

**PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA**

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES  
(HANSARD)**

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

**WRITTEN ADJOURNMENT RESPONSES**

**27 and 28 July 2010**

**(Extract from book 11)**

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<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, 27 July 2010**

**Dartmoor sawmill: closure**

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

**Raised by: Ms Tierney**

**Raised on: 10 September 2008**

**REPLY:**

As you are aware, Carter Holt Harvey Wood Products Australia (CHH) ceased sawmilling operations at its Dartmoor facility on 25 September 2008 with the loss of up to 128 jobs. Of the 128 workers, 60 lived in Dartmoor, 10 in Heywood, 20 in Mount Gambier and 25 in Casterton.

The Victorian Government, through Regional Development Victoria, undertook a two pronged approach to assist the redundant workers and the Dartmoor community by:

- contacting the company and arranging for a Skill Up application to provide support through the SW TAFE;
- working with Glenelg Shire, the Dartmoor Progress Association and the CFMEU as well as holding a whole of government information day for both the employees and community.

The key outcome of the information day was a clear mandate by the community to request the company to make the site available for other uses in a timely manner. The site has land, buildings and 3 phase power, making it a suitable facility for engineering or an industrial estate for contractors servicing the various timber and energy driven investments. The community requested both local and State Government to convey this message to the company.

**To assist the affected workers, the Government undertook the following action:**

- The SW TAFE completed the skill assessments for the workers and identified there was a strong interest in truck licences and front end loader training, which aligned well with current and future skill needs for the region.
- RDV contacted CHH in relation to the future of the site and expressed support for the community view that it would be good if the site were to be available for alternative uses should there be commercial interest in using it.
- RDV, in conjunction with the Glenelg Shire Council, agreed to develop several initiatives to boost livability in Dartmoor and plan for the future.

To date the Government has approved \$153,600 for Skill Up support to be provided for 128 retrenched workers from CHH. Of these workers, 111 took up the opportunity for pre-course counselling and 85 (77 per cent) went on to undertake training.

Training was undertaken in areas including:

- |  |    |
|--|----|
| – Course in Construction (Red Card)            | 39 |
| – Front End Loader                             | 8  |
| – Transport (truck licence)                    | 6  |
| – Computers                                    | 5  |
| – Hospitality (Responsible Serving of Alcohol) | 4  |

Individuals also undertook training in First Aid, Bar Service, Food Hygiene, Forklift Operations, Literacy, MYOB, Civil Operations courses, Security, Chainsaw Operations, Whistle Signalling and Heavy Machinery.

This training has now been successfully delivered. The CCH workers supported through Skill Up were followed up one month after all training had been completed. Of those contacted, 63 individuals reported being employed. Skill Up monitoring data indicates that the most common employment sectors for these workers include:

– Forestry	24
– Construction	8
– Agriculture and Horticulture	6
– Engineering	5
– Business and Clerical	5
– Electrical and electronics	4
– Transport	4

Individuals also found employment in Property Services, Wholesale and Repair Service and Retail; and Water.

Negotiation with the company about the site was not successful. The site has been closed and it is understood the company is applying to the Glenelg Council for a 2 block subdivision.

Livability in Dartmoor has been enhanced by a \$40,000 STDF Grant to construct a new 2.1 metre chain mesh fence on the surveyed boundary of the Dartmoor Recreation Reserve. It will enable the community to attract and effectively stage a wider range of sporting and community events in Dartmoor, and enhance the safety of patrons.

### **Regional and rural Victoria: business excellence awards**

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

**Raised by:** Mr Drum

**Raised on:** 28 October 2008

#### **REPLY:**

The 'Business Excellence Awards' are held annually within the majority of the 48 provincial councils and, as Mr Drum acknowledges, these awards bring great benefits to local communities. Powercor has been the predominant sponsor of the Business Excellence Awards and in the majority of cases the awards are organised and run by community groups.

The Government's regional economic development statement 'Moving Forward' has a number of programs targeted at new events/activities that demonstrate a focus on business growth and socio economic development in regional Victoria.

The Government, particularly through Regional Development Victoria and the Department of Innovation Industry and Regional Development, continues to provide assistance and sponsorship to new and existing projects and will continue to work with local Government and community groups to achieve significant outcomes for regional Victoria.

### **Bendigo hospital: redevelopment**

**Raised with:** Minister for Health

**Raised by:** Ms Lovell

**Raised on:** 11 March 2009

**REPLY:**

In the 2010–11 budget the Brumby Labor Government committed \$473 million to the largest regional hospital project in Victoria's history.

This builds on the \$55 million announced in the 2009/10 budget for the first stage of redevelopment of the Bendigo hospital.

This project is another example of the Brumby Labor Government's commitment for regional and rural Victoria.

Unfortunately, the people of Bendigo have received nothing from the National/Liberal Coalition in 10 years. And they got even less in the 10 years before that when Jeff Kennett and the National Party stood by and watched country hospitals close their doors.

The Brumby Labor Government understands that good health policy and not bad health politics delivers world class health care to Victorians and remains the only political party to commit to building a new Bendigo hospital.

These are exciting times for Bendigo and the broader community and I wish to commend the work done to date on this great new redevelopment.

**Medical practitioners: East Gippsland**

**Raised with: Minister for Health**

**Raised by: Mr P. Davis**

**Raised on: 16 September 2009**

**REPLY:**

Ensuring an adequate and well trained workforce is a significant challenge for all health sectors both in Australia and internationally. In recognition of this challenge, the State government funds a range of programs to support the training, recruitment and retention of health professionals.

In relation to general practitioners, the Commonwealth government is the primary provider of funding and support for general practice and as such I suggest you raise your concerns with the Hon Nicola Roxon MP, Federal Minister for Health and Ageing. The State government does however provide support to a number of programs aimed at the medical workforce, including rural general practitioners.

In the 2008–09 state budget, the government announced \$55.1 million over four years to support the increased number of medical students at the new Deakin and Monash University medical schools. This funding includes \$20 million for teaching infrastructure and \$35 million to support additional graduate places to train up to 211 additional doctors per year by 2012.

The government has also provided \$5.3 million over four years to increase the number of medical education officers in health services and \$1.5 million to support the extension of clinical training to areas outside of traditional hospital settings, such as general practice. I am informed Heyfield Medical Practice provides placement for interns under this program.

Specifically for rural general practitioners, the State government provides funding to the Rural Workforce Agency Victoria to support a number of programs. These include \$3000 for rural general practitioners per financial year to support continuing professional development; the Victorian Overseas Trained Doctors Rural Recruitment Scheme which provides incentives to assist recruitment to rural general practices; and the Rural Medical Network which aims to support rural general practitioners and their families.

In recognition of the importance of procedural general practitioners in rural Victoria, the government also funds two programs aimed at increasing the number of procedural general practitioners. The Advanced General Practitioner Procedural Posts are supernumerary training posts in anaesthetics, obstetrics, surgery and emergency

medicine. In Gippsland there are posts at West Gippsland Healthcare Group, Latrobe Regional Hospital, and Central Gippsland Health Service. The other program is the Extended Skills for General Practitioners initiative which supports the acquisition of specialist skills and provides subsidies of \$12,000 to \$24,000 to support the training.

The result of these programs has seen over 500 extra doctors practice in regional and rural Victoria since Labor has come to government.

### **Smoking: minimum age**

**Raised with:** Minister for Small Business

**Raised by:** Mr Drum

**Raised on:** 11 November 2009

#### **REPLY:**

I appreciate that some measures to control tobacco use impact on tobacco retailers.

Nevertheless, the Victorian Tobacco Control Strategy 2008–2013 remains the focus of the Victorian Government's action to reduce the incidence of smoking.

The Strategy introduces a range of initiatives and regulatory reforms that aim to reduce adult smoking rates by 20 per cent by 2013. Further, the measures also focus on controlling advertising and promotion of tobacco to young people.

Consideration of any new initiatives to control youth smoking needs to address the social, economic and environmental causes of youth smoking and the role of the tobacco industry. It remains unclear that the introduction of a minimum legal smoking age would address these underlying causes.

### **Geelong Hospital: emergency department**

**Raised with:** Minister for Health

**Raised by:** Mr D. Davis

**Raised on:** 12 November 2009

#### **REPLY:**

Barwon Health is one of the busiest and largest health services in Victoria.

In March 2009 the new Barwon Health Emergency Department opened due to a State Government investment of \$26.1 million.

This doubled the size of the old emergency department, co-located medical imaging and provided world class facilities and equipment.

We have continued to support Barwon Health with increased recurrent funding of over 130 per cent and by investing over \$200 million in capital works, world class medical equipment and infrastructure works.

In the 2010–11 budget this Government continued to deliver for the Geelong and surrounding communities with \$33.6 to expand acute capacity and funding to purchase land and plan for a second hospital for Geelong.

In regards to clinical issues, Barwon Health have given assurances about better patient communication and are continuing to strive to provide high quality emergency care.

**Barwon Health: leaked document**

**Raised with:** Minister for Health

**Raised by:** Mr D. Davis

**Raised on:** 24 November 2009

**REPLY:**

The Victorian Government has increased its funding to Barwon Health by over 130 per cent so that health professionals can deliver world class care

We have also funded over \$200 million in capital works, world class medical equipment and infrastructure works.

In the 2010–11 budget this Government continued to deliver for the Geelong and surrounding communities with \$33.6 to expand acute capacity and funding to purchase land and plan for a second hospital for Geelong.

I have confirmed that the Barwon Health email referred to by Mr Davis, was sent by the CEO to in excess of 5000 staff and was not a confidential document. Therefore, Barwon Health has advised that there is no basis for Mr Davis's concerns.

**Barwon Health: performance**

**Raised with:** Minister for Health

**Raised by:** Mr Koch

**Raised on:** 8 December 2009

**REPLY:**

The Department of Health has been working closely with Barwon Health to ensure the ongoing viability and sustainability of the health service, including increasing the capacity of the health service to meet emergency and surgical care for the local community.

Since coming to Government we have invested in excess of \$200M in capital building projects, world class medical equipment and infrastructure works. These investments include a new Emergency Department, additional cancer services and significantly improved aged and rehabilitation facilities.

The \$26M Emergency Department was opened in March 2009. The new state of the art facility now includes an area specifically designed for receiving and treating children requiring urgent care and the streaming of patients to provide greater efficiency in their clinical management.

More recently, the Victorian Government has invested a further \$14M to increase The Geelong Hospital's capacity to meet surgical care, including an additional 24 bed surgical ward to support the additional two (2) operating theatres which are currently under construction.

The Victorian Government has supported the ongoing master planning of Barwon Health to ensure it can continue to meet the health care demands of the catchment and its role as a regional hospital.

In recognition of the growth of Geelong's surrounding communities the 2010–11 budget committed \$33.6 million to expand Barwon Health's acute capacity and provide funding to purchase land and plan for a second hospital for Geelong.

Additionally we have also increased recurrent funding by over 130 per cent to meet growing demand.

My department will continue to work closely with Barwon Health to ensure the provision of high quality health care to the community.

### **Housing: Ringwood development**

**Raised with:** Minister for Planning

**Raised by:** Mrs Kronberg

**Raised on:** 10 December 2009

#### **REPLY:**

On 10 December 2009 Mrs Kronberg raised concerns regarding traffic impacts resulting from a residential development at 4–10 Larissa Avenue, Ringwood that I approved on 29 September 2009, and the provision of parking more generally within the Ringwood Central Activity District.

