

**PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA**

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES  
(HANSARD)**

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL**

**FIFTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT**

**FIRST SESSION**

**WRITTEN ADJOURNMENT RESPONSES**

**17, 18 and 19 April 2012**

**(Extract from book 7)**

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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, 17 April 2012**

**South-west cancer centre: implementation study**

**Raised with:** Minister for Health

**Raised by:** Ms Tierney

**Raised on:** 31 August 2011

**REPLY:**

I thank the honourable member for Western Victoria for the matter raised during her adjournment debate on 31 August 2011 regarding the cancer services review in south-west Victoria.

I note that Daniel Andrews and Labor had 11 years to act on cancer services in the south-west but failed to do so.

The cancer services review has been oversighted by a project advisory group, which includes several community representatives. The advisory group has had the opportunity to review and provide comment on the draft report. It is a very comprehensive document and significant work and consultation has been undertaken.

The Review of Cancer Services in South-West Victoria — Service Plan will be released for community comment.

**WorkSafe Victoria: workplace bullying procedures**

**Raised with:** Assistant Treasurer

**Raised by:** Ms Pennicuik

**Raised on:** 24 November 2011

**REPLY:**

I am informed as follows:

Bullying behaviours wherever they occur are a complex issue that the community is dealing with.

Victoria has been the leader in helping employers and workers understand their obligations when it comes to behaviours at work. Victoria is the only state in Australia that maintains a dedicated inspectorate, through the Victorian WorkCover Authority (VWA), for responding to bullying-related concerns and complaints by people at work.

And Victoria has been a national leader in holding to account those who have breached health and safety laws. The successful prosecution in the Café Vamp case is evidence of this, as are the subsequent prosecutions of other offenders, and changes that this government made to the Crimes Act last year.

I understand that the VWA has collaborated closely with Victoria Police to establish protocols for dealing with allegations where the seriousness warrants further investigation.

The authority's operational experience highlights the challenge that regulators, employers and workers face in identifying when people have failed in their obligations under the Occupational Health and Safety Act.

In recent years the vast majority of bullying-related inquiries and complaints to the VWA, and resulting inspections or investigations, have not demonstrated how an employer or co-worker has failed in their duties and put the health and safety of a complainant at risk — often despite genuine feelings of hurt or frustration by the complainant.

In a large number of cases, the issues causing concern to workers are not relevant in an occupational health and safety context because they have not created a health and safety risk. These issues are more appropriately dealt with by other agencies like Fair Work Australia or the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, who are the appropriate authorities for dealing with industrial, discrimination or harassment matters.

I understand that the VWA is currently working to update its public information to provide employers and workers with more clarity so they are better placed to limit bullying behaviours from occurring in the first instance, and dealing effectively with them if they do occur. It will also provide greater understanding about where best a person can get the support they need.

The VWA is committed to remaining at the forefront of providing people at work with practical and sound advice about bullying, and where appropriate investigating and prosecuting where there has been a demonstrable failure.

When it comes to the VWA's processes and procedures for dealing with internal complaints, the VWA has a workforce of approximately 1000 people — I am advised that these employees are regularly trained and encouraged to raise any concerns, which are then addressed through appropriate processes. Like any responsible employer, where appropriate it agrees and then engages external and independent consultants to investigate matters.

As an employer, the VWA is committed to continuously reviewing and updating its human resources policies and procedures, including those relating to handling employee complaints and disputes to ensure that they continue to provide fair and reasonable processes and outcomes for the parties involved.

A recent review of VWA's human resources policies and procedures identified that the VWA's policies and procedures contain relevant best practice principles, however some recommendations for improvement were outlined and are being addressed.

Ms Pennicuik may wish to forward me any particular issues that have been raised with her, to allow them to be investigated further.

### **Orbost Regional Health: award**

**Raised with: Minister for Health**

**Raised by: Mr O'Donohue**

**Raised on: 8 December 2011**

#### **REPLY:**

Thank you, Mr O'Donohue, for the endorsement of the work of Orbost Regional Health, and your congratulations to the health service on its significant achievement in winning Rural Health Service of the Year for 2011.

The health service does deliver integrated and innovative services over a large geographic area as you suggest. The health service's achievements as recognised through this award are many. Orbost Regional Health's ability to deliver well-targeted, needs-based services to its local population across the full continuum of home-based, community-based, and bed-based services is at the core of this. Being able to provide this suite of services in such an integrated, client-focused and efficient manner is a great credit to the board, executive and staff of the service. I too congratulate them on the significant achievements leading to this award.

