine a light on sometimes vulnerable clients of the TAC or WorkSafe. I can only explain the conduct of the agency (and affirm the validity of that conduct where that is appropriate) by further undermining a client's private affairs.

Mr Rich-Phillips knows that the forms of the house require that a matter raised by a member on the adjournment must be responded to publicly and placed on the Hansard record.

It would be preferable if he either raised the matter on behalf of his constituent and avoided the gratuitous abuse of the agency so that a sensitive response could be prepared. Or alternatively, when private matters concerning medical conditions and the like are involved, it is open to Mr Rich-Phillips to write to me in any terms that he wishes. I have never failed to respond appropriately (and where possible, expeditiously) to such an approach, and the privacy of vulnerable constituents can be protected.

Of course it is the absolute right of every member to raise any matter in the house and receive an answer from the responsible Minister. I question whether the best interests of his constituents are being advanced by Mr Rich-Phillips when he proceeds in this manner.

### **Consumer affairs: motor car traders**

**Raised with:** Minister for Consumer Affairs

**Raised by:** Ms Darveniza

**Raised on:** 28 July 2010

#### **REPLY:**

I refer to the matter you raised in the Legislative Council on 28 July 2010 regarding encouraging consumers in regional Victoria to buy their cars from licensed motor car traders to get greater protection under the law.

I share your view that consumers should be informed about the greater protection under the law when buying from licensed motor car traders. These include a cooling-off period, a statutory warranty for a car that is not more than 10 years old and has travelled less than 160 000 kilometres, and clear title.

I am advised that Consumer Affairs Victoria (CAV) has a number of channels through which this message is being communicated to all consumers, including those in your electorate of Northern Victoria. This includes widely distributed consumer information publications, the CAV website and community education sessions conducted by CAV in metropolitan and regional Victoria.

Around 15 000 of the joint CAV, RACV and Victorian Automobile Chamber of Commerce (VACC) consumer guides *Better Car Deals: A Guide to Buying, Owning and Selling a Car* have been distributed through RACV and VicRoads offices across Victoria. The guide highlights the greater protection under the law afforded when buying from a licensed motor car trader. Consumers are also informed that buying from a private seller offers less legal protection. Similar messages are also published on the CAV website.

Over the next 12 months, CAV plans to deliver over 50 community education sessions across Victoria that will include information about the greater protection under the law of using a licensed motor car trader.

Thank you for raising this matter with me.

### **Rail: St Albans level crossing**

**Raised with:** Minister for Roads and Ports

**Raised by:** Ms Hartland

**Raised on:** 10 August 2010

#### **REPLY:**

In September 2009, the Government announced that it would investigate a grade separation (rail under road) of Main Road, St Albans. The investigation follows on from other recent actions in the St Albans Precinct Strategy, including the \$54 million Taylors Road underpass of the railway which was completed in November 2008.

VicRoads has been working with the Brimbank City Council, the Department of Transport and the public transport operator to determine a suitable proposal and project scope.

Survey works, ground investigations and traffic modelling in the St Albans area have been completed. A preliminary concept design for a rail under road arrangement at Main Road has been developed.



The proposal will improve safety for pedestrians, motorists and public transport users. It would relieve traffic congestion in the area and will become a key component of the St Albans urban renewal project.

Proposals for new projects must be considered and evaluated on a state wide basis. Any works at the Main Road crossing will be considered in this context.

### **Geelong Ring Road: lighting**

**Raised with:** Minister for Roads and Ports

**Raised by:** Mr Koch

**Raised on:** 10 August 2010

#### **REPLY:**

VicRoads closely monitors the operation of the Geelong Ring Road to ensure its safe management. A fault with the lamp design of a batch of lights on the Ring Road was identified by VicRoads and taken up with the supplier. The lamps are currently being replaced.

### **Bushfires: powerlines**

**Raised with:** Minister for Energy and Resources

**Raised by:** Mr Vogels

**Raised on:** 10 August 2010

#### **REPLY:**

I refer to the matter you raised during the Adjournment debate in the Legislative Council on 10 August 2010 in relation to various matters relating to the clearance of vegetation by the electricity network companies and auditing regime administered by Energy Safe Victoria (ESV).

The ESV has previously met with Helimatic Australia and understands there is no barrier to the use of new technologies. Whether Helimatic is contracted will depend on whether the company can meet the needs of the electricity network companies in fulfilling their obligations set out under the *Electricity Safety Act 1998* ('Act').

Annual audits of the electricity distribution businesses are carried out adjacent to the commencement of the declared Fire Danger Period by the Country Fire Authority. They are also carried out throughout the year in municipal areas where councils have responsibilities for electric line clearance.

