

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

FIFTY-SIXTH PARLIAMENT

FIRST SESSION

WRITTEN ADJOURNMENT RESPONSES

5 and 6 May 2010

(Extract from book 6)

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By authority of the Victorian Government Printer

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Select Committee on Train Services — Mr Atkinson, Mr Barber, Mr Drum, Ms Huppert, Mr Leane, Mr O'Donohue and Mr Viney.

Standing Committee on Finance and Public Administration — Mr Barber, Ms Broad, Mr Guy, Mr Hall, Mr Kavanagh, Mr Rich-Phillips and Mr Viney.

Standing Orders Committee — The President, Mr Dalla-Riva, Mr D. Davis, Mr Hall, Mr Lenders, Ms Pennicuik and Mr Viney.

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

¹ Appointed 3 February 2009

² Appointed 9 March 2010

³ Resigned 1 March 2010

⁴ 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.

Wednesday, 5 May 2010

Wallace Recreation Reserve: funding

Raised with: Minister for Sport, Recreation and Youth Affairs

Raised by: Mr Vogels

Raised on: 11 September 2008

REPLY:

At the time the Adjournment matter was raised, the Country Football and Netball Program had yet to receive an application from Moorabool Shire Council, on behalf of the Wallace Recreation Reserve Committee of Management, for the Wallace Recreation Reserve Pavilion Development project. However the application was later received on 10 December 2008.

On 30 January 2009 the Moorabool Shire Council subsequently withdrew this application and an application for funding for the Wallace Recreation Reserve was made to an alternate source.

Transport: east-west link needs assessment

Raised with: Minister for Roads and Ports

Raised by: Ms Hartland

Raised on: 2 December 2008

REPLY:

I refer to the matter you raised during the Legislative Council adjournment debate of 2 December 2008, regarding government analysis of public submissions made in response to the Eddington report, Investing in Transport. I apologise for the delay in responding.

Public submissions were made available on 17 July 2008 via the Department of Transport website, www.dot@transport.vic.gov.au.

V/Line: telecommunications

Raised with: Minister for Public Transport

Raised by: Mr Vogels

Raised on: 11 August 2009

REPLY:

The Department of Transport and V/Line support efforts to improve mobile telephone and internet coverage on trains travelling in regional Victoria, and will work together to determine the most appropriate way to progress this initiative for the convenience of passengers.

Planning: urban growth boundary

Raised with: Minister for Planning

Raised by: Ms Hartland

Raised on: 13 August 2009

REPLY:

Public consultation has been an essential part of the process for the Urban Growth Boundary review and the broader package of initiatives within *Delivering Melbourne's newest sustainable communities*. Public feedback was formally sought on the Urban Growth Boundary review at three stages.

Round 1 consultation was managed by the Growth Areas Authority and focused on the investigation areas for the Urban Growth Boundary Review.

Delivering Melbourne's newest sustainable communities was announced on 17 June 2009, outlining:

- The proposed changes to the Urban Growth Boundary;
- The preferred location of the Outer Metropolitan Ring / E6 Transport Corridor;
- The preferred alignment of the Regional Rail Link; and
- The locations of two proposed grasslands reserves west of Melbourne.

Round 2 Consultation on *Delivering Melbourne's newest sustainable communities* was conducted from 17 June to 17 July 2009.

A preliminary review of submissions received during the June/July 2009 consultation led Government to consider alternative options for the Regional Rail Link, Outer Metropolitan Ring/E6 Transport Corridor and the boundary of the grassland reserves.

Targeted consultation on those options (Round 3) was conducted 24 August to 21 September 2009. This resulted in an additional opportunity for residents of Wollert to provide comment, as an alternative E6 alignment was considered in the Wollert area.

The Government has both responded to issues raised and ensured the community has been given every opportunity to provide input to the deliberations of Government.

The Government considered all submissions when providing input to the Minister for Planning on the initiatives contained in *Delivering Melbourne's newest sustainable communities*.

I approved Amendment VC55, which included the E6 transport corridor alignment. However, as the time allowed for the Parliament to ratify Amendment VC55 has now passed, the amendment has lapsed. The Government remains of the view that it would be irresponsible to open up new land for development in revised Urban Growth Boundary without securing from developers the revenue to pay for new schools, roads, healthcare, public transport and community facilities and services. The Government is now considering its options in relation to these matters.

Fishing: north-eastern Victoria

Raised with: Minister for Agriculture

Raised by: Ms Broad

Raised on: 2 September 2009

REPLY:

After the 2006 state election, the Victorian Government committed \$13.5 million to enhance recreational fishing opportunities across the state through a range of different programs, including improving angler access along the Howqua River, installing new fish cleaning tables and implementing the dollar-for-dollar adopt-a-stream initiative.

As part of the Enhanced Recreational Fishing Program, fish stocking will be increased by 30 per cent over a four-year period. This will increase the average number of trout and native fish stocked from 1.1 million to 1.5 million in 2010, giving anglers a greater chance to catch fish in their favourite waters.

Fisheries Victoria stocks around 400,000 trout annually into Victorian waterways which are produced at the Department of Primary Industries (DPI) fish production facility at Snobs Creek, near Eildon. All of the trout stocked by Fisheries Victoria are at ready-to-catch size. The decision to stock larger trout was made after requests which came from recreational anglers and subsequent research showed the survivability to be higher than stocking more numbers of fry.