The application referred to by Mrs Kronberg is for a project which is funded under the Commonwealth's Nation Building Economic Stimulus Plan and under the Maroondah Planning Scheme I am the Responsible Authority for the application. The application was assessed and reviewed in detail by my Department and considered suitable for support. The provision of parking and access to the site was supported by a Traffic Assessment report prepared by O'Brien Traffic Pty Ltd, a qualified engineering firm. The proposed parking provision for the development is considered satisfactory and will not have an adverse impact on the surrounding street network.

State and Local Planning Policy encourages increased housing densities in close proximity to Central Activities Districts and Activity Centres and the Maroondah Planning Scheme encourages reduced car dependency. Ringwood Central Activities District is well served by public transport; with the Ringwood Train Station within 800 ms walking distance of the site.

Department of Planning and Community Development and the City of Maroondah have jointly funded a car parking study of the Ringwood Central Activities District and surrounding street network. Extensive investigation and planning has been undertaken to ensure that the intensification of the Ringwood Central Activities District over the next 20 years is sustainable.

### **Health: Wallan super-clinic**

**Raised with:** Minister for Health

**Raised by:** Mrs Petrovich

**Raised on:** 4 February 2010

#### **REPLY:**

The Victorian Government has acknowledged and welcomed the Commonwealth's significant investment in GP Super Clinics in Victoria, particularly in areas of high projected future population growth such as in Wallan.

We were pleased to see the announcement of funding for 3 new GP Super Clinics in Wodonga, Portland and South Morang to build on the 5 sites already announced.

With regard to the Wallan GP Super Clinic, I note that Mitchell Community Health Service is working closely with other local agencies in Wallan, including local GPs, to use the Commonwealth funding to build a hub-and-spoke type GP Super Clinic.

In this model, local agencies will work together to enhance multidisciplinary primary care services for the community, including better access to state-funded allied health services. The distinct advantage of this kind of model is that the GP Super Clinic will be an integrated model, rather than a stand alone facility that would compete

with other general practices in Wallan. To this end, Mitchell Community Health Services has the full support of the Victorian Government.

### **Planning: Bonbeach development**

**Raised with:** Minister for Planning

**Raised by:** Mrs Peulich

**Raised on:** 24 February 2010

#### **REPLY:**

In 2006 Amendment C58 to the Kingston Planning Scheme facilitated the residential development of the former Chisholm TAFE site in Bonbeach.

Amendment C58 was considered concurrently with a planning permit which allowed the subdivision of the site into 79 residential lots, including a super lot (lot B1, now known as 7 Zephyr Place) having an area of about 4265 square metres identified for medium density housing.

Notice of approval of Amendment C58 appeared in the Victoria Government Gazette on 2 November 2006.

The Panel supported the identification of Lot B1 as medium density development and that a good planning outcome for Lot B1 is contingent upon issues of amenity and external impacts and not by the actual number of dwellings. Consequently, the Panel did not support the specification of a maximum number of dwellings (19) for Lot B1. Given the location of the site, the Panel did not consider the proposal an overdevelopment. The amendment was adopted and approved consistent with the Panel's recommendation.

In December 2009, a planning permit application was lodged with Kingston City Council for 82 dwellings within a three storey apartment style development on the land, known as 7 Zephyr Place, Bonbeach.

Under the provisions of the Development Plan Overlay which apply to the land, and were introduced by Amendment C58, the planning permit application is exempt from the notice and decision requirements and the review rights of the Act. However, Council informally notified local residents of the proposal and planning scheme controls applying to the site.

The developer has formally withdrawn the planning permit application for 82 dwellings. The developer has agreed to work with VicUrban, the landowner when Amendment C58 was under consideration, on conducting a community engagement process in relation to the redesign of the development proposal to achieve an outcome more in keeping with community expectations for the site.

VicUrban representatives met with a residents group on 8 April 2010 to discuss the next steps in the project redesign and community engagement process. Further meetings with the residents' group will be arranged as the project redesign evolves.

Before deciding on any revised planning application, Council must assess the proposal against the State and Local Planning Frameworks (Municipal Strategic Statement and local planning policies) of the Kingston Planning Scheme.

### **General practitioners: rural medical workforce rescue package**

**Raised with:** Minister for Health

**Raised by:** Mr Vogels

**Raised on:** 24 February 2010

**REPLY:**

As you would be aware, the Commonwealth Government has primary responsibility for the supply and retention of general practitioners and controls the supply through its allocation of Medicare Provider numbers.

The AMA proposal regarding rural doctors recommends incentives for doctors to relocate to rural areas.

Such incentives already exist under the Commonwealth's General Practice Rural Incentives Program commencing on 1 July 2010.

The State Government has provided further support to regional and rural doctors by funding \$14.1 million for 174 specialist training posts in areas such as Obstetrics, Anaesthetics, Surgery and Paediatrics.

A further \$13.9 million has been provided for a Victorian Rural Enhancement Package to support Visiting Medical Officers on-call arrangements. The Government also provides support with Continuing Professional Development Grants for Rural GP's and a statewide locum relief scheme.

Additionally \$55.15 million has been provided to train up to 211 additional doctors per year by 2012 and \$4.8 million has been allocated to recruit and support International Medical Graduates.

These programs have seen over 500 extra doctors recruited to regional and rural Victoria since Labor has come to Government.

***Curlip II: funding***

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

**Raised by:** Mr Hall

**Raised on:** 24 February 2010

**REPLY:**

Over recent years an Orbost-based committee has constructed the Paddle Steamer *Curlip*. This is now established it as a tourist operation on the lower Snowy River near the township of Marlo.

The new *Curlip* has been embraced by the East Gippsland community and business network as a significant tourist asset.

I congratulate the local committee for their outstanding achievement in building the vessel and commencing the tourist operation. However, I am aware it is proving difficult obstacle to continue its operation and therefore the committee is seeking alternative operators.

The government has previously supported the development of the *Curlip* during boat construction and establishment of the tourism operation. Support was given by the Department of Planning and Community Development Community Capacity Building program as well as the Federal Regional Partnerships Program.

Through the local paper and approaches to my office, local members have suggested the government through Parks Victoria could take over operation of the vessel. I can advise Parks Victoria has supported the *Curlip* by waiving its tour operator fees during the start-up phase of the *Curlip*'s operation as well as providing other in-kind support.

No approach to manage the *Curlip* operation has been made directly to Parks Victoria.

Parks Victoria has been advised no application for further funding has been made to the Department of Regional Development. However the Department has met with the management committee and the Shire of East Gippsland regarding this matter.



**Mining warden: future**

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

**Raised by:** Mr Drum

**Raised on:** 24 February 2010

**REPLY:**

I refer to the matter you raised during the Adjournment Debate in Legislative Council on 24 February 2010 concerning the position of the mining warden.

The roles and responsibilities of the Victorian Mining Warden are specified in the *Mineral Resources Sustainable Development Act 1990*. The Act is currently being reviewed by the Department and amendments will be brought before the Parliament in the future. Extensive consultation has taken place with all the relevant stakeholders.

In March this year I welcomed Mr Edward John Butler as Victoria's new Mining Warden. Mr Butler brings a wealth of administrative law expertise to the role.

**Libraries: Nunawading refurbishment**

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

**Raised by:** Mr Atkinson

**Raised on:** 25 February 2010

**REPLY:**

I wish to advise Mr Atkinson, Member for Eastern Metropolitan Region, that the Regional and Local Community Infrastructure Program is a federally funded program and is part of the National Building Economic Stimulus Plan.

The Minister responsible for the program is the Hon Anthony Albanese MP, Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government.

**Wind farms: Bald Hills**

**Raised with:** Minister for Planning

**Raised by:** Mr Guy

**Raised on:** 25 February 2010

**REPLY:**

This wind farm development was subject to an extended Environmental Effects Statement approval process. Hearings were held in March and April 2004 that allowed considerable public input and which ultimately found that the development was unlikely to raise unacceptable environmental impacts, and that it should proceed. The planning permit for this development was first granted in August 2004.

On 10 March 2009, I received an application from Bald Hills Wind Farm seeking my consideration of an application for secondary consent to increase the maximum height of the wind turbines for the Bald Hills Wind Farm from 110 metres to 135 metres.

The application for secondary consent was made pursuant to condition 4(b) of the planning permit. The proponent submitted, in support of its application for secondary consent under condition 4(b), a report which included assessments in relation to the following matters:

- a. Planning;
- b. Predicted outdoor noise levels resulting from the changes;
- c. Shadow flicker durations for sites around the wind farm;
- d. Aeronautical impacts;
- e. Visual impacts;
- f. Bird and bat impacts; and
- g. Landscape and visual impacts of obstacle marking and lighting.

The information provided by the proponent was scrutinised by my department; in particular the Environmental Assessment Unit, State Planning Services and Legal Services.

I decided, after considering all of the information provided by my department and the proponent, to grant secondary consent for the increase in height on 16 December 2009. I made my decision, having regard to the legal advice I received from my department, and a consideration of the planning and environmental impacts of the proposed increase in height.

I also note that on 30 November 2009, the Commonwealth Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts confirmed that the increase in turbine height to 135 metres was acceptable and did not require any additional assessment pursuant to the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

In respect to the lighting of the towers, the Civil Aviation Safety Authority has no current statutory requirement to have these towers equipped with night lighting.

### **East Gippsland: walking tracks**

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

**Raised by: Mr P. Davis**

**Raised on: 10 March 2010**

#### **REPLY:**

I am pleased to confirm that on 11 January 2010 I announced a grant of \$1,612,546 to East Gippsland Shire Council, in partnership with Parks Victoria, for two East Gippsland Short Coastal Walks at Marlo and Mallacoota.

The Victorian Nature Based Tourism Strategy identifies four 'iconic' long distance walks that should be constructed or upgraded to serve a broader market and to facilitate the introduction of guiding and other value-adding services.

The two short walks are the "bookends" for the iconic East Gippsland Coastal Walk, part of the National Coastal Landscape and will become an integral part of "Australia's Wilderness Coast". The walks are considered a high priority in building Victoria's nature based tourism experience.

The issues raised in relation to the project funding relate to the delivery of a major tourism infrastructure project in East Gippsland. The walks are located in a sensitive coastal landscape and require a highly technical and extensive planning and design process. Furthermore, the construction of the walks will be undertaken in a challenging and variable terrain.

The walks and associated visitor infrastructure will be exposed to severe coastal conditions and will therefore be constructed to a high standard and utilise material that will reduce long-term maintenance costs.

The projects costs include the construction of numerous lookouts designed to enhance the visitor experience by increasing the opportunity to appreciate the spectacular views at these locations.

In order to facilitate access both walks include a number of elevated bridge and boardwalk structures. At Marlo in particular, a considerable length of boardwalk needs to be constructed over open water limiting machinery access.

To ensure the provision of a quality tourism experience, the upgrading of trail-head infrastructure such as car parking, information shelters and orientation information is required. Both walks also require vegetation removal and revegetation of degraded sites as part of the overall project.

Construction of the first stage of the new walk at Marlo will be commenced soon. The Shire of East Gippsland is proceeding with detailed design of the walk within the township and Parks Victoria is currently seeking tenders for Stage 1 which extends from the Eastern edge of the town to Mots Beach.

Planning and approvals for the remainder of the Marlo walk to Frenches Narrows are well advanced and construction will occur next financial year.

I note and commend the Rotary Club of Sale's contribution to the walk in the Sale Common that was partly RDV funded, along with a generous private donation and in-kind agency support.

