

CHAPTER 9: DEPARTMENT OF PREMIER AND CABINET HEARINGS

9.1 Introduction

The Department of Premier and Cabinet is responsible for the administration of three portfolios:

- Premier;
- Multicultural Affairs; and
- Arts.

9.2 Key budget themes for 2009-10

The Department of Premier and Cabinet advised the Committee that its key budget themes reflected Government priorities. Key budget themes identified in the *2009-10 State Budget* were:²⁹

- Government priorities;
- bushfire recovery;
- intergovernmental and *National Reform Agenda*;
- continuing the delivery of core services in relation to policy advice, the arts and cultural sector, multicultural affairs and climate change; and
- strengthening organisational capability and efficiencies.

9.3 Key assumptions that have been used to develop the Department's projections for 2009-10

The Department of Premier and Cabinet identified the following five key assumptions upon which its projections for 2009-10 were based:³⁰

- service delivery requirements will be maintained despite the imposition of significant savings;
- a high demand for policy advice and input into the Intergovernmental and *National Reform Agenda* will continue;
- resources will be provided to assist the *2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission* and the Victorian Bushfire Reconstruction and Recovery Authority;
- the Victorian Multicultural Commission has transferred from the Department of Planning and Community Development to the Department of Premier and Cabinet; and
- efficiencies will be pursued.

²⁹ Department of Premier and Cabinet, *Response to the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee Budget Estimates Questionnaire*, May 2009, p.1

³⁰ *ibid.*

9.4 Major Expenditure Policy Shifts in the 2009-10 Budget

The Department of Premier and Cabinet identified three major expenditure policy shifts in 2009-10:³¹

- Office of the Victorian Co-ordinator General. In February 2009 COAG agreed to new oversight and coordination arrangements to ensure that the *Nation Building and Job Plan* stimulus was delivered efficiently and effectively. One of these requirements was the appointment of State Coordinators General to oversee implementation in the areas of social housing, building the education revolution, energy efficient homes and transport and infrastructure. The Victorian Coordinator General is located within the Department of Premier and Cabinet and funding is required to support the officer's functions;
- Victorian Multicultural Commission. On 1 January 2009 the Victorian Multicultural Commission became an administrative office of the Department of Premier and Cabinet following a machinery of government transfer from the Department of Planning and Community Development. The Department of Premier and Cabinet has negotiated a transfer of the Victorian Multicultural Commission funding from the Department of Planning and Community Development and the 2009-10 funding component is \$11.9 million; and
- Victorian Bushfire Reconstruction and Recovery Authority. On 11 February 2009 the Victorian Bushfire Reconstruction and Recovery Authority became an administrative office of the Department of Premier and Cabinet. The Victorian Government, in partnership with the Federal Government, established the Authority to coordinate bushfire recovery activity across Victoria. To support the Authority, the funding in 2009-10 is currently \$12 million. Final funding will be approved by ERC in the near future.

9.5 Premier's Portfolio

9.5.1 Introduction

The Committee received evidence from the Hon. John Brumby MP, Premier, on 11 May 2009. The Premier provided an overview of his portfolio at the start of the hearing, assisted by Ms Helen Silver, Secretary; Mr Philip Reed, Deputy Secretary; and Mr Adam Fennessy, Executive Director, Policy and Cabinet Group, Department of Premier and Cabinet. The Committee thanks the Premier and accompanying officers for their attendance and assistance.

9.5.2 General comments

At the budget estimates hearing, the Committee raised various matters concerning the budget estimates for 2009-10 (see Volume Two for the transcript of proceedings). Transcripts of the budget estimates proceedings are also accessible on the Committee's website at www.parliament.vic.gov.au/paec. Documents provided at the hearings of the budget estimates (see Section 9.5.4) are available on the Committee's website. Written answers to questions on notice should be submitted to the Committee by 15 June 2009. These answers will be considered by the Committee for inclusion in a further report.

³¹ Department of Premier and Cabinet, *Response to the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee Budget Estimates Questionnaire*, May 2009, p.8

9.5.3 Key matters raised at the budget estimates hearing

Key matters raised at the budget estimates hearing included a standard question on Federal Government grants and the following (page references refer to the transcript in Volume Two, Section 9.1):

Victorian bushfire reconstruction and recovery

- bushfire clean up and funding for compassionate assistance (pp.8-9);
- fuel reduction burning as part of the *Government's Fire Prevention strategy* (pp.9-11);
- co-ordination of bushfire reconstruction and recovery (pp.11-12);
- funding to improve emergency services communication systems and equipment (p.13);
- management and administration of the *Victorian Bushfire Appeals fund* (pp.11 and 16-17); and
- emergency warning systems (pp.21-23).

Global Financial Crisis, investment and jobs

- new jobs creation in the *2009-10 State Budget* (pp.13-16);
- initiatives to deal with the Global Financial Crisis (p.19);
- planning reforms (p.21)
- programs within *A Fairer Victoria* that address the impacts of the global financial crisis (p.35);
- assistance to first home owners (p.20 and 26);
- unallocated funding and contingencies for capital works (pp.20-22);
- investment in rail and road infrastructure (p.28); and
- skills training programs, including the apprentice and traineeship completion bonus and matching job opportunities following qualification (pp.23-24).

Drought and water supplies

- funding for local government drought coordinators, outreach workers and rate relief (pp.12-13); and
- food bowl modernisation project (pp.24-25).

Environment

- East Gippsland forestry policy and the potential of tourism as an alternative (pp.27-28);
- Office of Climate Change policy development and initiatives targeting climate change (p.30); and
- *Climate Change Green Paper* and the *Green Jobs Action Plan* (pp.26-28).