Recognising the social and economic benefits that are attributed to recreational fishing on the Goulburn River, the Government recently stocked 2,300 ready-to-catch trout into the Goulburn River between Eildon Pondage and Molesworth as part of a three-year stocking and monitoring trial. To promote trout fishing in this area and to raise awareness of the trial, a competition was held – one angler who caught a dart tagged trout won a prize pack valued at \$250. This stocking regime has had a direct benefit for the Goulburn River and local towns affected by the 2009 bushfires. There has been an overwhelming positive response from recreational fishers who are visiting this fire affected area as a result of improved fishing conditions.

Another initiative that brings great benefits to recreational fishing in Victoria is the Go Fishing in Victoria program, which aims to promote recreational fishing as a family friendly activity. \$3.2 million has been injected into this program to hold Family Fishing Festivals at selected Premier Lakes (Eildon Pondage is one), improve and provide for access and facilities for anglers of all abilities and promote three Premier Rivers (one being the Goulburn River) as favoured sites for developing and experienced anglers.

The Fisheries Management Plan for the Goulburn Broken catchment is currently being reviewed by a steering committee comprising of representatives of local stakeholder groups and relevant managers. The new management plan will identify policies and strategies for managing recreational fishing activity and enhancing the social and economic benefits for all Victorians.

Fisheries Victoria will continue to work together with recreational anglers to grow fishery opportunities and ensure Victoria remains the best place in Australia to go fishing.

Taxis: driver certification

Raised with: Minister for Public Transport

Raised by: Mrs Coote

Raised on: 10 November 2009

REPLY:

The driver accreditation scheme, which requires applicants to meet stringent suitability requirements based on the public care objective, was introduced on 1 July 2007. The driver accreditation scheme replaced the previous driver certification scheme.

To become accredited as a taxi driver in the metropolitan Melbourne area, applicants must successfully complete a Course in Taxi Driving. Significant changes have been made to the course in Taxi Driving to lift driver standards. The course has been expanded from 90 to 115 hours and now incorporates a test of Melbourne's landmarks in addition to existing route knowledge and a required level of English literacy.

The accreditation application process was further strengthened on 31 August 2009 by requiring drivers, who have held their Victorian Drivers Licence for less than 12 months, to demonstrate to the Victorian Taxi Directorate (VTD) that they have a basic understanding of the skills and knowledge required to become a commercial passenger vehicle driver prior to taking an Independent Driving Assessment.

The accreditation process ensures that prospective taxi drivers have a reasonable understanding of the working environment and are able to provide a service in a manner which reflects passenger expectations. A satisfactory Independent Driving Assessment result will enable the applicant to formally proceed with an application for driver accreditation.

Driver accreditation was introduced to ensure high standards of taxi service in Victoria. If passengers encounter unacceptable taxi service, I encourage them to contact the VTD with details of the trip, including driver identification and/or taxi registration number, the time and date of the incident and the trip receipt. The VTD will then investigate the incident and take disciplinary action if required. Complaints may be registered online at <www.taxi.vic.gov.au> or by telephone on 1800 638 802.

Shire of Indigo: Tangambalanga skate park

Raised with: Minister for Sport, Recreation and Youth Affairs

Raised by: Ms Darveniza

Raised on: 12 November 2009

REPLY:

At the time the Adjournment matter was raised Indigo Shire Council had submitted an application to the 2010/2011 Community Facilities Funding Program (CFFP) – Minor Facilities category requesting \$60,000 for the development of Tangambalanga Skate Park.

In November 2009, following the assessment of applications to the 2010/11 CFFP – Minor Facilities category, I approved a CFFP grant of \$60,000 to Indigo Shire Council for the development of Tangambalanga Skate Park.

Fenning Bairnsdale: timber supply

Raised with: Minister for Agriculture

Raised by: Mr P. Davis

Raised on: 2 February 2010

REPLY:

I refer to the matter you raised during the Adjournment Debate on 2 February 2010 in the Legislative Council in relation to VicForests' timber supply in East Gippsland and its ability to supply the company Fenning Bairnsdale (Fennings).

As part of its continuing consultation and communication with its customers, VicForests has informed Fennings of progress in modelling future resource availability taking into account the February 2009 bushfires. I am advised that VicForests and Fennings are working together to examine how best to meet Fennings expected future timber demand.

Schools: speed zones

Raised with: Minister for Roads and Ports

Raised by: Mrs Coote

Raised on: 3 February 2010

REPLY:

Speed limits are determined to provide a balance between safety and mobility, with consideration given to factors such as the number of access points and the nature of the road environment and abutting development.

In recent years a number of surveys have been conducted into the public understanding of speed limits including the variable speed limit times. As a result of the information obtained actions have been taken to address the issues identified.

During 2008 there was a television and radio campaign to inform the public about school speed zones and, on an on-going basis, at the start of each school term VicRoads places advertisements in metropolitan, key regional, and ethnic language newspapers, along with radio messages during morning traffic and weather reports, to remind drivers that school is back and to observe the school speed zones.

There is currently significant work being undertaken to enhance signing of speed limits. Electronic school speed zone signs have been installed on roads with an 80 km/h or higher speed limit which carry more than 500 vehicles per day. The Brumby Government is currently investing \$13.6 million to install more than 950 electronic school speed zone signs on all roads with a 70 km/h speed limit and on the busiest 60 km/h roads. In addition, static advance warning signs have been installed at all school speed zone and strip shopping centre speed zone locations to alert motorists they are approaching a lower speed zone and to give them time to slow down if necessary.