From RDV's experience, each walk or trail has its own special requirements. They often have a range of terrain constraints, environmental sensitivities and location and access constraints which impact the project's costs and delivery time frame.

I support the work of East Gippsland Council and Parks Victoria in the development of this iconic coastal walk for Victoria.

Parks Victoria is the lead agency for the delivery of the four iconic walks and RDV is in discussion with Parks Victoria on the future funding opportunities for the next stage of this and other iconic walks in regional Victoria.

### **Lockwood Primary School: land purchase**

**Raised with: Minister for Education**

**Raised by: Ms Lovell**

**Raised on: 11 March 2010**

#### **REPLY:**

I am informed as follows:

The site area entitlement for Lockwood Primary School is 1.7 hectares compared to the existing school site which is 2.4 hectares. I am aware that there are existing site constraints including a large fenced-off dam area.

To help the school with these issues the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development has agreed to assist Lockwood Primary School in the acquisition of the adjacent church site. The Department is currently in the process of liaising with the adjoining owner to progress this acquisition.

### **Geelong Hospital: elective surgery**

**Raised with: Minister for Health**

**Raised by: Mr D. Davis**

**Raised on: 23 March 2010**

**REPLY:**

Barwon Health is one of the busiest and largest health services in Victoria. It serves a large local population and is the regional referral centre for the Barwon-South Western region.

Barwon Health has experienced over a 60 per cent increase in the number of non elective (emergency) operations since we came to government.

That's why we have increased recurrent funding by over 130 per cent and committed funding to expand the number of theatres from 8 to 10.

\$30 million was allocated in the 2009–10 budget to upgrade theatres through fabric works and new fit outs as well as building an additional 24 bed surgical ward.

In the 2010–11 budget this Government continued to deliver for the Geelong and surrounding communities with \$33.6 to expand acute capacity and funding to purchase land and plan for a second hospital for Geelong.

Extra theatre capacity will mean that Barwon Health can better manage their surgery list, so that patients can get the care they need.

**Wild dogs: control**

**Raised with: Minister for Agriculture**

**Raised by: Mr Hall**

**Raised on: 23 March 2010**

**REPLY:**

I refer to the matter you raised during the Adjournment Debate in the Legislative Council on 23 March 2010, regarding wild dog control.

Your constituent, Mr Gordon Moon is recognised by local Department of Primary Industries (DPI) wild dog control staff as making significant effort to protect his stock.

Electrified wild dog exclusion fences are one of the most effective tools farmers have at their disposal to protect their livestock. Previous incentives provided to individual farmers have repeatedly demonstrated the benefits of this proven control measure with many farmers adopting the practice of building effective fences.

The East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority has accepted advice from the Gippsland Wild Dog Management Group that any future funds would be most effectively used to support community fences where the intention is to build a contiguous length of fence that benefits the greatest number of farmers in an area, such as the Tambo Valley, from livestock predation rather than continue to provide individual farmers with incentives for private fences.

The ongoing DPI baiting program in Gippsland is based on community intelligence provided through the Local Area Control Plans and the detailed knowledge of departmental wild dog control staff. Close coordination with Parks Victoria and the Department of Sustainability and Environment baiting programs, ensures baits are laid throughout the year in appropriate locations and times for maximum effectiveness. This approach is based on national best practice informed by research and on-ground experience.

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. DPI has adopted a range of baiting techniques to address the recommendations of the Aerial Baiting Stakeholder Consultative Committee. These measures also reflect the priorities of the Wild Dog Management Groups. DPI is undertaking year round ground baiting in coordination with the baiting efforts of regional public

land managers. This sustained effort is aimed at reducing the numbers of wild dogs on public land near the interface with private land.

Departmental field staff selected the 'Jake' traps from a wide range of compliant traps. The 'Jake' trap is recognised internationally and within Australia as a robust and reliable device. It is reported as the trap of choice by the largest trap retailer in Australia and is used successfully in Western Australia, South Australia, Queensland and New South Wales. DPI staff have had the same level of success with the 'Jake' trap as compared to the old 'Lanes' trap, and report that it can be set in locations where old traps were not suitable.

The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986 (POCTA) Regulations do not specify that traps be visited daily, rather an animal cannot remain in a trap for more than 24 hours. Research is now being undertaken to trial a remote trap monitoring device. If successful, traps would only need to be visited when they have been sprung, which would create considerable efficiencies and reduce the possibility of human scent interfering with traps.

DPI is committed to harnessing the knowledge of communities, public land managers, wild dog control staff, researchers and interstate groups, and will continue to use all of the control techniques and tools at our collective disposal to better manage wild dogs into the future through an integrated control program.

Thank you for your interest in this matter.

### **BreastScreen Victoria: mobile unit program**

**Raised with: Minister for Health**

**Raised by: Mrs Coote**

**Raised on: 24 March 2010**

#### **REPLY:**

The Victorian Government is committed to reducing the impact of preventable cancers through early detection, and we are proud to continue our support of the BreastScreen Victoria Program, which provides free two-yearly breast screening, specifically targeting women aged 50–69 years.

Through Victoria's Cancer Action Plan, \$150 million has been committed to improve cancer survival rates. As part of this plan, additional funding of \$2.8 million has been allocated to BreastScreen Victoria to provide an additional 20,000 screens per year.

Funding for BreastScreen Victoria has continued to increase over time. Since 1999 the Government has increased funding by over \$15 million, from \$19 million in 1999 to \$34.5 million in 2010. Since 2005–06 funding has increased from \$25.6 million to \$34.5 million this year.

BreastScreen services are spread geographically across metropolitan, regional and rural locations.

The mobile screening vans are an important feature of the BreastScreen Victoria program, and are used by the Program to ensure equity in access for all women.

BreastScreen Victoria continually review and revise planning of services, including location of the vans, to ensure that the Program meets the needs of all Victorian women.

In May 2009 the Government committed \$10 million to continue expanding digital mammography to all BreastScreen services in Victoria, ensuring Victorian women have access to the best screening technologies available.

This investment is being supported by a commitment by the Commonwealth Government of \$120 million to roll-out digital technologies in BreastScreen services nationally.

This funding will enable digital upgrades to all major public screening and assessment services, including the urban mobile screening van.

As a necessary first step, Information Technology systems that enable digital radiology reading are being installed at St Vincent's, Monash and North Western BreastScreen, ensuring images can be received from the new digital machines, including those taken by the urban mobile van when the new digital equipment is installed.

Victoria was the first state to trial digital mammography through the Government-funded \$2.6 million pilot project with BreastScreen Victoria in 2005–2008.

Digital technologies have been installed at Maroondah, Bendigo, Ballarat and Geelong assessment centres, with a number of rural sites currently in transition. Victoria, along with Tasmania, introduced the first fully digital mobile vans in Australia, and the Victorian van was the first screening service to send images over a broadband wireless network.

I trust that this information allays any concerns Mrs Coote has regarding funding for the BreastScreen Program, and highlights the significant work being undertaken by this government to ensure women have access to the best screening technologies available.

### **Mitchell Rangers Football Club: facilities**

**Raised with:** Minister for Sport, Recreation and Youth Affairs

**Raised by:** Mrs Petrovich

**Raised on:** 24 March 2010

#### **REPLY:**

The Victorian Government has a range of funding programs that support local councils and clubs in the planning for, and provision of, community sport and recreation facilities.

The Planning category of the Community Facilities Funding Program (CFFP) provides funding to support community sport and recreation provision through better information, consultation and strategic planning.

The Member for Seymour has discussed this issue with me.

I have recently approved the Mitchell Shire Council's application for funding under the CFFP Planning category to prepare a Sports Infrastructure Development Strategy for the municipality. The strategy will consider the community needs, demands and trends with respect to sport within the Shire and recommend actions by council to address identified gaps. The development of this strategy will provide the basis for the delivery of well considered and planned future sports infrastructure projects.

I would expect the need for a permanent training and competition home for soccer in the Mitchell Shire to be one of the issues addressed in the development of this strategy. Officers from my department met with officers from Mitchell Shire Council on Thursday 25 March to discuss ways in which the State Government and Council can most effectively support the development of soccer in the Mitchell Shire. The Mitchell Shire Council is continuing to explore a number of options to meet the need for soccer facilities within the Shire, including the possibility of seeking further State Government assistance in providing those facilities.

The Strengthening the World Game Program (SWGP) provides funding to assist local councils to upgrade existing or to develop new soccer facilities. Grants from this program require matching funding and are provided directly to local government for projects that increase participation, access and use of community soccer facilities.

### **Merino: bush nursing centre**

**Raised with:** Minister for Health

**Raised by: Mr Koch**

**Raised on: 24 March 2010**

**REPLY:**

The Government is committed to the provision of enhanced health services to small rural communities.

I am aware of the issues raised concerning the redevelopment of the Merino Community Health Centre.

I am pleased report that this issue has now been resolved with a slight change to the proposed design.

I understand that tenders have closed and this project is continuing to proceed.

In regards to master planning of the Coleraine campus of Western District Health Service, the 2010–11 budget delivered \$25.8 million to build a new hospital for Coleraine. This is an exciting project that has been well received by the local community.

### **Hospitals: violence**

**Raised with: Minister for Health**

**Raised by: Mr D. Davis**

**Raised on: 24 March 2010**

**REPLY:**

The Government holds the safety of staff and patients in the highest regard.

An issue arising from the 2005 Ministerial Taskforce on Violence in Nursing (the Taskforce) was to ensure greater reporting of aggressive incidents in health services.

Health services are encouraged to have a Code Grey and Code Black system, so that staff are made aware and can quickly respond to aggressive situations.

The reporting of these codes allows health services to learn from these incidents so that they can design better responses to ensure the safety of staff and patients.

In response to the Taskforce the government funded the \$4 million for the Occupational Violence Prevention Fund.

This funding supported 144 projects across 65 health services to upgrade security systems, introduce swipe access, improved environmental hospital design, additional staff training, CCTV cameras and closer collaboration with police.

These projects demonstrate the Governments commitment to make health services safer places for both staff and patients.

### **Electricity: smart meters**

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

**Raised by: Mr Vogels**

**Raised on: 24 March 2010**

**REPLY:**

I refer to the matter you raised during the Adjournment Debate in the Legislative Council on 24 March 2010 concerning electricity smart meters.

Smart meters use new digital two-way communications technology to provide regular remote reading of energy use. The new meters replace existing meters which must be read manually. Smart meters, like the existing meters, are part of the regulated poles and wires electricity distribution network and are owned by the distribution business.

The rollout of new smart meters by the distribution businesses commenced in Victoria in September 2009 and will conclude at the end of 2013. Smart meters will benefit consumers by enabling more efficient network and energy management. These benefits will reduce electricity costs for consumers.

The benefits of smart meters accrue to all consumers regardless of how many meters they have. These benefits include:

- Remote reading of meters, removing the need for on-site meter reading;
- More efficient management of network energy flows, with savings to be passed on to consumers in the regulated network charges;
- Immediate remote monitoring of power outages, with faster response and emergency management; and
- More information and control for consumers over their energy use, with time of use prices available for consumers who want to reduce their electricity bills by using electricity more efficiently.

There is no blow-out in costs and your use of various amounts in your adjournment debate is like comparing apples with oranges. The Auditor-General did not find that the cost would be \$2.25 billion — he was only reporting an industry estimate.

When the government first considered the smart meter program in 2005, it based its estimate of \$800 million for a 20 year rollout of simple interval meters. However, newer meters offer a key breakthrough in design: two-way communication capabilities. This innovation means that future technological improvements can be handled by software upgrades rather than replacement of the meter, a key consideration in ensuring that the smart meters do not become obsolete.