I would be very pleased to take up your offer of visiting Orbost Regional Health to witness their innovative work firsthand and will ask my staff to make the necessary arrangements when my schedule allows.

**Abortion: counselling services**

**Raised with:** Minister for Mental Health

**Raised by:** Mr Finn

**Raised on:** 9 February 2012

**REPLY:**

According to the document *Law of Abortion — Final Report* (2008), approximately one-third of all abortions in Victoria are performed in the public health system. A return visit is offered to these women as a matter of course to discuss issues such as physical and emotional recovery and contraceptive options.

A number of public health services that provide abortions make counselling available to affected women, which may involve several sessions with a clinical psychologist. The major public provider of abortions in Victoria is the Royal Women's Hospital. Its Pregnancy Advisory Service (PAS) provides a range of services to women experiencing unplanned or unwanted pregnancy. The PAS intake service, which is the initial contact point, coordinates each woman's care. Pre and post-abortion counselling is offered to all women using the service.

The particular needs of women having abortions following diagnosis of foetal abnormality requires specialist support, including access to skilled counselling services and time to consider their decision. The Women's, Monash, and Mercy Hospital for Women all have foetal management units where specialist counselling and support is available. The Women's and Monash include the option of abortion, which is provided within those hospitals.

The Victorian government provides funding to community health services (CHSs) to provide counselling services. CHSs employ qualified counsellors to provide supportive counselling, casework and specific therapeutic interventions. Women who require counselling services in relation to the experience of abortion may access CHS counselling services.

Women who have had an abortion as a result of a pregnancy that resulted from a sexual assault may also access counselling services through Centres Against Sexual Assault.

**Respite care: Western Metropolitan Region**

**Raised with:** Minister for Community Services

**Raised by:** Mr Elsbury

**Raised on:** 28 February 2012

**REPLY:**

Families with children who have a severe disability face many challenges in day-to-day life. The Victorian government acknowledges the important role that carers play in supporting these families and recognises that respite and carer support is vital to sustain the care relationship.

There continues to be a high demand for these supports despite the government's \$101 million investment in respite services in 2011–12.

Our government is working to expand and improve the range of respite services available for people with a disability, their families and carers. In the 2011–12 Victorian state budget the government allocated \$21 million over four years for innovative respite support and for school holiday respite support. We have made a clear commitment to reform the respite and carer support service system to deliver efficient, simple and timely services. We also recognise that to achieve this vision, Victoria will need to work collaboratively with local and commonwealth governments.

Recently we announced the successful providers to deliver innovative school holiday respite support and these services will be commencing for the Easter school holiday period. Specifically, we will be expanding services across the western metropolitan region by funding Interchange Western Region Association, People Outdoors, MacKillop Family Services and Yooralla.

The announcement of successful respite service providers forms part of a larger investment by the government in respite and carer support which includes the endorsement of three facility-based respite proposals for funding under the commonwealth's Supported Accommodation Initiative Fund and the development of an additional three facility-based respite services in the north and west metropolitan, southern metropolitan and Gippsland regions.

### **Housing: Horsham North community house**

**Raised with:** Minister for Housing

**Raised by:** Ms Pulford

**Raised on:** 28 February 2012

**REPLY:**

I am advised that representatives from the Department of Human Services, Grampians region and Horsham Rural City Council will meet with resident representatives from Horsham North to discuss their needs and explore accommodation opportunities within the Horsham area.

### **Gas: Terang supply**

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

**Raised by:** Ms Tierney

**Raised on:** 28 February 2012

**REPLY:**

Ms Tierney has referred the matter in the adjournment debate of 28 February 2012 to me for a response, as this is a matter that falls within my portfolio responsibility.

On 22 February 2012 I wrote to Mr Jim O'Brien outlining the process for implementation of the Energy for the Regions Program (program). In my letter, I informed him that Terang is one of the 12 towns prioritised under the program and that the government remains committed to supplying the town with natural gas.

The program's ability to deliver natural gas to Terang via an extension to the existing gas distribution network is dependent upon the participation of one of the private gas distributors. Accordingly, the advice issued to Mr O'Brien in February 2012 still applies.