Wild dogs: control

Raised with: Minister for Agriculture

Raised by: Mr P. Davis

Raised on: 3 February 2010

REPLY:

I refer to the matter you raised during the Adjournment Debate in the Legislative Council on 3 February 2010 in relation to wild dog control. Wild dogs are part of the Eastern and North Western Victorian landscape. Successful land-holders in those areas take the management of all pests, including wild dogs, into account when developing and implementing their farm management plans. The Victorian Government supports these land-holders through 26 staff positions in the Wild Dog control program.

A position for a Department of Primary Industries (DPI) pest management officer, wild dogs, based in Orbost, will be advertised during February-March 2010. The position will coordinate an enhanced and expanded wild dog baiting program maximising the impact of government baiting programs by securing the support of land-holders and develop baiting campaigns across all tenures based on a sound understanding of wild dog activity.

The Gippsland Wild Dog Management Group and members of the public attending local community meetings have called for greater emphasis to be placed on ground baiting to control wild dogs.

Wild dog baiting has been carried out in the Bendoc, Bonang and Tubbut Local Area Control Plan area, with 136 baits laid in November 2009 by DPI. Further baiting by DPI is planned for the area in late February 2010.

The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act (POCTA) Regulations came into effect in December 2008. These regulations require improvements to the humaneness of a range of trapping standards, including trap sizes. Traps with a jaw spread greater than 15.5cm can no longer be used under the Regulations, but there are a number of different trap designs with a jaw spread (13-15.5cm) available that meet the new Regulations for trapping wild dogs. DPI Wild Dog management program staff are now using these traps in Gippsland and other parts of Victoria

with success. Comments from staff include references to the robustness and reliability of the new trap design compared with previous models used. Similar traps are also currently being used to good effect in other States.

DPI will continue to use a range of integrated control techniques in the management of wild dogs in Gippsland including, but not confined to, trapping, baiting programs, exclusion fencing support, information on the management of livestock in wild dog affected areas and cooperative programs across both public and private land.

Henty Highway: upgrade

Raised with: Minister for Roads and Ports

Raised by: Mr Koch

Raised on: 23 February 2010

REPLY:

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

The Brumby Government is committed to building better, safer roads across the state, having invested \$3 billion into upgrading and maintaining roads in regional Victoria.

Significant efforts have been made by the Government to reduce the impact of road trauma on Victorian families. Victoria's seven lowest road tolls have been recorded in the last seven years and we are taking action to drive down our record road toll even further through our *arrive alive* strategy and our \$650 million commitment for road safety initiatives over 10 years.

In conjunction with the South Australian Government, I released the *Green Triangle Region Freight Action Plan*. This plan outlines the freight transport demands and infrastructure needs in the Green Triangle Region and defines the actions that will be taken to address them. These actions include, amongst others, road network enhancements, rail network enhancements and regulatory reform.

In relation to the sections of the Henty and Glenelg Highways raised by the Member for Western Victoria, \$3.77 million has been spent during the past two financial years to reconstruct more than 10.5 km of road pavement in these locations. This reconstruction work is not a short term treatment, but long term reconstruction of the road pavement to enable these highways to efficiently carry predicted traffic loads for decades to come. In addition, further proposals have been developed for consideration against other competing projects on a state wide and region wide basis in future years.

On 14 June 2009, the third stage of the Geelong Ring Road between Fyansford and Waurn Ponds was officially opened six months ahead of schedule. An allocation of \$3 million from the Government's State Impacted Local Road Program was provided to upgrade Mt Duneed Road to cater for increased volumes of traffic using the road.

The Brumby Government is committed to ensuring the road network can meet the demands of the future freight task in western Victoria for the long term and will continue to invest in essential infrastructure.

Bendigo Senior Secondary College: redevelopment

Raised with: Minister for Education

Raised by: Ms Lovell

Raised on: 23 February 2010

REPLY:

I am informed as follows:

Since the 2007-08 State budget the Victorian Government has committed over \$63 million towards the Bendigo Education Plan. This development will provide four brand new junior secondary colleges for the Bendigo district. These projects will make a significant contribution towards improving educational outcomes for the Bendigo community.

As part of the Commonwealth-funded Building the Education Revolution (BER) program, Bendigo Senior Secondary College has been allocated \$1.97 million towards the establishment of a language centre under the *Science and Language Centres for 21st Century Secondary Schools* program, up to \$10 million towards the development of the Bendigo Trades Training Centre and a further \$200,000 to upgrade school facilities under round one of the *National School Pride* program. This is a massive commitment to the future of students at Bendigo Senior Secondary College.

A master plan had been developed for the Bendigo Senior Secondary College site to incorporate the adjoining former Bendigo gaol into the school site. With the recent inclusion of the federally funded projects, this master plan is being reassessed to incorporate these new projects.

VicRoads: online trailer registration

Raised with: Minister for Roads and Ports

Raised by: Mr O'Donohue

Raised on: 23 February 2010

REPLY:

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

VicRoads was implementing computer system changes to accommodate the heavy vehicle registration charges and vehicle classifications brought about by the National Transport Commission's national heavy vehicles determination. As an interim measure, manual processing was implemented to allow the registration of lead trailers (also known as "A" trailers by some industry groups) at the new rates.

Although the online facility was not available for lead trailers whilst the system changes were being implemented, dealers could continue to register lead trailers by posting completed registration applications and payment cheques direct to VicRoads where the information was added to the database. Lead trailers were considered registered from the date of completion of the registration application.

VicRoads continued the online registration facility for all other vehicles and trailers.