The 20-year cost estimate for these new meters is \$1.6 billion. Previous independent analysis has shown that the benefits of the smart meter program far outweigh the costs. For every dollar spent on smart meters, above what it would have cost to continue to run the outdated system, Victorians will receive between \$3 and \$16 in return.

The network companies will be constantly scrutinised by the AER — an arm of the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) — to ensure that costs cannot blow out.

Each network connection point includes a meter, and attracts a metering service charge as part of the regulated network service charge. Properties with more than one network connection and metering point (such as many farms) pay a network and metering charge for each connection. There has been no change in the way these charges have been applied in 2010 — network and metering charges have always been applied in this way to keep costs fair and reasonable for all. If a farmer has a connection that is only used a few days per year they have been paying fees for this for years and should review if this connection is needed.

Consumers, including those on sites with multiple network connection and metering costs, will begin to benefit from smart meters as they are progressively installed between now and 2013. As with all network upgrades, the most substantial benefits will be available when the rollout is complete and large scale efficiencies can be economically delivered.



**Ballarat: Avenue of Honour restoration**

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

**Raised by:** Mr Koch

**Raised on:** 25 March 2010

**REPLY:**

The City of Ballarat and the Avenue of Honour Committee are seeking the partial or full reinstatement of the portion of the Avenue of Honour that was severed by the construction of the Ballarat Bypass in the early 1990s. This part of the Avenue of Honour is under the care and management of the City of Ballarat and as it is relatively inaccessible, and requires further and continuing maintenance. As the current Western Highway Duplication Project incorporates some road changes at this location, VicRoads is liaising closely with both the City of Ballarat and the Avenue of Honour Committee so that any impacts on the Avenue are minimised as well as ensuring that any options for the reinstatement of the Avenue are not “built-out”.

**Geelong Hospital: emergency department**

**Raised with:** Minister for Health

**Raised by:** Mr D. Davis

**Raised on:** 25 March 2010

**REPLY:**

Barwon Health is one of the busiest and largest health services in Victoria.

Barwon’s health professionals are dedicated to providing world class care to patients and this Government has been proud to support their important work.

That’s why we have increased recurrent funding by over 130 per cent.

We have further supported Barwon by investing over \$200 million in capital works, world class medical equipment and infrastructure works.

This includes \$26.1 million to fund a new emergency department, doubling the size of the old emergency department, which was opened in March 2009.

In the 2010–11 budget this Government continued to deliver for the Geelong and surrounding communities with \$33.6 million to expand acute capacity and funding to purchase land and plan for a second hospital for Geelong.

In regards to reporting on emergency department and elective surgery performance, these details are publicly available through the Your Hospitals report.

**Racial and religious tolerance: offensive advertising**

**Raised with:** Attorney-General

**Raised by:** Mr Finn

**Raised on:** 13 April 2010

**REPLY:**

Thank you for your question raised during the Adjournment debate on 13 April 2010 regarding the *Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001* (RRTA). You called on me to launch an investigation into whether the use of a Christian religious image to advertise a nightclub may be religious vilification under the RRTA.

Complaints under the RRTA can be made by individuals or representative bodies. There is no provision in the RRTA for me to launch an investigation into this matter, nor is there provision for the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (the Commission) to intervene to take action. That is the case regardless of the religion in question.

However, it is open to you or any of your concerned constituents to lodge a complaint with the Commission if you consider the material in question to be vilifying.

**VicRoads: road safety funding**

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

**Raised by:** Mr Koch

**Raised on:** 14 April 2010

**REPLY:**

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

VicRoads delivers a number of road safety programs to the community. Two of these programs, the Saferoads local government road safety initiative and the network of RoadSafe Community Road Safety Councils, have been recently reviewed with the primary aim of improving engagement with the community on local road safety issues and for the community to have greater ownership in delivering local road safety programs.

A reference group was established in early 2009 to oversee and provide strategic advice on the review into the future delivery of community road safety programs. This group included representation from VicRoads, Transport Accident Commission, Department of Justice, Victoria Police, local government, other Government departments and RoadSafe Victoria.

A major role of this group was to provide advice, report back to their own organisations regarding the progress of the review and provide recommendations on the future delivery model for community based road safety programs.

The establishment of the Road Safety Alliance was very strongly supported by the reference group including the community representatives. The broad representation of Government and non-Government organisations on this Alliance will improve the integration of road safety across these areas.

A more integrated and coordinated approach to community road safety was seen as pivotal to the success of future programs. The role of partnerships and cooperation has been one of the strengths of Victoria's approach to road safety which last year saw a record low road toll of 290.

The value of volunteers is well recognised and appreciated, as is the work being done by local community groups. VicRoads has undertaken extensive consultation across Victoria with community groups such as RoadSafe and local government on how to make the transition to the new delivery model, which is to be phased in by 1 July 2011.

VicRoads support of community based road safety initiatives will remain a key component of Victoria's road safety strategy *arrive alive 2008-2017*. Under the new model VicRoads will work strategically within the community and will continue to provide assistance and information to local communities to ensure that community programs deliver demonstrable road safety benefits.

**Bushfires: tourism**

**Raised with:** Minister for Tourism and Major Events

**Raised by:** Mr Vogels

**Raised on:** 6 May 2010

**REPLY:**

I refer to the matter raised during the Adjournment Debate in the Legislative Council on 6 May 2010 regarding the tourism implications of bushfire messaging, and the request for the Government to fund a regional tourism summer marketing campaign.

In response to the 2009 bushfires, a joint \$10 million Commonwealth and State Government *Bushfire tourism Industry Support Package* was announced on 17 March 2009, to fund a range of strategies in order to assist tourism in the bushfire affected regions. This package included \$6 million for marketing, \$1 million to support events and \$3 million for infrastructure projects.

Based upon extensive consultation, the Commonwealth and Victorian Governments allocated funds to meet the specific needs of the bushfire regions of our State. Funding allocations were made to the follow regions:

– Yarra Valley and the Dandenong Ranges	\$2,200,000
– High Country/Australian Alps	\$1,500,000
– Gippsland	\$1,500,000
– Murrindindi/Mitchell	\$ 600,000
– Goldfields	\$ 100,000
– Daylesford and the Macedon Ranges	\$ 100,000
– Grampians	\$ 50,000

A further \$13.3 million was allocated over four years for *Regional Marketing Initiatives* announced as part of the 2008–09 State Budget. this funding has been used to develop the new \$7.3 million *Daylesford, Lead a Double Life* campaign, highlighting Victoria's strengths in spa and wellbeing, and the unique villages throughout Victoria.

This initiative also included \$6 million for the *Regional Marketing Program 2009–12*. this funding is allocated (\$2 million per annum) to the Regional Campaign Committees and Regional Tourism boards throughout Victoria to support marketing and cooperative programs for their respective regions.

Tourism Victoria works closely with these organisations to develop their annual marketing plans and campaigns. However, it is the responsibility of the Regional Campaign Committees and Regional Tourism Boards to make decisions regarding the use of marketing funding on the basis of their strategic objectives, peak tourism periods and in line with industry consultation and feedback.

In addition to the funding support as outlined above, Tourism Victoria has been working with fire agencies to better prepare tourism businesses and visitors for the upcoming bushfire season, including clear advice on the new Fire Danger Rating system.

Over 600 tourism businesses have now attended a series of special bushfire preparedness workshops held across regional Victoria. This level of interest is unprecedented and reflects the high level of engagement by the tourism industry on this important issue.

**Regional and rural Victoria: ambulance services**

**Raised with:** Minister for Health

**Raised by:** Mr D. Davis

**Raised on: 6 May 2010**

**REPLY:**

The Brumby Government has more than tripled the funding provided to our ambulance services and more than doubled the number of paramedics working across the State.

More recently, the Government has provided a \$56M boost to rural and regional ambulance services which will deliver 297 additional paramedics, with 234 paramedics to be on the road within the next 12 months.

This package includes

- 10 new MICA single-responder units with 48 new MICA paramedics dedicated to work in regional and rural Victoria;
- 40 scholarships for students who want to become paramedics in regional and rural Victoria;
- 8 dedicated non-emergency patient transfer crews staffed by 32 non-emergency transfer patient transport officers to cut-down the number of non-emergency transports undertaken by paramedics by 10 per cent and increase capacity of paramedics to respond to emergency call-outs by an estimated 12,000 hours; and
- a new regional and rural call referral service, which will enable '000' callers who do not require an emergency ambulance to be referred to an alternative health service.

The Brumby Government is committed to continuously improving emergency services across rural and regional Victoria. As a part of this process, the Government in conjunction with Ambulance Victoria will continue to monitor road accident hot spots, ambulance caseload and hospital admissions to enable effective planning for future service developments.

### **Our Place: funding**

**Raised with: Minister for Community Services**

**Raised by: Ms Lovell**

**Raised on: 25 May 2010**

**REPLY:**

The amazing response from individuals and organisations in response to the 2009 Victorian Bushfires has been greatly appreciated and tremendously valued by all those who have needed assistance. Our Place is one of the organisations which have provided assistance to the bushfire affected people in Eaglehawk and surrounding areas.

Our Place has received funding to support their bushfire specific activities, including \$30,000 from Department of Human Services for community development activities. Our Place has also benefited from a \$45,000 grant provided by the Bendigo Community Recovery Committee to support the activities that both Our Place and the Long Gully Neighbourhood House have undertaken with the Eaglehawk community.

All the work done by community organisations for people affected by the bushfires has been greatly appreciated. I note the commitment of Our Place to providing support to the broader communities of Long Gully and understand that they are actively seeking advice and have approached various avenues to secure funding so that they can continue their work.

### **BioGrid Australia: funding**

**Raised with: Minister for Health**

**Raised by: Mr D. Davis**

**Raised on: 25 May 2010**

**REPLY:**

BioGrid is an IT platform that provides a method to link data from multiple institutions in an ethical and secure method, using agreed and approved processes to enable medical research.

The funding for BioGrid has been provided through the Department of Innovation, Industry and Regional Development (DIIRD) as part of the Australian Cancer Grid (ACG) project. BioGrid is a not-for-profit public company limited by guarantee with a company board and committee of management both providing direction to the company.

\$16.9 million has been provided to BioGrid since 2003 from both the Victorian (\$12.6 million) and Commonwealth (\$4.3 million) governments. Development of long-term financial sustainability beyond the current public funding is a key component of the ACG project.

BioGrid has obtained project specific funding from the Department of Health through the Victorian Cancer Agency as part of competitive funding rounds. BioGrid has directly received \$308,000 as part of a platform technology grant, while funding is also provided indirectly through fees paid by funded researchers accessing the BioGrid system.

Possible development options for BioGrid are currently being considered as part of a review jointly commissioned by DIIRD and the Victorian Cancer Agency. In addition to funding options, the review will determine the value BioGrid provides to Victoria's researchers and synergies with existing research platforms. The results of the consultation with BioGrid, researchers and other stakeholders will be available before the current funding ends in December 2010. The Victorian Government will consider future funding options for BioGrid after the review is received.

### **Water: sportsgrounds**

**Raised with: Minister for Water**

**Raised by: Mr Koch**

**Raised on: 25 May 2010**

**REPLY:**

Before the completion of the Wimmera Mallee Pipeline, sporting clubs in the service area of the pipeline were supplied with water in the form of an annual dam fill via the old channel system. However, a lack of dam fills in recent years led to sporting clubs not being able to adequately water their grounds.