The Electricity Safety (Electric Line Clearance) Regulations ('regulations') relate to the clearing of vegetation within specified clearance zones. The regulations also relate to the treatment of 'hazard' trees that reside outside the clearance zones but have the potential to fall within the clearance zones and contact powerlines. This was an issue identified by the Royal Commission in relation to one of the main fires (near Beechworth), and is a matter that is addressed in the final recommendations.

ESV has sought and changed the Code of Practice contained in the regulations to empower Responsible Persons to remove hazard trees. In addition, the Act has been amended to require municipalities to identify these hazard trees.

**Lake Charm Primary School: building program****Raised with: Minister for Education****Raised by: Ms Lovell****Raised on: 12 August 2010****REPLY:**

I am informed as follows:

Students at Lake Charm Primary School are now enjoying their newly refurbished facilities as part of the Commonwealth's *Building the Education Revolution* program. The school's BER project is complete.

Costing information on school's BER projects is accessible on the Department's website and will be updated as further details become available.

The Department and project manager worked closely with the school throughout the finalisation of the school's BER project.

**Violet Town Tennis Club: facilities funding****Raised with: Minister for Sport, Recreation and Youth Affairs****Raised by: Ms Broad****Raised on: 13 August 2010****REPLY:**

Strathbogie Shire Council's application for the Violet Town Tennis Court 'For the Next Generation' Resurfacing Project has been received under the Victorian Government's 2011–12 round of the Community Facility Funding Program — Minor Facilities category.

Applications are currently under assessment. I intend making announcements for successful projects from September this year.

Your support for the proposed project has been noted and will be taken into consideration.

## WRITTEN ADJOURNMENT RESPONSES

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

**Wednesday, 15 September 2010**

**Police: Ballarat**

**Raised with:** Minister for Police and Emergency Services

**Raised by:** Mr Vogels

**Raised on:** 23 February 2010

**REPLY:**

The Brumby Government is committed to providing safe streets and homes for Victorians by ensuring Victoria Police is highly professional and well resourced. By the end of this year, the State Government will have increased the net number of police by almost 2000 since coming to office. This includes an additional 120 police officers for the new Operational Response Unit to carry out targeted law enforcement and public order operations. The Government has also committed over \$460 million to fund the construction or refurbishment of over 160 police stations and residences across the state, in Victoria's largest ever police station building program.

The 2010–11 State Budget includes increased funding to Victoria Police to a record of nearly \$2 billion. While the last decade has seen the greatest ever increase in police numbers, the Government has announced an extra 1966 front-line police in the next five years including 1700 new police and the release of 266 police officers from behind desks back into front-line roles. This will be the biggest ever increase over a five-year period, building on the previous decade.

The Government's additional support to Victoria Police is showing good results. Victoria's crime rate has fallen 30 per cent since 2000–01 and in 2009 Victoria recorded its lowest ever road toll of 290 deaths.

Decisions on the placement of police throughout the state are operational matters and are made by police command on the basis of assessed need. It is important that this process is not subject to political interference. I am assured by the Chief Commissioner of Police that the level of policing across Victoria is continuously monitored by the respective Regional Command Officers, with a view to maintaining optimum policing effectiveness.

Victoria Police deploys first response police across its 56 Police Service Areas using a sophisticated resource allocation model incorporating 12 characteristics of the local community that are used to predict levels of crime and road trauma; the population of an area is just one of these. Victoria Police uses this model to ensure that police resources are distributed equitably and according to demonstrated operational need. It should be noted that, since 1999, the number of first response officers has increased in all police regions across Victoria. In Ballarat, the number of first response officers has increased by 32.31 per cent over the period November 1999 to 30 June 2010 and Victoria Police recently indicated that Ballarat will be a priority area for extra police over the next 12 months.

On 29 April 2010 the Premier announced an expansion of the Emergency Services Telecommunications Authority call centre at Mount Helen over the next three years, enabling a consolidation of all regional police, CFA and ambulance emergency calls. This will permit the redeployment of 66 police officers at the existing police D24 centres in Ballarat, Mildura, Bendigo, Moe and Wangaratta to operational duties across the state.

I trust this information is of assistance and thank you for taking the time to bring your concerns to my attention.

**Police: Bendigo**

**Raised with:** Minister for Police and Emergency Services

**Raised by:** Ms Lovell

**Raised on:** 9 March 2010

**REPLY:**

I refer to the matter raised by you during the Adjournment Debate in the Legislative Council on 9 March 2010, and your correspondence dated 1 April 2009 (*sic*).

On 24 November 2009, I responded to your Adjournment Debate of 14 October 2009 concerning this same matter.