VicRoads advises that the system changes have now been implemented and "lead trailers" can again be registered on-line by dealers and manufacturers accredited under VicRoads' Dealer Certification Scheme.

Varroa mite: control

Raised with: Minister for Agriculture

Raised by: Mrs Petrovich

Raised on: 23 February 2010

REPLY:

I refer to the matter you raised during the Adjournment Debate in the Legislative Council on 23 February 2010 in relation to the lack of funding for Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) and the status of the quarantine and protection of honey bee industry in Victoria.

The matter of funding for CSIRO projects is primarily a matter for the Commonwealth Government to address. However, I am advised that Dr Denis Anderson, CSIRO Entomology, Canberra, currently receives funding from CSIRO appropriations. I am also advised that funding for a post-doctorate position at CSIRO, primarily for succession planning for Dr Anderson's position, will be provided by the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (RIRDC). These funds are derived from Commonwealth contributions and statutory industry levies.

The quarantine and protection of Victoria's honey bee industry and crop pollination service industry is addressed by several initiatives that are supported by the Victorian Government. Firstly, the National Sentinel Hive Program provides post-border monitoring for honey bee mites, including varroa mite. The program is administered by Animal Health Australia and is co-funded by the Australian and State Governments, including Victoria, with in-kind contributions provided by the honey bee industry. The Australian Government has provided \$300,000 towards the program for the period 2009-2011.

Secondly, the Victorian Government through the Department of Primary Industries (DPI) and in partnership with the Victorian honey bee industry provides support for post border surveillance for varroa.

Early warning surveillance is provided through the Victorian swarm catch box project which is additional to the Sentinel Hive Program and involves the location of empty honey bee swarm catch boxes at the sea ports of Geelong, Melbourne, Portland and Western Port in order to catch and test bee swarms that may enter Australia on overseas ships.

Additional initiatives include surveillance by DPI and industry in suburban and regional Victoria, plus training of a State Quarantine Response Team, an expanding team of beekeepers who will assist DPI with in-hive surveillance in the event of an incursion of varroa.

The Government recognises the importance of having DPI staff well trained in all aspects of varroa management. In early March, 2010, all four apiary officers visited New Zealand, where varroa is now endemic, to increase their skills in surveillance, field diagnosis and post-incursion management of honey bee colonies.

Rail: Footscray station

Raised with: Minister for Public Transport

Raised by: Ms Hartland

Raised on: 24 February 2010

REPLY:

The Victorian Government is progressively implementing the requirements of the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992 Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002* (DSAPT). The Department of Transport (DOT) is working with operators to improve access for people with a disability to public transport services.

The Footscray Footbridge Project is part of the Victorian Government's Footscray Renewal program to revitalise Footscray. The new footbridge will be fully accessible and will comply with DSAPT by providing stair and lift access to each of the station platforms and across the rail tracks. The lifts will operate 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to provide access to and from Hyde Street, Irving Street and McNab Avenue. Each lift has capacity for 30 people and incorporates transparent panels to provide good visibility into and out of the lifts.

Emergency procedure protocols have been developed in the event that a lift breaks down. This includes continuous monitoring and communication until assistance arrives, in the event that the lift is occupied. It is also noted that the new footbridge has seven stairways for access/egress.

Although unlikely, if all lifts were to fail, access to Footscray Railway Station is possible via Mc Nab Avenue.

Ramps and escalators were considered by the design team but would have resulted in very lengthy ramps, and a much longer path of travel than the lifts provide. Escalators were also considered but found to be unsuitable for a number of reasons, including exposure to the weather which can result in frequent failure.

Caroline Springs College: disability funding

Raised with: Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development

Raised by: Mr Finn

Raised on: 25 February 2010

REPLY:

I am informed as follows:

The Victorian Government is committed to improving the learning outcomes of all students, by acknowledging their diverse needs and catering for different learning styles. A key element of this commitment is an emphasis on improving the learning outcomes for students with disabilities and additional learning needs, including strategies that ensure inclusive practices are in place in schools.

In 2009, the Government invested \$41.7 million in the Program for Students with Disabilities, including \$31 million in the Language Support Program. Funding for these Programs has grown for each of the past five years. Since 1999, expenditure for students with additional learning needs has increased by 112 per cent.

The Program for Students with Disabilities provides additional resources to government schools to support the delivery of educational programs for eligible students. Applications from schools for additional resources under the Program for Students with Disabilities are considered in light of responses to an Educational Needs Questionnaire by the school and parent/guardian(s) during a Student Support Group meeting.

Where it is believed that an adjustment to the level of support provided for a student is needed for a student in the Program for Students with Disabilities, the Student Support Group has capacity to initiate a reappraisal of the funding level the student receives.

In cases where it is essential for a school to purchase specialist equipment for a student, and that equipment could in no way have been reasonably planned for within the Program for Students with Disabilities resources, the Student Support Group again has capacity to put a request through regional and central departmental authorities for an extraordinary grant for such equipment. Regarding the issues you raised, I am advised that regional staff are now working with the school in this manner to address Tyler's needs.

Schools: air conditioning

Raised with: Minister for Education

Raised by: Mrs Petrovich

Raised on: 25 February 2010

REPLY:

I am informed as follows:

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development's air conditioning policy provides air conditioning to identified schools with the highest needs based on the climatic index of the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation developed by the National Housing Energy Rating Scheme. In accordance with this index, the identified air conditioning zones are located predominantly in Northern Victoria.