The completion of the Wimmera Mallee Pipeline has given sporting clubs access to a more secure water supply. However, due to the cost of the pipeline, the price of pipeline-supplied water (\$65 per megalitre in 2010–11) will be higher than the previous low reliability channel supply (\$43.30 per megalitre in 2009–10).

To minimise the price impact on customers, further annual price increases will be capped at 50 per cent until the full tariff, as approved by the Essential Services Commission in June 2010, is reached.

I note that sporting clubs, as not-for-profit organisations, are entitled to a full rebate on the fixed meter charges for the pipeline. Sporting clubs are also exempt from applicable capacity charges.

Grants are also available to sporting clubs through Sport, Recreation and Youth Affairs Victoria (e.g. drought relief for sporting grounds) and administered through local councils. The grants encourage sporting clubs to become more self-sufficient with their water supply and embrace water saving measures to sustain their grounds.

**Ambulance services: Castlemaine****Raised with: Minister for Health****Raised by: Mr Drum****Raised on: 25 May 2010****REPLY:**

The Brumby Government has invested significantly to improve ambulance services in the regions. The Government has more than tripled the funding provided to our ambulance services and more than doubled the number of paramedics working across the State.

The Brumby Government is committed to continuously improving emergency services across rural and regional Victoria. As a part of this process, the Government in conjunction with Ambulance Victoria continuously monitors road accident hot spots, ambulance caseload and hospital admissions to enable effective planning for future service developments.

Ambulance Victoria has advised that in June 2008 the rostering configuration at Castlemaine was upgraded to operate 24-hours a day four days a week. More recently, to facilitate graduate training, 24-hour services have been operating seven days a week in Castlemaine.

Additionally, the Government has provided a \$56M boost to rural and regional ambulance services which will deliver 297 additional paramedics, with 234 paramedics to be on the road within the next 12 months. In the Loddon Mallee region this investment will deliver 58 additional paramedics including new MICA single responder units in Mildura, Swan Hill and Echuca. This package will also provide scholarships for students to become paramedics in country Victoria, introduce a call referral service to the regions and increase the availability of paramedics to respond to emergency call outs.

This latest boost builds on previous Government investments in the region, which includes additional paramedics in Bendigo, Castlemaine, Kangaroo Flat and a new emergency helicopter in Bendigo.

**City of Traralgon Pistol Club: site****Raised with: Minister for Roads and Ports****Raised by: Mr Hall****Raised on: 25 May 2010****REPLY:**

I am informed that, as at the date the question as raised;

Following discussions between VicRoads and the Secretary of the Traralgon Pistol Club, it was agreed that as the land was now surplus to requirements, the Club would be given 12 months to vacate the site.

Following these discussions, I am advised that the Club has made a submission to Latrobe City Council requesting it to consider the purchase of part of the site. The Club may also be interested in purchasing the site if it can obtain funding. Government policy does allow for direct sales if a prospective purchaser can demonstrate exceptional circumstances. Such sales are at market value as assessed by the Valuer General.

If the Latrobe City Council or the Club can demonstrate exceptional circumstances for purchase of part of the site, the request will be considered in accordance with the relevant guidelines.

**Timber industry: firewood strategy**

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

**Raised by:** Mr P. Davis

**Raised on:** 26 May 2010

**REPLY:**

Victoria's Firewood Strategy for Public Land was launched at Tylden on 2 June 2010. The release of the Strategy follows extensive community engagement and consultation.

Firewood collection will be simpler and more accessible for all Victorians under the new Strategy and it will also ensure firewood supplied from Victoria's public land is sustainable into the future.

The Strategy provides a practical system for the collection of firewood from public land for use in households. It is important the Government and community work in partnership to ensure firewood collection from public land has a sustainable future while giving certainty to communities who rely on firewood as a primary energy source.

Key features of *Victoria's Strategy for Firewood on Public Land* include:

- Firewood collection permits will be available for up to three months;
- Authorisation for roadside collection will only to be required from the land management authority.
- Collection of firewood by members of the public will be permitted in designated areas during an autumn and a spring season to manage risks of fire ignition, environmental impact and the volume of firewood removed;
- Firewood permit prices will be consistent across the state and concessions on firewood permits brought into line with electricity and gas; and
- Community firewood suppliers to be established throughout Victoria by the Department of Sustainability and Environment so commercial firewood cutters across the State all have the same opportunity to cut and collect firewood in State forests.

The changes will be phased in from autumn 2011, with the new system fully in place for the autumn 2012 firewood collection season

**Sport and recreation: community code of conduct**

**Raised with:** Minister for Sport, Recreation and Youth Affairs

**Raised by:** Ms Darveniza

**Raised on:** 26 May 2010

**REPLY:**

The Victorian Code of Conduct for Community Sport (the Code) was released in March 2010 after consultations with State Sporting Associations. A number of support resources were launched in April 2010 to assist associations, leagues and clubs implement and adhere to the Code. These included a DVD on spectator behaviour, a poster on the Code and a CD Rom entitled 'Leading Clubs — the rules and tools for a more inclusive club'. Each of these resources is designed to provide an introduction to the behaviours and standards expected in Victorian community sport.

A series of workshops will be held in all regions across Victoria to raise awareness on all aspects of the Code and to signpost the resources currently available to support improved conduct and behaviour. These workshops will be

held in the second half of 2010. It is expected that a number of other key agencies will contribute to the workshop content.

A dedicated online site, accessed through the Sport and Recreation Victoria website, is also available to provide information to support a better understanding of the Code. Additionally, further consultation meetings with State Sporting Associations have been undertaken to seek views on how best to support the Code.

Supporting the Code will be an on going activity and the Government will continue to work in partnership with the sector to ensure that the right resources are in place.

### **Colac Otway Performing Arts and Cultural Centre: funding**

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

**Raised by:** Ms Tierney

**Raised on:** 26 May 2010

**REPLY:**

I can confirm that Colac Otway Shire Council has submitted an application to the Regional Infrastructure Development Fund (RIDF) to promote economic development and enhance livability in the region through an upgrade of the Colac Otway Performing Arts and Cultural Centre.

All applications to the RIDF are assessed by a Regional Infrastructure Development Committee (RIDC). This Committee of senior officers of the Departments of Premier and Cabinet, Treasury and Finance, Transport and Regional Development Victoria has been established to evaluate applications and provide recommendations to me on projects deemed suitable for funding.

### **Housing: government performance**

**Raised with:** Minister for Housing

**Raised by:** Mr Drum

**Raised on:** 26 May 2010

**REPLY:**

The Victorian Government, in concert with the Commonwealth Government, has committed to one of the biggest investments in decades to increase affordable housing. Under the Nation Building and Jobs National Partnership Agreement, Victoria has been allocated \$1.167 billion to fund new social housing resulting in 4500 new public and social housing units across Victoria over the next two years. At the same time around 2350 new homes will be added to the housing supply from Victoria's own record \$510 million investment.

Through the Victorian Government Growth Strategy, the Nation Building and Jobs National Partnership Agreement and National Rental Affordability Scheme (NRAS) an additional 14,350 affordable rental stock will be provided. Increasing supply is the most effective way of reducing upward pressure on rents. Moreover, over the next two years the NRAS will deliver 7500 new homes in the private market. This scheme delivers properties at 20 per cent below market rents and is the biggest injection of affordable accommodation into the private rental market in decades.

According to the Housing Industry Association-Commonwealth Bank of Australia (HIA-CBA) March 2010 First Home Buyers Affordability Index, regional Victoria remains the most affordable regional area among the eastern seaboard states. Regional Victoria recorded an affordability index of 155.8, compared to Regional New South Wales at 136.0 and Regional Queensland at 123.1. In addition, affordability in regional Victoria is much better than that in Regional Western Australia, which recorded an affordability index at 104.4.



The Victorian Government and the Department of Human Services (DHS) seek to work alongside not-for-profit organisations to provide assistance to vulnerable Victorians. There are a number of funded homelessness services in the Bendigo area and DHS acknowledges the valuable work of organisations such as 'Our Place' run by Rev. Tracey Wolsley. In addition to the support provided through 'Our Place', Loddon Mallee Housing Services in Bendigo took a lead role in housing provision during the bushfire period.

DHS is supportive of the Horizon House program across Victoria. Horizon House provides a live in carer model, one of these properties is in Bendigo. A number of the young people in that home are supported, with case management services, with funding from the DHS. In addition through the Housing and Community Building Division (HCB), DHS is actively providing capital to the Horizon House program. In Geelong one property is currently provided for nominal rent and in Warrnambool a brand new facility is being built for Horizon House to operate. In the Barwon South West region the Horizon House program currently provides two properties for homeless young people, both of these are either directly or indirectly supported by HCB funds for services such as case management, outreach support and live in care.

The 2002 Victorian Homelessness Strategy was an Australian first. The goal was to develop an integrated and sustainable response to homelessness in Victoria. The success of this strategy in arresting the upward trend in homelessness between 1996 and 2001 (increase of 2465 people) is striking. In the four years following the strategy's release and implementation, Victoria was able to significantly contain the overall rate of homelessness, and record only a comparatively marginal increase of 206 individuals (national census data information). This is despite population growth in that same period and housing affordability decreases.

The Victorian Government has now embarked on the development of a Victorian *Homelessness 2020 strategy*. Following broad community and government consultation, a draft *strategy* has been developed and is currently under formal review by the Victorian Government. Due to the overwhelming number of high quality responses received throughout the consultation process and the complexity of the issues surrounding homelessness and a whole-of-government approach, the release date for the *strategy* is now expected later in the year.

### **Ambulance services: Shepparton**

**Raised with:** Minister for Health

**Raised by:** Ms Lovell

**Raised on:** 26 May 2010

#### **REPLY:**

The Brumby Government has invested significantly to improve ambulance services in the regions. The Government has more than tripled the funding provided to our ambulance services and more than doubled the number of paramedics working across the State.

Shepparton currently has five MICA paramedics which is the number of MICA paramedics committed to in 1999. In keeping with the implementation plan developed in 2000, the current pool of five MICA paramedics are crewed in a manner to enable the provision of a 24/7 MICA response to the Shepparton community.

Ambulance Victoria has advised the number of MICA paramedics in Shepparton will increase to seven in the coming months as two ALS paramedics complete the MICA training program.

More recently, the Government has provided a \$56M boost to rural and regional ambulance services which will deliver 297 additional paramedics, with 234 paramedics to be on the road within the next 12 months. In the Hume region this investment will deliver 66 additional paramedics including new MICA single responder units in Shepparton, Wangaratta and Wodonga. This package will also provide scholarships for students to become paramedics in country Victoria, introduce a call referral service to the regions and increase the availability of paramedics to respond to emergency call outs.

**Surrey Road, Blackburn North: pedestrian crossing**

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

**Raised by:** Mr Atkinson

**Raised on:** 26 May 2010

**REPLY:**

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

Prioritisation of funding for pedestrian facilities under VicRoads' Pedestrian Crossing Program is based on a number of factors, including the level of vehicle and pedestrian activity, the extent to which the treatment improves pedestrian safety and the cost to implement the project.

The installation of pedestrian operated signals on Surrey Road, Blackburn North, will be considered for funding and evaluated against other statewide proposals under the pedestrian priority improvement works program.

**Neighbourhood houses: child-care funding**

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

**Raised by:** Mrs Peulich

**Raised on:** 27 May 2010

**REPLY:**

I am informed as follows:

The Take a Break program provides great support to parents and also provides important early learning and social experiences for children aged 0–6 years.