Other issues

- general government efficiencies and specific efficiency savings in the Department of Premier and Cabinet (pp.28-30);
- financial liabilities and net government debt, including the repayment of net government debt (pp.31-35);

- management of local government risks (pp.6-8 and 17-18);
- use of funds allocated to the output *Developing the Local Government sector* (p.17); and
- cancer centre funding (pp.19-20).

9.5.4 Documents tabled at the budget estimates hearing

The Premier and the Secretary, Department of Premier and Cabinet each provided an introductory slide presentation at the budget estimates hearing. The slides are available on the Committee's website.

9.5.5 Questions taken on notice at the budget estimates hearing

A number of questions were taken on notice by the Premier at the budget estimates hearing (see Appendix 2 - Questions on Notice, and the transcript in Volume Two) relating to:

- Federal Government grants;
- funding details for drought outreach workers;
- expenditure components of the *Developing the Local Government Sector* output; and
- projected annual savings from the Northern Victoria Irrigation System.

A written response by the Premier to the Committee on this question is due by 15 June 2009 and will be considered for publication in a further report.

9.6 Multicultural Affairs Portfolio

9.6.1 Introduction

The Committee received evidence from the Hon. John Brumby MP, Premier in his capacity as Minister for Multicultural Affairs on 11 May 2009. The Premier provided an overview of his portfolio at the start of the hearing, assisted by Ms Helen Silver, Secretary; Mr Philip Reed, Deputy Secretary, Government and Corporate Groups, Department of Premier and Cabinet; and Mr George Lekakis, Chair, Victorian Multicultural Commission. The Committee thanks the Premier and accompanying officers for their attendance and assistance.

9.6.2 General comments

At the budget estimates hearing, the Committee raised various matters concerning the budget estimates for 2009-10 (see Volume Two for the transcript of proceedings). Transcripts of the budget estimates proceedings are also accessible on the Committee's website at www.parliament.vic.gov.au/paec. Documents provided at the hearings of the budget estimates (see Section 9.6.4) are available on the Committee's website. Written answers to questions on notice should be submitted to the Committee by 22 June 2009. These answers will be considered by the Committee for inclusion in a further report.

9.6.3 Key matters raised at the budget estimates hearing

Key matters raised at the budget estimates hearing included a standard question on Federal Government grants and the following (page references refer to the Veteran's Affairs/Multicultural Affairs portfolio transcript in Volume Two, Section 8.1):

- advertising budget targets for culturally and linguistically diverse communities (p.3);
- public attitudes towards multiculturalism and survey variations in the *2009-10 State Budget* (pp.3-4);
- Victorian Multicultural Commission grants program (p.4);
- *Community Harmony* funding and the Parliament of the Worlds Religions (p.4); and
- educational support for young refugees (p.6).

9.6.4 Documents tabled at the budget estimates hearing

The Premier provided an introductory slide presentation at the budget estimates hearing. The slides are available on the Committee's website.

9.6.5 Questions taken on notice at the budget estimates hearing

A number of questions were taken on notice by the Premier at the budget estimates hearing (see Appendix 2 - Questions on Notice, and the transcript in Volume Two) relating to:

- Federal Government grants; and
- funding to support refugee students within the Victorian school system.

A written response by the Premier to the Committee on this question is due by 15 June 2009 and will be considered for publication in a further report.

9.7 Arts Portfolio

9.7.1 Introduction

The Committee received evidence from the Hon. Lynne Kosky MP, Minister for the Arts, on 13 May 2009. The Minister provided an overview of the Arts portfolio at the start of the hearing, assisted by Ms Penny Hutchinson, Director; Mr Greg Andrews, Deputy Director, Policy and Programs; Mr Dennis Carmody, Deputy Director, Agencies and Infrastructure, Arts Victoria; and Ms Joan Rowland, Senior Manager, Corporate Development, Agencies and Infrastructure, Arts Victoria, Department of Premier and Cabinet. The Committee thanks the Minister and accompanying officers for their attendance and assistance.

9.7.2 General comments

At the budget estimates hearing, the Committee raised various matters concerning the budget estimates for 2009-10 (see Volume Two for the transcript of proceedings). Transcripts of the budget estimates proceedings are also accessible on the Committee's website at www.parliament.vic.gov.au/paec. Documents provided at the hearings of the budget estimates (see Section 9.7.4) are available on the Committee's website. Written answers to questions on notice should be submitted to the Committee by 22 June 2009. These answers will be considered by the Committee for inclusion in a further report.

9.7.3 Key matters raised at the budget estimates hearing

Key matters raised at the budget estimates hearing included a standard question on Federal Government grants and the following (page references refer to the transcript in Volume Two, Section 9.3):

- *Arts Development Program* expenditure and outcomes (pp.3-4);
- declining attendance at arts agencies (p.4);
- the Melbourne Recital Centre (pp.4-5);
- Hamer Hall upgrade (p.5); and
- *regional Touring Victoria destinations* output funding and performance (pp.5-6).

9.7.4 Documents tabled at the budget estimates hearing

The Minister provided an introductory slide presentation at the budget estimates hearing. The slides are available on the Committee's website.

9.7.5 Questions taken on notice at the budget estimates hearing

A number of questions were taken on notice by the Minister at the budget estimates hearing (see Appendix 2 - Questions on Notice, and the transcript in Volume Two) relating to:

- Federal Government grants;
- attendances across individual agencies/institutions during the last three years; and
- performance against established targets for the Melbourne Recital Centre.

A written response by the Minister to the Committee on this question is due by 22 June 2009 and will be considered for publication in a further report.