The Department has also provided funding to schools to install air conditioners in newer relocatable buildings and provides all new relocatables with air-conditioning. Older portable classrooms are progressively being replaced with the newer air-conditioned buildings.

Given the government's greenhouse strategy to reduce energy usage, schools are encouraged to investigate passive cooling methods to enhance their learning environment and to limit power usage and resultant green house emissions. Further information regarding this strategy and methods assisting schools to improve the temperature control within their facilities can be found at the following websites.

www.greenhouse.gov.au

www.seav.sustainability.vic.gov.au

www.education.vic.gov.au/management/infrastructure/environment.htm

Buses: Port Melbourne

Raised with: Minister for Public Transport

Raised by: Mrs Coote

Raised on: 10 March 2010

REPLY:

In 2006, the Victorian Government committed \$1.4 billion for new and upgraded bus services. As part of this commitment, the Department of Transport (DOT) has conducted a program of metropolitan bus service reviews over a four-year period. The reviews focused on service standards, route coverage, service connectivity and the effectiveness of existing transport linkages.

The review process involved extensive stakeholder consultation, including a number of community consultation forums and meetings with local councils and bus company representatives.

The Port Melbourne area was included in the recently completed Melbourne / Port Phillip / Yarra Bus Service Review. The operation of bus routes in the Port Melbourne area was an issue that was raised by both members of the public and the City of Port Phillip.

The recommendations report for this review is currently being considered by DOT. Outcomes of the review will be announced on the DOT website at <www.transport.vic.gov.au> and in local media.

Housing: affordability

Raised with: Minister for Housing

Raised by: Ms Tierney

Raised on: 10 March 2010

REPLY:

With respect to approved construction projects and committed repairs and maintenance works under the Nation Building Social Housing Initiative, of the \$1.26 billion allocated to Victoria, \$388 million is earmarked for projects in Regional Victoria. The following amounts have been allocated to each municipality in Western Victoria Region:

Municipality	Repairs & Maintenance Commitment	Construction Funding
Ararat	\$97,564	\$1,057,478
Ballarat	\$4,330,823	\$37,020,758
Central Goldfields	\$115,327	\$937,080
Colac Otway	\$49,241	\$3,873,026
Corangamite	\$3,600	\$260,300
Glenelg	\$18,991	\$1,266,160
Greater Geelong	\$9,529,464	\$59,052,369
Hepburn	\$6,277	\$0
Horsham	\$1,411,025	\$4,644,208
Macedon Ranges	\$217,717	\$468,945
Melton	\$883,099	\$11,038,476
Moorabool	\$39,993	\$7,997,221
Northern Grampians	\$122,377	\$1,438,979
Southern Grampians	\$192,781	\$1,408,487
Surf Coast	\$224,501	\$0
Warrnambool	\$255,989	\$10,445,363
Total	\$17,498,769	\$140,908,849

Please note that these allocations are subject to change as variations to the construction program are approved and further repairs and maintenance funding is committed.

Racing: government initiatives

Raised with: Minister for Racing

Raised by: Ms Tierney

Raised on: 11 March 2010

REPLY:

I thank you for your Adjournment Debate question on 11 March 2010 regarding the installation of plastic running rails in Western Victoria.

Providing a safe working environment is of paramount importance and the invention of the Mawsafe plastic running rail clearly demonstrates the commitment of the Victorian racing industry's passion and desire to protect the welfare of both horse and rider from serious injury.

Western Victoria has a long and proud history in racing in this state and I was delighted to recently announce that Hamilton will be one of the first tracks in regional Victoria to have the new rails installed.

In addition to Hamilton, I am pleased to advise that the following racetracks in Western Victoria will also be a recipient of the Mawsafe rails in the coming 12 months-Ararat, Ballarat, Geelong, Horsham, Kyneton, Stawell and Warrnambool.

I thank you for bringing this matter to my attention.

Bendigo Senior Secondary College: redevelopment

Raised with: Minister for Education

Raised by: Ms Lovell

Raised on: 23 March 2010

REPLY:

I am informed as follows:

Since the 2007-08 State budget the Victorian Government has committed over \$63 million towards the Bendigo Education Plan. This development will provide four brand new junior secondary colleges for the Bendigo district. These projects will make a significant contribution towards improving educational outcomes for the Bendigo community.

As part of the Commonwealth-funded Building the Education Revolution (BER) program, Bendigo Senior Secondary College has been allocated \$1.97 million towards the establishment of a language centre under the *Science and Language Centres for 21st Century Secondary Schools* program, up to \$10 million towards the development of the Bendigo Trades Training Centre and a further \$200,000 to upgrade school facilities under round one of the *National School Pride* program. This is a massive commitment to the future of students at Bendigo Senior Secondary College.

A master plan had been developed for the Bendigo Senior Secondary College site to incorporate the adjoining former Bendigo gaol into the school site. With the recent inclusion of the federally funded projects, this master plan is being reassessed to incorporate these new projects.

City of Brimbank: vermin control

Raised with: Minister for Health

Raised by: Mr Finn

Raised on: 23 March 2010

REPLY:

Officers from my department have raised this matter with the Brimbank City Council, who in turn have advised that Environmental Health Officers were dispatched to inspect Devon Lane.

I am advised that the council officers found no evidence of rats, likely rat habitats or food scraps that might attract rats.

I am further advised that as an additional precaution Council officers will conduct a check and clean of the drains in the area.

The Brimbank City Council has also informed my department that the council has recently launched a campaign to clean up the streets of Sunshine.