On 4 June 2010, the Government announced an increase in funding of \$1 million to a total of \$1.9 million in 2010–11 to ensure the Take a Break Child Care Program can continue in Victoria.

This additional funding means that more than 220 centres offering the Take a Break program will continue to be funded. This includes many Neighbourhood Houses and Learning Centres. The Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development has written to all services offering the Take a Break program to inform them of the additional funding.

The Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development has asked the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development to review current arrangements for funding the Take a Break Child Care Program and provide options for the delivery of the program beyond 2010–11.

The Government is also providing \$700,000 in 2010–11 for the Adult Community and Further Education Child Care Program to deliver occasional child care funding to assist parents and guardians to access education and training through the adult community and further education sector.

The Government's funding of \$2.6 million in 2010–11 for these two occasional child care programs demonstrates our commitment to helping families and to working with education and community based organisations to help provide the children's services that families need.

**Ferny Creek Recreation Reserve: maintenance**

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

**Raised by:** Mr O'Donohue

**Raised on:** 27 May 2010

**REPLY:**

Committees of management comprised of volunteers or municipal councils manage more than 4500 Crown land reserves on behalf of the State. Throughout Victoria, local community committees of management such as Ferny Creek Recreation Reserve Committee of Management, tirelessly volunteer their time and knowledge to the planning, management, maintenance and development of reserves for public use. The efforts of these volunteers enrich the Victorian social fabric and contribute to the preservation of the State's unique natural assets.

Government recognises the financial challenges faced by volunteer committees in maintaining and managing reserves. The Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) provides grants to assist its delegated managers to meet some of these challenges.

DSE has given more than \$19 million in grant funding to its delegated Crown land managers over the previous five years through initiatives such as Stewardship in Action, Crown Land Caravan and Camping Park Improvement, Coastal Risk Mitigation, Alpine Risk Mitigation, and Improving Public Safety on Public Land. DSE grants have assisted committees with limited financial resources such as Ferny Creek Recreation Reserve Committee of Management, to repair assets and infrastructure, develop management strategies, and mitigate public safety and environmental risks on Crown land.

The Ferny Creek Recreation Reserve's committee of management has received DSE grants totalling more than \$20,000 over the past four years to repair and restore the reserve's built assets.

Local DSE staff will continue to work actively with the committee to help obtain suitable funding to address issues identified at Ferny Creek Recreation Reserve.

**Timber industry: firewood strategy**

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

**Raised by:** Mr Hall

**Raised on:** 27 May 2010

**REPLY:**

Victoria's Firewood Strategy for Public Land was launched at Tylden on 2 June 2010. The release of the Strategy follows extensive community engagement and consultation.

Firewood collection will be simpler and more accessible for all Victorians under the new Strategy and it will also ensure firewood supplied from Victoria's public land is sustainable into the future.

The Strategy provides a practical system for the collection of firewood from public land for use in households. It is important the Government and community work in partnership to ensure firewood collection from public land has a sustainable future while giving certainty to communities who rely on firewood as a primary energy source.

Key features of *Victoria's Strategy for Firewood on Public Land* include:

- Firewood collection permits will be available for up to three months;
- Authorisation for roadside collection will only be required from the relevant road management authority;

- Collection of firewood by members of the public will be permitted in designated areas during an autumn and a spring season to manage risks of fire ignition, environmental impact and the volume of firewood removed;
- Firewood permit prices will be consistent across the state and concessions on firewood permits brought into line with electricity and gas; and
- Community firewood suppliers to be established throughout Victoria by the Department of Sustainability and Environment so commercial firewood cutters across the State all have the same opportunity to cut and collect firewood in State forests.

The changes will be phased in from autumn 2011, with the new system fully in place for the autumn 2012 firewood collection season

### **Fishing: Corio Bay**

**Raised with:** Minister for Agriculture

**Raised by:** Mr Kavanagh

**Raised on:** 8 June 2010

#### **REPLY:**

I refer to the matter that you raised during the Adjournment Debate in the Legislative Council on 8 June 2010, concerning commercial fishing in the Corio Arm of Port Phillip Bay.

The Victorian Government recognises that many Victorians enjoy eating seafood and expect to be able to buy high-quality locally produced seafood. The Victorian Government is also committed to providing high quality opportunities for recreational fishers, which includes delivery of the \$13.5 million Enhanced Recreational Fishing Program by Fisheries Victoria.

Available fishery and scientific monitoring evidence indicates that stocks of snapper, King George whiting and calamari in Port Phillip Bay are currently in a healthy condition, and fluctuations in abundance are more likely to be driven by habitat and environmental conditions than by the effects of recreational or commercial fishing.

As far as resource allocation is concerned in Victorian bays and inlets, the Victorian Government believes that there is no need for further mandatory closures and cutbacks without the support of industry.

The Victorian Government will continue to ensure the sustainable use of Victoria's public fish resources, facilitating great recreational fishing opportunities and maintaining supplies of fresh local seafood to Victorian fish consumers.

Thank you for raising this matter during the adjournment debate.

### **Patterson Lakes: water charges**

**Raised with:** Treasurer

**Raised by:** Mrs Peulich

**Raised on:** 8 June 2010

#### **REPLY:**

I refer to the issue raised in the Adjournment debate of 8 June 2010 in the Legislative Council, regarding the Melbourne Water: rate increases.

As per the administrative arrangements, responsibility for the Essential Services Commission rests with the Minister for Finance, WorkCover and the Transport Accident Commission, the Hon. Tim Holding MP. Accordingly, I have forwarded your adjournment debate to him for consideration and response.

### **Children: protection**

**Raised with:** Minister for Community Services

**Raised by:** Ms Hartland

**Raised on:** 8 June 2010

#### **REPLY:**

I thank Ms Hartland for raising this matter.

Providing comprehensive multidisciplinary health services for the secure welfare service is a priority. That is why the 2010–11 State Budget allocated \$1.7 million for additional workers to expand the health services delivered to highly traumatised children.

Following consultation with stakeholders, the Department of Human Services has identified the immediate need for a nurse practitioner to complement existing staffing prior to establishment of the comprehensive health service.

The department has funded the nurse practitioner and continuation of the existing doctor and medical administrator on an interim basis until the comprehensive service is implemented from 1 July 2011. The comprehensive service will meet the needs of young people placed in the secure welfare service.

### **Country Fire Authority: resources**

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

**Raised by:** Mrs Petrovich

**Raised on:** 8 June 2010

#### **REPLY:**

I refer to the issue you raised in the Legislative Assembly on 8 June 2010 regarding Country Fire Authority (CFA) funding towards equipment and training.

The fires that broke out across the state in February 2009 were precipitated by the most severe weather conditions we have seen in our history. The Government is dedicated to making continual improvements to the State's emergency management arrangements and is determined to take the necessary steps — in partnership with the community — to protect Victorians.

The Brumby Government has provided record resources to the CFA to provide the training, equipment and facilities they need to respond to emergencies to ensure the safety of the Victorian community. Since 1999, the CFA budget has more than tripled from \$113.8 million to \$391.2 million in 2009–10.

The CFA brigades have also received 398 grants worth \$12.08 million through the Community Safety Emergency Support Program (CSESP). The CSESP, which commenced in 2000, has assisted CFA brigades in the purchase of more than \$31.58 million in trucks and other equipment. The pool of funds available to emergency services during the 2010–11 CSESP more than doubled to \$6.8 million.

The CFA has a significant and comprehensive training program that provides volunteers with numerous skills relevant to their role. Skills developed through the CFA include, but are not limited to, basic firefighting, fire safety

awareness, endorsed truck license, first aid, leadership training, communications, wildfire behaviour, wildfire suppression, map reading, radio communications and fireground safety.

I have been advised by the CFA that the Wallan Brigade was identified (as was a number of brigades in the Outer Metropolitan Area) to have their brigade training profile adjusted in order to keep up with the changing needs of the community and the different types of risks to which they will respond. This allows members of the brigade to undergo different types of training as their community grows, rather than all at once.

The CFA has advised that the Wellington Square Shopping Centre was the first alarmed sprinkler system in the Wallan area. Nineteen CFA Wallan Brigade members have now received training in Check Installed Fire Systems (previously Alarms and Sprinklers). This training was completed soon after the shopping centre opened, allowing the brigade to view and learn with a live system in their area.

The CFA has noted that prior to the completion of the Check Installed Fire Systems training, the Wallan community was not at a disadvantage as responses to incidents in the area are multi-brigade. The Craigieburn Brigade was already trained in alarms and sprinklers as their community has a number of alarms, and was therefore able to respond when the Wellington Square Shopping Centre experienced problems with their sprinklers.

### **Gas: heater regulations**

**Raised with:** Minister for Consumer Affairs

**Raised by:** Mr Koch

**Raised on:** 8 June 2010

#### **REPLY:**

In response the Adjournment Debate raised regarding gas heating regulations this matter falls within the portfolio responsibility of the Minister for Energy and Resources.

### **Lake Wendouree: restoration**

**Raised with:** Minister for Water

**Raised by:** Mr Vogels

**Raised on:** 9 June 2010

#### **REPLY:**

Lake Wendouree is managed by the City of Ballarat (CoB) in accordance with a lake Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP) approved by the Environment Protection Authority. The agreement between Central Highlands Water (CHW) and the CoB for the delivery of Class A recycled water to the lake is in accordance with the EIP.

The EIP specifies that salt levels in the recycled water should be on average no more than 800 mg per litre. The Class A recycled water supplied from the Ballarat North Wastewater Treatment Plant has a salinity level that is consistently between 500 and 700 mg per litre, below the salinity levels specified in the EIP.

The EIP also specifies that the phosphorous levels for supplementary water inputs into the lake should be at or below 0.1 mg per litre. Water quality samples taken by CHW from the Ballarat West Bore between July 2007 and December 2009, show median phosphorous levels in the groundwater of 0.1 mg per litre, in line with the requirement of the EIP.

Additionally, the lake's EIP requires that phosphorous levels are maintained at below 5 mg per litre. As at 15 May 2010, the phosphorous levels in the lake were generally zero mg per litre.

The CoB regularly monitors the phosphorous levels of the water sources going into the lake in accordance with the EIP. This ensures that phosphorus levels are managed to within limits that are not detrimental to the health of the lake and its ability to support aquatic life.

### **Rail: Pakenham line**

**Raised with: Minister for Public Transport**

**Raised by: Mr Rich-Phillips**

**Raised on: 9 June 2010**

#### **REPLY:**

The *Victorian Transport Plan* provides funding of \$153 million for the Westall Rail Upgrade. The Upgrade will ensure more trains can start and finish their journey from Westall Railway Station, reducing delays for the entire Dandenong rail corridor as passengers will be more evenly distributed over services commencing from Cranbourne, Pakenham, Dandenong and Westall Railway Stations.

In order to avoid disruptions to peak weekday services, Metro will plan track works on weekends where possible. Replacement bus services are provided as part of the planned shutdown of train services.

Metro works with bus companies (in this case Grenda) to ensure there is at least one DDA-compliant bus on standby during disruptions. The majority of buses used during replacement bus services are normal route buses of which the majority are low floor and DDA-compliant.

If a DDA-compliant bus is not available, Metro will organise a wheelchair accessible taxi to transport the customer to their destination at no additional expense.

Metro customer service staff are deployed to Westall Railway Station during days of planned bus replacements to assist those passengers with special needs in organising appropriate transport.