Decisions on the placement of police throughout the state are operational matters and are made by police command on the basis of assessed need. It is important that this process is not subject to political interference. I am assured by the Chief Commissioner of Police that the level of policing across Victoria is continuously monitored by the respective Regional Command Officers, with a view to maintaining optimum policing effectiveness.

The Brumby Government is committed to providing safe streets and homes for Victorians by ensuring Victoria Police is highly professional and well resourced. By the end of this year, the State Government will have increased the net number of police by almost 2000 since coming to office. This includes an additional 120 police officers for the new Operational Response Unit to carry out targeted law enforcement, public order and road safety operations. The Government has also committed over \$460 million to fund the construction or refurbishment of over 160 police stations and residences across the state, in Victoria's largest ever police station building program.

The 2010–11 State Budget includes increased funding to Victoria Police to a record of nearly \$2 billion. While the last decade has seen the greatest ever increase in police numbers, the Government has announced an extra 1966 front-line police in the next five years including 1700 new police and the release of 266 police officers from behind desks back into front-line roles. This will be the biggest ever increase over a five year period, building on the previous decade.

The Government's additional support to Victoria Police is showing positive results. Victoria's crime rate has fallen 30 per cent since 2000=01, with crime now at its lowest rate since the introduction of computerised recording in 1993.

The Government rejects the Liberal-National Party policy of making the Chief Commissioner of Police provide new police to metropolitan Melbourne and ignoring country areas.

I trust this information is of assistance and thank you for bringing your concerns to my attention.

**Emergency services: crisis assessment and early response**

**Raised with:** Minister for Police and Emergency Services

**Raised by:** Mrs Coote

**Raised on:** 23 June 2010

**REPLY:**

The Brumby Government is committed to providing safe streets and homes for Victorians by ensuring Victoria Police is highly professional and well resourced. By the end of this year, the State Government will have increased the net number of police by almost 2000 since coming to office. This includes an additional 120 police officers for the new Operational Response Unit to carry out targeted law enforcement and public order operations. The Government has also committed over \$460 million to fund the construction or refurbishment of over 160 police stations and residences across the state, in Victoria's largest ever police station building program.

The 2010–11 State Budget includes increased funding to Victoria Police to a record of nearly \$2 billion. While the last decade has seen the greatest ever increase in police numbers, the Government has announced an extra 1966 front-line police in the next five years including 1700 new police and the release of 266 police officers from behind desks back into front-line roles. This will be the biggest ever increase over a five-year period, building on the previous decade.

The Government's additional support to Victoria Police is showing good results. Victoria's crime rate has fallen 30 per cent since 2000–01, with crime now at its lowest rate since the introduction of computerised recording in 1993.

Decisions on the placement of police throughout the state are operational matters and are made by police command on the basis of assessed need. It is important that this process is not subject to political interference. I am assured by the Chief Commissioner of Police that the level of policing across Victoria is continuously monitored by the respective Regional Command Officers, with a view to maintaining optimum policing effectiveness.

In his November 2009, Report on Responding to Mental Health Crises in the Community, the Auditor-General highlighted that Victoria Police has undertaken organisational change in responding to mental health issues through the development and implementation of the Peace of Mind Strategy, including investment in research with the Centre for Behavioural Science, Monash University, and the trial of the Police, Ambulance and CAT Emergency Response (PACER). It is acknowledged that further improvement can occur with the consolidation of improvements particularly in coordination between agencies, compliance with protocols, appropriate training and ongoing evaluation of responses.

The PACER initiative is an operational decision for the Chief Commissioner and as such it is not appropriate for me, as a Government Minister, to interfere.

As Police have a day-to-day role in responding to people with mental illness or disorders, the Chief Commissioner of Police welcomed the insights and recommendations arising from the independent analysis as a constructive contribution to the Victoria Police commitment to improving the police responses in this area.

The Peace of Mind Strategy is supported by an action plan outlining 60 directions for implementation. Major achievements involve the establishment of the Mental Health Strategy Unit, recruitment of 120 Mental Health Liaison officers, mental health first aid training, testing and evaluating collaborative service models to initiate an innovative service delivery model and implement of new data collection methods.

I trust this information is of assistance and thank you for taking the time to bring your concerns to my attention.



**WRITTEN ADJOURNMENT RESPONSES**

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

**Thursday, 16 September 2010**

**Corio Bay: pollution**

**Raised with:** Minister for Environment and Climate Change

**Raised by:** Mr Kavanagh

**Raised on:** 14 April 2010

**REPLY:**

Thank you for your adjournment debate question asking me to review health data relating to heavy metals in sands around Corio Bay.