This campaign will:

- clean public spaces, lanes and streets;
- address environmental health issues relating to waste and vermin;
- check the compliance of premises that deal with food; and
- organise clean up crews for private premises that need attention.

I am also advised by the Council that they have already conducted a clean up of the Sunshine Shopping Precinct and the area surrounding the Sunshine railway station.

Traffic Accident Commission: claims management

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

Raised by: Mr Drum

Raised on: 23 March 2010

REPLY:

Firstly, I would like to take this opportunity to express how sorry I am to hear about the immense loss and tragedy that Mrs Coutts and her children have had to experience in losing Mr Coutts in 2002. I sympathise enormously with the difficulties faced by the Coutts family in overcoming the tragedy. I know from the many TAC clients that I come in to contact with that the road to emotional and physical recovery is often a long and challenging one.

The TAC takes its responsibilities, as also outlined by Mr Drum, to ensure compensation is delivered expeditiously and in a socially and economically appropriate way, very seriously.

It is asserted that little assistance was provided in relation to these claims in the first 5 years following the crash. It is certainly true that families go through enormous trauma at this time and obviously need all the help they can possibly get. The TAC is very aware of this situation. In the five years following the accident, the TAC provided over \$330,000 in benefits and support to the Coutts family.

The TAC contacted the Coutts family during 2003 to explain other entitlements that could be sought under the Transport Accident Act 1986 (the Act), and to advise how to progress these claims further. Once a claim was eventually made, further benefits were paid in 2008. To date, the TAC has now paid the Coutts family over \$700,000 in compensation and support payments. This includes the cost of all travel and accommodation associated with treatment at the Royal Children's Hospital, funding for an education specialist and integration support for Bradley and Angela and psychological counselling support for Mrs Coutts.

An application for respite care was made on behalf of the Coutts family by a Case Manager in March 2010. The information contained in this application was deficient for the purposes of consideration for approval by the TAC. The TAC did not acknowledge nor promptly communicate to this Case Manager that further information was required. The TAC failed to meet its usual high standards in this instance. However, I understand the request for respite was approved within 10 days of receiving the outstanding information, in accordance with the applicable TAC policy.

The TAC has responded as effectively as possible to the needs and requests of the Coutts family in accordance with their statutory obligations. Every request for support that has been made in accordance with entitlements available under the Act has been granted.

The TAC does not make any assumptions about family circumstances, income levels or residency of TAC clients. The TAC provides the same high level of service to clients in regional areas as they do to all other clients. The claims of Mrs Lyn Coutts and those of her children Angela and Bradely are under active and appropriate management by the TAC.

Clyde Road, Berwick: duplication

Raised with: Minister for Roads and Ports

Raised by: Mr O'Donohue

Raised on: 24 March 2010

REPLY:

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

The Government is aware of the community's concern regarding the section of Clyde Road between Kangan Drive and High Street. Accordingly, a number of capacity and safety improvements have been undertaken along this route, including the installation of traffic signals at the Clyde Road/Enterprise Avenue intersection and a reconfiguration of the Clyde Road/Kangan Drive intersection, which has improved access for both vehicles and pedestrians to the TAFE College, Monash University and Casey Hospital.

As you mentioned in parliament, the Brumby Government's *Victorian Transport Plan* included funding of \$1 million for the Clyde Road Planning Study, which is currently underway. The study is investigating options for the duplication of the section of Clyde Road between Kangan Drive and High Street and will ensure that any upgrade along this route best meets the needs of the community in this area.

As you would appreciate, proposals for improvement projects must be considered and evaluated on a statewide basis. Any duplication of this section of Clyde Road will be considered in this context.

School buses: eastern suburbs

Raised with: Minister for Public Transport

Raised by: Mr Atkinson

Raised on: 24 March 2010

REPLY:

The provision of dedicated school buses to designated schools in metropolitan Melbourne ceased during the 1990s, with services already in place permitted to remain. Students may use the available 'historical' school buses where loading capacity permits, or use regular public transport services to travel to or from school.

When parents choose a school for their children's education outside their local area, they need to consider the public transport services available to ensure ease of access to the school. Another option is to arrange private bus services through a local charter company, a practice that has been adopted by many schools in the metropolitan area.

Buses have a licensed total carrying capacity which includes provision for seated and standing passengers. While it is not permitted to exceed the total carrying capacity of the bus, it is considered safe to have a number of standing passengers up to the permitted capacity.

City of Brimbank: councillor conduct

Raised with: Minister for Local Government

Raised by: Mr Finn

Raised on: 25 March 2010

REPLY:

The matter reported in relation to Mr Sui is currently being investigated by the Local Government Investigations and Compliance Inspectorate. As the investigation is ongoing it would be inappropriate for me to comment further. Mr Sui will be informed of the outcome of the investigation in due course.

School buses: Marnoo Primary School

Raised with: Minister for Public Transport

Raised by: Mr Vogels

Raised on: 25 March 2010

REPLY:

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) is the Victorian Government agency responsible for setting policy regarding access to free rural school bus services. Under DEECD's guidelines, seven eligible students are required to maintain a school bus service.

The Department of Transport (DOT) undertook an initial review of the Marnoo Primary School bus service in November 2009 and a subsequent review in February 2010. Unfortunately, the February 2010 review identified only six eligible students, and found no evidence of these numbers improving in the future.

In response to recent representations made by the school community, DOT and DEECD have agreed to maintain this service until the end of the 2010 school year. A further review will be undertaken at that time. The school community and affected families will be kept informed throughout this process.