### **Abortion: health risks**

**Raised with: Minister for Health**

**Raised by: Mr Kavanagh**

**Raised on: 9 June 2010**

#### **REPLY:**

Findings of studies investigating a link between induced or spontaneous abortion and breast cancer are conflicting. Some studies have shown no link between abortion and breast cancer, others have shown a small increased risk.

The three studies cited are case control studies which compare persons with the disease (cases) and persons without the disease (controls). These type of studies have a number of methodological flaws including reliance of woman's recall of abortion, recall bias, inadequate data on spontaneous abortions, differentiation of abortion method (surgical versus medical), type of breast cancer, age of woman, selection bias, small numbers of participants, inadequate matching of the cases and controls, diet, environmental exposures lifestyle (smoking/alcohol) and many other factors. Due to the methodological problems the findings of these studies are open to question and are not considered to be reliable

The most reliable study in this area is a 1997 Danish study which produced strong evidence that abortion does not increase the risk of breast cancer. The evidence in the study came from 1.5 million women listed on the Danish health registries. The study had a strong and powerful design in that information about abortion was collected from

all of the women before any were diagnosed with breast cancer. After adjustment for known risk factors, induced abortion was not associated with an increased risk of breast cancer (N Eng J Med 1997, 336: 81–85).

Another large sample study included 267,361 women in Europe who were recruited between 1992 and 2000. The European Prospective Investigation into Cancer and Nutrition study findings were based on data from 20 centres, across 9 countries. In this study, information was collected from a total of 4805 women with breast cancer, of whom 1657 reported having ever had any type of termination. Overall, the findings provide further strong evidence of the lack of an adverse effect of induced abortion on breast cancer risk (Int J Cancer 2006;119:1741–1745).

There are a number of independent risk factors associated with breast cancer and large scale studies and combined analysis of smaller studies provide little evidence that abortion increases the risk of breast cancer.

### **Scouts: Moira Park camp**

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

**Raised by: Ms Lovell**

**Raised on: 10 June 2010**

#### **REPLY:**

Thank you for your question of 10 June 2010 regarding Scouts Australia's request to extend the licence for the Scout camp on the Goulburn River near Shepparton from an annual term to a more reasonable time frame such as 20 to 30 years.

The licence over reserved forest was first granted to Scouts Australia on 1 June 1970 and has been renewed on annual basis ever since.

There has been no recent change from a 99-year licence to an annual licence because of the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council's (VEAC) River Red Gum Forests Investigation recommendations.

The VEAC report did however identify an area encompassing the scout camp as a community use area and provides for existing uses to continue.

DSE staff will contact Scouts Australia in the coming weeks to ensure that an appropriate tenure is issued which satisfies all parties.

### **Montmorency Primary School: future**

**Raised with: Minister for Education**

**Raised by: Mrs Kronberg**

**Raised on: 10 June 2010**

#### **REPLY:**

The Treasurer (for the Minister for Education): I am informed as follows:

Like other schools around Australia, Montmorency Primary School has received funding as part of the Commonwealth Government's *Building the Education Revolution* program.

All schools were eligible for funding under the *National School Pride* program to undertake small scale infrastructure or minor refurbishment projects. As part of this program, Montmorency Primary School received \$75,000 for refurbishments associated with their Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden program.



The *Primary Schools for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* program is for the building or renewing of large scale infrastructure, including libraries, multi-purpose halls and new classrooms. Funding is based on the enrolment of the school. Primary schools, such as Montmorency Primary School with enrolments between 51 to 150 students, received \$850,000. The school is using this funding to refurbish classrooms. Larger primary schools like Montmorency South Primary School with a 2009 enrolment of 151 to 300 students received \$2 million.

Principals are expected to have adequate workforce planning strategies in place to manage their staff requirements against the funding provided through the Student Resource Package. The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development provides tools to assist principals in modelling scenarios to help them with managing their budgets.

Officers from the Department continue to provide advice to the principal on school organisational arrangements.

As part of the 2010–11 Victorian Budget, Montmorency South Primary School was allocated \$2.5 million from the *Victorian Schools Plan* to construct a gymnasium to provide a sporting stadium that can be used by both the school and the community.

For some years, Montmorency South Primary School has occupied a section of land that is owned by Banyule City Council. The capital development opportunities presented by the *Building the Education Revolution* program and the *Victorian Schools Plan* requires the ownership of the land be transferred to the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. Department officers are currently discussing the acquisition of the land in question with Banyule City Council.

### **City of Brimbank: business permits**

**Raised with: Minister for Local Government**

**Raised by: Mr Finn**

**Raised on: 10 June 2010**

#### **REPLY:**

The Honourable Member has raised a range of issues relating to a planning dispute between the Brimbank City Council and a Mr Peter Singh. I have made inquiries about this matter, and I am advised that the Council has identified a number of areas in which Mr Singh's materials recycling operation is apparently not compliant with the approved plans for the property in question.

In particular, I am advised that the permit for the particular use was issued to the property owner, and that Mr Singh, who subsequently took up a sub-lease, has been found to be operating outside the permitted area.

I am further advised that Mr Singh and the property owner have been made fully aware of these problems, and that the Council has attempted to resolve the matter, to date without success. However, I understand that the Council is open to continuing discussions with Mr Singh about the best way forward, and is presently awaiting his response.

I also understand that the property has recently been the subject of joint enforcement action by the Environment Protection Authority and the Council in relation to dust emissions, and the lack of any dust management plan for the site.

This individual dispute occurs in the broader context of serious issues relating to dust control and odours emanating from the Brooklyn Industrial Precinct, and the impact of this on adjoining residential communities. I am advised that the Council is working in partnership with the Environment Protection Authority and local industries to address these matters with all relevant property owners, in the interests of the whole community.

With regard to the suggestion that I arrange mediation in this matter, that would be both unnecessary and inappropriate. Disputes between individuals and councils are properly matters between the parties, and councils as a distinct tier of government are responsible for their own negotiations.

**Hospitals: Armstrong Creek**

**Raised with: Minister for Health**

**Raised by: Mr Koch**

**Raised on: 10 June 2010**

**REPLY:**

I am pleased to reinforce that the Brumby Labor Government is committed to the provision of high quality health services to the people of Geelong and the surrounding districts.

As part of this ongoing commitment the government announced \$33.6 million in the 2010–11 budget for further acute expansion at Barwon health and funding to purchasing land and plan for a second hospital for the region.

A second hospital for Geelong will meet the needs of families moving to Geelong's southern suburbs, the Surf Coast and the Bellarine Peninsula.

The community will be a part of this process in planning the hospital with the establishment of a community consultation forum

I am surprised that although the Member for Western Victoria, Mr Koch, acknowledges the need for extra services to meet future demand, again the Liberal and National parties refuse to support this project, let alone promise to commit funding for this important community facility.

This is just another example of where the Liberal and National parties are more familiar with closing country hospitals than they are with opening them.

**Health: drug funding**

**Raised with: Minister for Health**

**Raised by: Mr Atkinson**

**Raised on: 10 June 2010**

**REPLY:**

As you may be aware, in Australia, the Commonwealth Government is responsible for managing and funding pharmaceuticals through the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) and associated programs.

The pharmaceutical eculizumab available as the brand Soliris<sup>®</sup> was last submitted, in March 2009, to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee (PBAC) for listing on the PBS. I advised that the PBAC rejected listing eculizumab on the PBS on the basis of an unacceptably high and uncertain cost-effectiveness. The PBAC noted that eculizumab did meet the criteria for the non-PBS program the Life Saving Drugs Program (LSDP) and referred the decision to the Federal Minister for Health.

I am further advised that eculizumab has never been funded under the LSDP but has been made available to patients free of charge by its Australian sponsor, Alexion Pharmaceuticals Australasia Pty Ltd.

Eculizumab was not funded by the Commonwealth through the LSDP in its 2010–11 Budget and the sponsor has decided to withdraw its previous compassionate use program after next years Commonwealth Budget in May 2011.

I understand that Minister Roxon has ordered a further review of the pharmaceutical by the PBAC.

**Ambulance services: central Victoria**

**Raised with:** Minister for Health

**Raised by:** Ms Lovell

**Raised on:** 22 June 2010

**REPLY:**

The Government has more than tripled the funding provided to our ambulance services and more than doubled the number of paramedics working across the State.

Ambulance Victoria has advised that in June 2008 the rostering configuration at Castlemaine was upgraded to operate 24-hours a day four days a week. More recently, to facilitate graduate training, 24-hour services have been operating seven days a week in Castlemaine.

Additionally, the Government has recently provided a \$56M boost to rural and regional ambulance services which will deliver 297 additional paramedics, with 234 paramedics to be on the road within the next 12 months.

In the Loddon Mallee region this investment will deliver 58 additional paramedics including new MICA single responder units in Mildura, Swan Hill and Echuca. This package will also provide scholarships for students to become paramedics in country Victoria, introduce a call referral service to the regions and increase the availability of paramedics to respond to emergency call outs.

**Bellarine Peninsula: foreshore committee**

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

**Raised by:** Mr Koch

**Raised on:** 24 June 2010

**REPLY:**

The Victorian Government has delegated responsibility for the management of coastal Crown land reserves between Point Richards and Edwards Point on the Bellarine Peninsula to the Bellarine Bayside Foreshore Committee of Management (the committee). There is strong interest in the management of the area by both user groups and the Bellarine Peninsula community.

The appointment process for members of the committee has been concluded and a new chair appointed. There have been changes to the committee structure to improve functionality including appointment of an additional member and staggering of Committee member terms to ensure continuity of business, access to corporate knowledge and accountability.

There was a short period between expiry of some committee member terms and appointment of new committee members. The committee of management can continue to function during this interim period given they have a number of paid staff to deal with the day to day management.

I have been advised that no significant decisions were required during this interim period and that the committee have already met to resolve any matters that arose during this time.

The previous committee has invested significant time in developing a strategic plan for the Bellarine Bayside foreshore. I have advised that this plan should be finalised as a priority for the new committee.

**VicRoads: Bacchus Marsh Avenue of Honour**

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

**Raised by: Ms Hartland**

**Raised on: 24 June 2010**

**REPLY:**

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

An important part of the Western Highway–Anthonys Cutting Realignment Project is the proposed Woolpack Road extension. The proposed works involve extending Woolpack Road approximately 1.2 km northward from Bacchus Marsh Road (Avenue of Honour) to the Western Freeway, and the construction of a conventional interchange at the freeway providing access in all directions. The extension will provide a vital north–south transport link for Bacchus Marsh.

The proposed works also involve the construction of a roundabout at the intersection of Woolpack Road and Bacchus Marsh Road (Avenue of Honour). This will require the replacement of up to one juvenile and eight mature Dutch Elms which form part of the Avenue of Honour.

The roundabout has been designed to minimise the impact on the trees. The proposed landscape design has been developed in consultation with key stakeholders and complements the existing landscape. The landscape design provides for up to ten additional Dutch Elm trees to be planted to maintain the integrity of the Avenue.

The Project Alliance recently completed the Bacchus Marsh Eastern Interchange and Road Link Options Assessment, which formed part of the permit application to Heritage Victoria for works in the Avenue of Honour. Four options were considered including upgrading Hallets Way with Melbourne-bound access ramps as recommended by the Avenue Preservation Group. The assessment recommended the extension of Woolpack Road to the Western Freeway and a new interchange at Woolpack Road as the preferred option.

The extension of Woolpack Road will provide a new link that will be safer and more efficient for road users. It will help reduce the number of casualty crashes along the eastern end of Bacchus Marsh Road and reduce the number of trucks travelling through the Bacchus Marsh township by providing an alternative truck route through to the Western Freeway.