As per my previous response to you on this matter, which I have attached, EPA runs water quality monitoring programs at local beaches and the results are publicly available. An expanded monitoring program in 2008–09 found low levels of heavy metals. EPA has no data on illnesses linked to exposure to heavy metals in Victoria.

This issue is therefore best dealt with by the Department of Health which is better placed to review the studies you mentioned. I will refer this matter to the Minister for Health for action.

Thank you again for raising this matter with me.



**Minister for  
Environment and Climate Change**

Gavin Jennings MLC

Our Ref: MC003339

Mr Peter Kavanagh MLC  
Member for Western Victoria  
2nd Floor, 1 Yarra Street  
GEELONG VIC 3220

Dear ~~Mr~~ <sup>Peter</sup> Kavanagh

**Corio Bay Pollution**

Thank you for your letter of 11 March 2010 on behalf of your constituent, Mr Stan Taylor about heavy metal pollution in the sands around Corio Bay. I apologise for the delay in responding.

One of EPA Victoria's key roles is to monitor the condition of the environment, including air, land and water. EPA runs a number of programs that monitor the health of the marine environment and which can give the community confidence in the health of our bays and beaches.

Beach Report is EPA Victoria's annual summer program that monitors water quality weekly at 36 beaches in Port Phillip Bay including St Helens, Eastern Beach and the Dell (at Clifton Springs) within Corio Bay. Samples are tested for levels of bacteria, heavy metals, organic chemicals, and harmful species of algae. This provides beach water quality information to the community so that people can make informed decisions about which beach they will visit. Testing results and beach quality reports are easily accessible from EPA's website, [www.epa.vic.gov.au](http://www.epa.vic.gov.au).

The information from Beach Report assists EPA, water authorities and local councils in responding to pollution incidents when they occur and in identifying areas for improved stormwater management.

Where necessary EPA will work with the Department of Health to provide advice to beach users based on the monitoring results. If elevated concentrations are identified EPA will seek to identify possible causes and work with the relevant agencies to appropriately respond.

In 2008/2009 EPA ran an expanded monitoring program across the 36 beaches, including those around Corio Bay as detailed above, which concluded in August last year. Heavy metals were generally low across the board, and bacteria levels were well within the targets set for water quality in the program. All results for organic chemicals and toxic algae were below the level of detection. Results from this testing are also available from EPA's website.

I trust this clarifies the concerns of your constituent.

Yours sincerely

**GAVIN JENNINGS MLC**  
Minister for Environment and Climate Change

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**6 MAY 2010**





**Wild dogs: control**

**Raised with:** Minister for Agriculture

**Raised by:** Mr P. Davis

**Raised on:** 11 August 2010

**REPLY:**

I refer to the matter you raised during the Adjournment Debate in the Legislative Council on 11 August 2010, regarding wild dog control.

The Department of Primary Industries (DPI) invests \$3.5 million annually in a wild dog management program across affected areas of Victoria. As best practice management of wild dogs requires an integrated approach, staff dedicated to this program undertake baiting, trapping and shooting to control wild dogs in proactive and reactive operations. In addition, advice is provided to land-holders on exclusion fencing, community control efforts and animal husbandry practices appropriate to areas where wild dogs are present.

An aerial baiting trial conducted in Gippsland in 2007 covered over 400 square kilometres and used 780 baits. Although the trial could not conclusively demonstrate whether aerial baiting was an effective tool for wild dog management, the work undertaken has provided information that will assist in making the wider control program more effective. Following the trial, the Aerial Baiting Stakeholder Consultative Committee (ABSCC), comprising of various stakeholders including the Victorian Farmers Federation and chairs of both the North East and Gippsland Wild Dog Management Groups, recommended that the Victorian wild dog program increase its emphasis on ground baiting. It also recommended that further Victorian deployment of aerial baiting be deferred until other studies are carried out, including a proposed extensive investigation in New South Wales into the required rate of aerially deployed baiting required for effective control.

DPI has recently increased its emphasis on strategic proactive ground baiting. This is in line with national best practice and the recommendations of the ABSCC, and complements the ongoing proactive and reactive trapping activity. There are currently 1296 km of tracks continuously baited on public land in Gippsland by DPI, with further bait stations to be added shortly, which are based on community requests. The ongoing baiting program in Gippsland is based on community intelligence provided through the Gippsland Wild Dog Management Group's Local Area Control Plans (LACP) and the detailed knowledge of departmental wild dog control staff. 58 land-holders recently attended LACP meetings held in Tambo Crossing, Ensay, Swifts Creek, Omeo and Benambra, providing valuable local knowledge. Close coordination with Parks Victoria and the Department of Sustainability and Environment baiting programs, also ensures that baits are laid throughout the year in appropriate locations and times for maximum effectiveness.