Planning: On Luck Chinese Nursing Home

Raised with: Minister for Planning

Raised by: Mrs Kronberg

Raised on: 25 March 2010

REPLY:

The Chinese Community Social Services Centre Inc (CCSSC) approached Manningham City Council to amend the Manningham Planning Scheme prior to the 15 March 2010 funding deadline for Commonwealth Government allocation of aged care beds. The Planning and Environment Act 1987 (the Act) does not provide Councils with the necessary powers to exempt themselves from notice requirements in order to meet such tight timeframes. Consequently CCSSC asked that I amend the Planning Scheme using the provisions of section 20(4) of the Act.

Prior to deciding to amend the Manningham Planning Scheme, the Manningham City Council was formally consulted and their views on the Amendment were considered. As a result, a number of changes were made to the Incorporated Document which addressed some of Council's concerns.

Prior to any development occurring on the site, the Amendment approved requires a detailed development plan addressing all the matters in the Incorporated Document to be submitted for my consideration. Assessment of the development plan will be undertaken in consultation with the Council.

The Amendment was approved using my powers under section 20(4) of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* and in accordance with the Ministerial Powers of Intervention in Planning and Heritage Matters Practice Note. Reasons for this intervention have been published.

For these reasons I do not believe that the matter needs to be referred to the Legislative Council's Standing Committee on Finance and Public Administration's inquiry into Victorian government decision-making, consultation and approval processes.

West Gate Freeway: access ramps

Raised with: Minister for Roads and Ports

Raised by: Ms Hartland

Raised on: 25 March 2010

REPLY:

Work on the Truck Action Plan has commenced with engineering and planning investigations well advanced. A planning study has been undertaken, including extensive community consultation to determine the preferred route option for the Truck Action Plan, and to provide better access to the Dynon/Port precinct for heavy freight vehicles, while improving the amenity and livability of Melbourne's inner west.

Throughout the planning investigation phase, VicRoads has involved and engaged with the community, businesses and other key stakeholders, such as the Friends of Stony Creek. Community engagement sessions were held back in July 2009. The community feedback was collated and delivered to consultants undertaking the planning study. Second round community "report back" meetings were held with residents on possible route options in October 2009.

At these community meetings, the details of the planning investigations and the route options have been on display for the community and other groups to be informed about the project, and to provide feedback to shape the outcomes of the planning study.

The community has been kept informed of the progress of the planning study via VicRoads' website, e-mail groups, newsletters and letter 'drops'. Information provided on the website has included the release of the planning study technical reports; this process is continuing and further technical reports will be released in due course.

VicRoads: proof of identity

Raised with: Minister for Roads and Ports

Raised by: Mr P. Davis

Raised on: 25 March 2010

REPLY:

VicRoads is a participant to a national proof of identity agreement with other Australian licensing jurisdictions aimed at ensuring that drivers conclusively prove their identity for various transactions, including change of name.

A driver licence is a critical document for ensuring that a person's identity is accurately recorded both for road safety purposes, and in the case of the broader community, increasingly for identity verification purposes.

VicRoads became aware in discussions with the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages (BDM) that a number of 'ceremonial certificates' circulating in the community were not official documents. They are not secure and relatively easy to forge.

The suggestion of establishing a link with BDM to verify these certificates has been explored with BDM, however, as these 'ceremonial certificates' do not have a registration number or record the date of birth of the parties, a link between VicRoads and BDM would not resolve this issue.

As there is also no link between the 'ceremonial certificate' and the marriage registration record maintained by BDM, a standard marriage certificate issued by BDM with a unique document number is required by VicRoads to record a name change.

All States and Territories follow the same process. It should be noted that Passports Australia has also adopted this requirement.

WRITTEN ADJOURNMENT RESPONSES

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

Thursday, 6 May 2010

Roads: Footscray tunnel

Raised with: Minister for Roads and Ports

Raised by: Ms Hartland

Raised on: 1 September 2009

REPLY:

As you are aware, Legislative Council sessional order 4(1), requires that: A response to a matter raised by a member must either be given at the time the matter is raised or provided in writing within 30 days.

The matter you raised during the adjournment debate regarding the truck action plan in Footscray and West Sunshine was responded to at the time by Justin Madden MLC. Under the provisions of sessional order 4(1), I am not required to provide a written response as the matter was deemed to have been dealt with. However, as a matter of courtesy, I provide you with the following advice.

The Government has publicly stated the WestLink planning and consultation study involves two stages. The first is a tunnel linking Dynon Road and Footscray Road in the Port of Melbourne with Geelong Road and Sunshine Road in West Footscray. This includes upgrades to Sunshine Road, Dempster Street and Paramount Road to complement the road tunnel. The second is a longer-term connection to the Western Ring Road. It is not anticipated that further road upgrades are required outside this project scope, however the study will consider and respond to any impacts on the surrounding road network.

The planning and consultation study for the project is progressing well with local communities being consulted and provided with accurate information about the project and the status of planning. It should be noted that amongst the key objectives of the WestLink project is reducing freight traffic and congestion on local streets in the inner-west and improving amenity for local communities.

Federal Government funding for public transport projects in the west, including the Regional Rail Link and Melbourne Metro rail tunnel, is not being used for the WestLink planning and consultation study. It is clear however from the level of investment in transport projects in the region that the Brumby Government is responding to the challenges of population and economic growth facing Melbourne's west. The Government's Victorian Transport Plan provides significant investment for the public transport system, roads and cycling paths.