Upgrading Hallets Way with Melbourne-bound access ramps has no impact on the Bacchus Marsh Avenue of Honour, however, it does not deliver on the key project objectives of improving road safety and freight efficiency.

The Hallets Way option would continue to direct Bacchus Marsh bound traffic along the Avenue of Honour, which has a poor accident record. It would not provide a suitable alternative freight route around the Bacchus Marsh township, and therefore it would not reduce the traffic congestion or remove trucks from the township. In addition, this option does not support Moorabool Shire Council's planning framework for future arterial road network connectivity to the north at Merrimu.

Furthermore, upgrading Hallets Way with Melbourne-bound access ramps would not cater for the major traffic movements between Bacchus Marsh and Melbourne or between Woolpack Road and the Western Freeway. It would impose greater demand on the Bacchus Marsh-Gisborne Road interchange. This option would be a significant downgrade of existing conditions for access between the Western Freeway and the eastern side of Bacchus Marsh.

VicRoads submitted a permit application to Heritage Victoria on 5 May 2010 for the Woolpack Road extension where the works are within the likely registered area. The permit application was advertised on 19 May for 14 days.

The Project Alliance is continuing to work with key stakeholders to address community concerns about the proposed works in the Avenue of Honour

**WRITTEN ADJOURNMENT RESPONSES**

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

**Wednesday, 28 July 2010**

**Warrnambool Hospital: radiotherapy treatment**

**Raised with: Minister for Health**

**Raised by: Mr Vogels**

**Raised on: 11 March 2009**

**REPLY:**

I was very saddened to hear Ms Jellie's story, and I have extended my condolences to the family. It is extremely hard for families when a father, mother, or child is diagnosed with cancer, but when that cancer is very aggressive and offers such poor outcomes, as in Mr Peter Jellie's case, it is a loss that is often felt throughout the whole community.

While there have been many successes in cancer care in Victoria over the last ten years — and Victoria's survival rates for cancer are among the highest in the world — both the Premier and I have clear views that we can do more to help patients and families with cancer. In December 2008 we launched a new Cancer Action Plan for Victoria that commits \$150 million over four years to improve cancer control in the four key areas of prevention, research, treatment and patient support.

We strongly support local cancer care delivery where this is clinically safe and appropriate. The Government has made major investments in improving access to cancer care for Victorians living in regional areas, including the development of regional radiotherapy services at Ballarat, Bendigo, and Traralgon, and redevelopment of the Andrew Love Cancer Centre in Geelong. These services have substantially reduced the burden of travelling to receive cancer treatment for regional Victorians.

Establishing and maintaining regional radiotherapy services relies on significant support from major metropolitan services in order to sustain the critical mass of highly specialised staff to operate and maintain the services. In addition, radiotherapy services require minimum patient levels to be viable, and to ensure that the services can keep pace with technology in this rapidly-evolving specialty.

The Victorian Government is strongly committed to ensuring that cancer patients in regional areas have access to best practice cancer care. I have asked Professor Robert Thomas, Victoria's Chief Cancer Adviser, to lead a review of cancer services in the south west of Victoria. The review will consider existing cancer services and facilities in both the public and private sectors in the south-west region, as well as referral pathways and patient flows in and out of the region for cancer related care. The review will address current and future requirements, including the potential for radiotherapy service provision in the South West of Victoria. An Advisory Group with senior health care executives, clinicians and cancer consumers from the region is being established and will ensure that all relevant groups are consulted as part of this.

It is important to note that patients with complex or rare cancers or cancers that require subspecialist treatment and support services, such as Mr Jellie, need to be treated at those major tertiary cancer centres that can sustain the critical mass of clinicians, treatment technologies and research required to best manage their care.

**General practitioners: eastern suburbs**

**Raised with:** Minister for Health

**Raised by:** Mr Atkinson

**Raised on:** 13 October 2009

**REPLY:**

Funding to support general practice is a Commonwealth Government responsibility. The Commonwealth has a range of initiatives in place to address the need for more general practitioners in districts of workforce shortage, including the programs outlined by Mr Atkinson.

The Brumby Government recognises that shortages of general practitioners can have a flow-on effect to public hospitals.

In this respect, the Brumby Government has provided substantial funding and support to increase the supply of new doctors. In 2009–10 the government is providing \$34.2 million to support the supervision and training of junior doctors in Victoria. This is being boosted by more than \$55 million over four years from the 2008–09 State Budget to train up to 211 additional doctors per year by 2012.

This follows the announcement in 2006 of an additional 220 HECS funded undergraduate medical school places in Victoria. In effect there will be almost a doubling of Victorian domestic medical graduates, from approximately 350 in 2009 to 690 in 2011. Some of these graduates will choose general practice as a career.

**Physiotherapy: national registration and accreditation scheme**

**Raised with:** Minister for Health

**Raised by:** Mr D. Davis

**Raised on:** 5 May 2010

**REPLY:**

At the meeting of the Australian Health Workforce Ministerial Council (AHWMC) on 31 March 2010, Health Ministers noted the work that has been done in the physiotherapy profession to support professional development beyond the minimum qualification and training that is required for registration.

The Australian Physiotherapy Association (APA) currently has 14 professional groups covering a range of areas of physiotherapy practice. Members with an advanced level of competency and experience in their practice may apply to these groups to use a title identifying their area of expertise. The Victorian Government strongly supports the work of the profession in this area, which provides a good platform for an extended scope of practice for physiotherapists in many health service settings.

However, moving beyond the current profession-led model to specialist registration categories that are managed by law is a significant step requiring consideration of a broad range of factors. Ministers have noted that, at present, no jurisdictions have specialist registration for physiotherapists and no legal framework exists for specialist categories in physiotherapy.

It is important to note that Ministers have not rejected the case for specialist registration but have recognised the need for further development in this area. Health Ministers were concerned at the 31 March 2010 meeting that the facts at hand to assist their consideration of the matter were not complete and did not provide for a comprehensive analysis.

In moving to a national registration and accreditation scheme, Ministers agreed on the need to develop a nationally consistent framework that can be applied to all health professions. It was therefore decided to refer the matter to the

Health Workforce Principal Committee (HWPC) of the Australian Health Ministers Advisory Council to progress the development of nationally consistent criteria.

In developing the criteria, the HWPC will consult stakeholders and take into consideration issues like patient safety, workforce flexibility and staffing demands, as well as training and accreditation requirements. Once approved, the national criteria will be used to assess requests for specialist registration from the health professions, including the proposal from the Physiotherapy Board of Australia.

### **Princes Freeway: construction works**

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

**Raised by:** Mr O'Donohue

**Raised on:** 26 May 2010

#### **REPLY:**

As you mentioned in Parliament, Akron Roads went into administration in February 2010 and in March 2010 went into liquidation impacting the progress of the project to install wire rope barriers on the Princes Freeway east of Nar Nar Goon.

VicRoads terminated its contract with Akron Roads in late March 2010 and finalised negotiations with Fulton Hogan to complete the outstanding work soon afterward.

In the interim, VicRoads undertook urgent repair work and tensioning of 11 km of the new wire rope barriers to address the immediate safety issues. This work was completed on 31 March 2010.

I am pleased to advise that construction recommenced on site on 26 May 2010 and it is expected to be completed by the end of August 2010.

### **Planning: green wedge zones**

**Raised with:** Minister for Planning

**Raised by:** Mrs Petrovich

**Raised on:** 26 May 2010

#### **REPLY:**

The planning controls for green wedge land, and in particular the provisions of the Green Wedge Zone, are intended both to protect the non-urban values and features of the green wedges for the benefit of the community, and to allow appropriate discretion for responsible authorities to make decisions about specific proposals. In general terms, agriculture and tourism are among the land use categories that the green wedges can accommodate, as long as those uses do not detract from the broader non-urban values of the green wedges.

The government has provided funding support to green wedge councils, including Hume City Council, to prepare green wedge management plans to complement the statutory planning controls.

The case of Pitruzzello Estate, where elements of the operator's preferred development proposal are not permissible under current planning scheme provisions, requires a tailored and collaborative approach with engagement from government through the Department of Planning and Community Development, Hume City Council and the proponent.

I am advised that discussions between the Department, Council and the proponent have been held and are continuing with a view to finding a resolution that reconciles protection of the green wedge with controls enabling suitable development.

The progressive completion of green wedge management plans will provide additional guidance to responsible authorities, potential applicants and other green wedge stakeholders about the forms of development that may be permitted in different places throughout the green wedges.

### **Bendigo hospital: beds**

**Raised with: Minister for Health**

**Raised by: Mrs Petrovich**

**Raised on: 27 May 2010**

#### **REPLY:**

The 2009 State Budget Allocation of \$55M to Bendigo Health included funding for a complex fire service upgrade. This includes fitting fire sprinklers to inpatient areas of the acute hospital.

This work requires significant planning and scheduling as the health service must find decanting space throughout the hospital to minimise the overall impact.

The plan included the construction of an additional 8 beds for decanting purposes. As works progress the health service relocates pockets of the hospital to the new beds to allow works to be completed. They return services to their original location at the completion of the works.

When all works are completed it is Bendigo Health's intention to use these beds as additional capacity for the region.

What is more disturbing is to hear that the Member for Northern Victoria, Donna Petrovich, is wandering hospital halls, unannounced, with the intention to publicly talk down the good work done by health professionals at Bendigo Health.

In contrast the Government announced \$473 million to build a new Bendigo hospital, the largest regional hospital project ever undertaken in Victoria's history.

The real question is will the Liberal and National Coalition commit to fund this important project?

### **Geelong Hospital: emergency department**

**Raised with: Minister for Health**

**Raised by: Mr D. Davis**

**Raised on: 8 June 2010**

#### **REPLY:**

Barwon Health is one of the busiest and largest health services in regional Victoria.

That's why the Victorian Government has increased its funding to Barwon Health by over 150 per cent, so that Geelong's health professionals can deliver world class care.

We have also funded over \$200 million on capital works, world class medical equipment and infrastructure works.



As part of this funding \$26 million was invested in the new Emergency Department, which was opened in March 2009.

The new state of the art facility was built to meet the demand for emergency care and includes an area specifically designed for receiving and treating children, as well as a fast-track area to provide even better care.

In the 2010–11 budget this Government continued to deliver for Geelong and the surrounding communities with \$33.6 million to expand acute capacity and funding to purchase land and plan for a second hospital for Geelong.

I reject the comments of both Mrs Petrovich and Mr Davis who declare that Barwon Health is a “war zone”.

Barwon Health’s dedicated health professional’s work hard to provide world class care and such statements are an insult to the care they give to their patients each and every day.

### **Bridges: East Gippsland**

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

**Raised by: Mr P. Davis**

**Raised on: 9 June 2010**

#### **REPLY:**

The Brumby Government is committed to building better, safer roads across the state, having invested more than \$3 billion into upgrading and maintaining roads in regional Victoria. We have completed 59 major projects totalling more than \$3 billion and are building or preparing for a further 18 road projects worth almost \$1.9 billion.

In circumstances where a road improvement project changes the road alignment and includes the construction of a new bridge a council such as East Gippsland Shire Council may wish to use the old road and bridge as a local access road or in some cases to provide pedestrian access.

In such cases, where Council wishes to use the road or bridge VicRoads reaches agreement to transfer responsibility for them to Council. The transfer is negotiated with Council and includes providing the road or bridge to Council in a well maintained and agreed condition.