A key to effective wild dog management is a cooperative effort from all stakeholders, including government agencies, private land managers, industry groups and the broader community. DPI is committed to working with affected communities to better manage wild dogs into the future through an integrated control program.

**Weeds: control**

**Raised with:** Minister for Agriculture

**Raised by:** Mr Kavanagh

**Raised on:** 12 August 2010

**REPLY:**

I refer to the matter you raised during the Adjournment Debate in the Legislative Council on 12 August 2010, regarding weed control in the Tea Tree Creek area.

Successful management of established weed species is best achieved where land-holders cooperate in a tenure blind approach. On some waterways within Victoria, it can be difficult to determine where the private land meets Crown land, particularly when waterways are dry and several pieces of legislation relating to land ownership apply.

Land-holders along Stoney Creek were issued with a notice to control weeds within the interface of private and Crown land, an area in which the title information obtained by the Department of Primary Industries (DPI) did not refer to Crown land boundaries. One of the land-holders was able to inform DPI of the application of several pieces of legislation that related to his property boundary. Once the issue had been identified, the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) was contacted and requested to undertake the necessary control work. DSE then carried out work in the area through the Good Neighbour Program.

DPI have since put measures in place to assist compliance officers determine land ownership in these situations. These measures include developing briefing notes and delivering training sessions for authorised officers who are likely to encounter tenure issues along waterways. DPI officers continue to work closely with their regional counterparts within the Department of Sustainability and Environment in the area of the management of invasive plants.

**WRITTEN ADJOURNMENT RESPONSES**

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

**Friday, 17 September 2010**

**Road safety: Buninyong**

**Raised with:** Minister for Roads and Ports

**Raised by:** Mr Vogels

**Raised on:** 27 July 2010

**REPLY:**

The Midland Highway connects Ballarat to Geelong and passes through the small township of Buninyong which lies on the outskirts of Ballarat.

The highway at the intersection of Ballarat-Buninyong Road has service road access to the shopping centre and speeds at this location are generally controlled by the roundabout. There have been no casualty crashes at the roundabout within the last five years.

The site does not meet the current speed zoning guidelines for a 50 km/h speed limit. VicRoads recently measured the speed of the traffic over a 7 day period on the eastern approach to the roundabout and the mean and 85th percentile speeds were 51 km/h and 58 km/h respectively.

The guidelines for 40 km/h speed zones near schools do not provide for schools where there is no direct access onto the road, as is the case in Buninyong.

The Government recently provided funding to erect a pedestrian fence on the Midland Highway approach to the roundabout in the vicinity of the shopping area to improve pedestrian movements and safety.

**Rail: Geelong line**

**Raised with:** Minister for Public Transport

**Raised by:** Mr Kavanagh

**Raised on:** 10 August 2010

**REPLY:**

Patronage on the Geelong corridor has grown by around 88 per cent over the five years from 30 June 2005 to 30 June 2010.

V/Line works collaboratively with the metropolitan train operator on timetable refinements and amendments to provide better service levels across the network.

Since 2006, 38 additional services a week have been provided to Geelong and two weekday services, in each direction between Geelong and Melbourne, are scheduled to operate with seven-carriage V/Locity trains, providing seats for almost 500 passengers on each service. Seven-carriage running has been in place on the Geelong corridor since November 2008.

In recent times, delays to Melbourne-bound services from Geelong are attributable to lost time on the congested metropolitan rail network. This is due in part to additional services on the Geelong line and the Northern Group lines on the metropolitan rail network. The Government is taking significant steps to address this congestion.

The \$38 billion *Victorian Transport Plan*, announced in December 2008, provides for the construction of the Regional Rail Link, a new 40-kilometre dual-track railway link between West Werribee and Southern Cross Station that will provide separate tracks for regional and metropolitan train services.

This \$4.3 billion project will provide capacity for more than 9000 extra passengers an hour. Regional Rail Link will provide more reliable regional rail services, removing the bottlenecks where the Geelong, Ballarat and Bendigo trains reach the metropolitan railway network.

The \$92.6 million Laverton Rail Upgrade will also deliver new infrastructure to improve the reliability of both Werribee and line and V/Line Geelong-line services., giving V/Line trains a clear path through Laverton. It will also include enhanced signalling, a third platform at Laverton Railway Station, and extra stabling for metropolitan trains. This project will address a bottleneck at the Laverton rail junction and at sections of single track in the Altona Loop and is scheduled for completion this year.

V/Line provides priority seating in every carriage for elderly and disabled passengers.