Caulfield Racecourse: public access

Raised with: Minister for Environment and Climate Change

Raised by: Mr Kavanagh

Raised on: 9 March 2010

REPLY:

In June 2008, the Melbourne Racing Club (MRC) and Glen Eira City Council (GECC) signed a communiqué on the use of public open space in the centre of the Caulfield Racecourse Reserve. The final version was executed in September 2009. The communiqué generally stated, amongst other things, that the centre of the reserve should be

maintained and improved as passive public open space, with improvements expected to be undertaken in 2009-2010.

The MRC has developed a development plan for the centre of the racetrack that will provide for improved community facilities including a barbecue, seating, walking/running track, improved boardwalk and drinking fountains. The MRC has advised that it is keen to progress the works this year, subject to further discussions with the GECC on the extent and scope of the proposed works to be undertaken. These proposed works will include enhanced pedestrian access.

Signs promoting access to the Caulfield Racecourse Reserve have already been installed at entrances adjacent to the Caulfield Railway Station, Queens Avenue, Glen Eira Road and Neerim Road. The signs were jointly unveiled by the MRC and the Mayor, Cr Steven Tang on 28 May 2009. Further signage may be installed following the completion of the centre development works.

The MRC engaged a consultant to assess the fencing along the Queens Avenue boundary.

The consultant's report identified that the fence plays a vital role in ensuring the safety and security of those involved in the racing industry, visitors and surrounding residents. For this reason the fencing will be retained, but the MRC has advised that it will develop short and medium term strategies to look after the fence.

The responsibility for vegetation along the Queens Avenue nature-strip rests with the GECC. The MRC will meet with GECC to discuss possible vegetation improvements along the fence line. It should be noted that behind the fence there is an existing high embankment level with the running track which would restrict vistas into the racecourse.

The MRC will continue to work with the GECC, the Racecourse Trust and the Department of Sustainability and Environment regarding improvements to the centre of the reserve, to ensure that it will be a public space available on an ongoing basis for a broader community benefit, taking account of continuing MRC racing and training requirements.

Arbuthnot Sawmills: red gum supply

Raised with: Minister for Environment and Climate Change

Raised by: Mr Drum

Raised on: 11 March 2010

REPLY:

- Mr Paul Madden of Arbuthnot Sawmill at Koondrook wrote to me on 24 February 2010 regarding River Red Gum timber requirements for the restoration of the Port of Echuca wharf.
- A reply has been sent to Mr Madden (from the Executive Director, Forests and Parks on 23 March 2010) advising him that:
 - The Department of Sustainability and Environment has fully allocated all River Red Gum sawlogs from Victorian State forests to Arbuthnot Sawmills at Koondrook.
 - To ensure the long term sustainability of River Red Gum timber harvesting operations, no increase in the existing 2009/10 allocations will be made.
 - This is consistent with the terms and conditions of the Forest Produce Licence issued to Arbuthnot Sawmills.
 - The Active Forest Health Program has been developed by Parks Victoria to determine the ecological effectiveness of thinning within the River Red Gum forests. Timber products generated through the Program will be sold in accordance with Victorian Government policy if, and/or when, they become available.

- The government will not allow unsustainable timber harvesting to occur in State forests.
- Both Victorian and New South Wales governments have acted to protect River Red Gum forests in the national parks and conservation reserve system. However, I am advised that up to 11,000 cubic metres of River Red Gum sawlog will be harvested from public land in Victoria and New South Wales each year until 2015 (reducing to about 5,000 cubic metres per year beyond this date).
- There are five (5) sawmills (including Arbuthnot Sawmills) in the Murray River region that procure sawlogs from public land in both Victoria and New South Wales. These sawmills have formed a co-operative to fill large orders for River Red Gum timber for a range of projects, most recently rail infrastructure upgrades in Victoria. This co-operative has access to sufficient sawlog material to meet the immediate needs of the Port of Echuca Wharf restoration.

Water: Bacchus Marsh irrigators

Raised with: Minister for Water

Raised by: Mr Vogels

Raised on: 23 March 2010

REPLY:

The Victorian Government has committed up to three gigalitres (GL) of water from the Melbourne water supply system to be made available to farmers in the Bacchus Marsh Irrigation District (BMID).

This will be implemented via an agreement between City West Water, Western Water and Southern Rural Water, on behalf of farmers in the BMID.

The price at which water will be made available under this agreement is still subject to negotiation between the parties to the agreement.

Southern Rural Water is working to develop the supply by agreement prior to the commencement of the 2010/11 irrigation season. Southern Rural Water plans to meet with its customers in the BMID over the coming months to discuss the implications for farmers.

Buses: western suburbs

Raised with: Minister for Public Transport

Raised by: Ms Hartland

Raised on: 24 March 2010

REPLY:

As part of *The Victorian Transport Plan*, the Government has announced it will invest \$290 million to extend the Yellow Orbital SmartBus route from Ringwood to Melbourne Airport. The Plan identifies bus services operating between Airport West, Watergardens and Werribee as part of the future development of the SmartBus Green Orbital route which will be considered for funding in the future. Additional information on bus service initiatives can be found at <www.transport.vic.gov.au>.

The Brimbank/Melton Bus Service Review recommendations report has been completed and is currently with the Department of Transport for consideration. Sixteen local area bus service reviews were conducted over a four-year period for areas across Melbourne. Recommendations are being prioritised having regard to geographical areas of greatest need and the types of service improvements that maximise overall community benefit. It is anticipated that the Brimbank/Melton report will be released later this year.