In delivering the program, Regional Development Victoria (RDV) has commenced implementation arrangements for a staged approach. The first stage involves direct discussions with gas distribution businesses regarding the capture of early opportunities through a negotiated process. The bid process for this first stage closed on 31 August 2011. RDV is well advanced in reviewing bids received under the direct negotiation process with respect to their technical and commercial merit. This process is expected to be finalised over the coming months.

Subsequent stages of the program will be informed by, and commence following, completion of the direct negotiation process.

**Gentle Annie Bridge, Whitfield: flood damage**

**Raised with:** Minister for Roads

**Raised by:** Mr Lenders

**Raised on:** 29 February 2012

**REPLY:**

I am informed that repairs to the flood-damaged Gentle Annie Bridge were completed on 31 March 2011.

**Rail: Highett station**

**Raised with:** Minister for Public Transport

**Raised by:** Mr Tarlamis

**Raised on:** 29 February 2012

**REPLY:**

The coalition government is committed to a new railway station at Southland shopping centre. The new station will enhance public transport options to the shopping centre, as well as improving access to the rail network for the local community.

The 2011–12 state budget provided funding to commence planning for the new Southland station. This phase of the project will identify the exact location of the station and provide an indicative station layout, including access requirements, potential bus interchange arrangements and connections with the surrounding communities.

The coalition government has taken responsible action in surveying members of the community most likely to be directly affected by the new station. This included interviewing people at adjacent railway stations (Highett and Cheltenham), Southland shopping centre and local shopping strips.

The results of the survey are critical to forecasting likely demand for the new station. The survey results will also be used as input for the design of the new station at Southland and to understand the likely benefits of relieving pressure on surrounding facilities, such as free commuter car parks at adjacent stations.

There are no plans to close either Highett or Cheltenham railway stations. Southland railway station will be a new, additional station to the current facilities on the Frankston line.

**Floods: northern Victoria**

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

**Raised by:** Ms Darveniza

**Raised on:** 13 March 2012

**REPLY:**

Northern Victoria has once again experienced severe rainfalls, which commenced on 26 February 2012, with some of the worst flooding in about 50 years, which has badly affected parts of the state's north and north-east, cutting off several small rural towns requiring evacuations and causing property damage.

Twenty-three locations in the north-east have recorded their highest total rainfall readings since records began. Hydrologists' assessments indicate that the flood levels will be higher than the 1993 levels with some areas experiencing a 1-in-100-year event.

Since the start of this flood event, the Victoria State Emergency Service (VICSES) has received over 3434 requests for assistance. VICSES continues to be supported by the Country Fire Authority, Department of Sustainability and Environment, Parks Victoria, Metropolitan Fire and Emergency Board, Ambulance Victoria, Victoria Police, Department of Human Services, Department of Primary Industries, Bureau of Meteorology, the Australian Defence Force and a number of other government agencies.

I have made a number of visits to flood-affected areas and have seen at first hand the damage and destruction caused by the current floods. I commend the Victorian communities for their resilience during these trying times and all the volunteers, government agencies and local councils for their assistance and support to affected communities.

There is a range of emergency support services available to assist families, businesses and farmers affected by the current flooding across and northern and central Victoria. Anyone in flood-affected areas needing support can contact the Victorian Government Flood and Storm Information Line on 1300 842 737.

The Department of Human Services administers the Victorian government's personal hardship assistance program, which provides financial assistance to alleviate the personal hardship and distress suffered by eligible Victorians as a result of an emergency. This program includes emergency relief assistance which covers a range of needs incurred in the immediate aftermath of an emergency such as food, clothing, medications, accommodation and one-off transport costs. For recovery matters, the relevant website can be accessed at [www.floodrecovery.vic.gov.au](http://www.floodrecovery.vic.gov.au).

As at 30 March 2012, 1589 personal hardship payments have been paid totalling \$1 605 747. These include relief assistance of up to \$1200 per household for emergency needs and up to \$30 000 re-establishment assistance per household for clean-up, repairs and rebuilding. Where approved, the Victorian government is also providing low interest loans to small businesses, primary producers and not-for-profit organisations. In addition, the Victorian and commonwealth governments will provide clean-up and recovery grants of up to \$25 000 to small businesses, primary producers and not-for-profit organisations in approved local government areas.

The Department of Primary Industries is encouraging farmers in flood-affected areas who need assistance to contact DPI on 136 186. DPI has established rural recovery processes using experienced rural recovery staff working throughout Victoria who will assess the loss of rural assets including stock, crops, pasture, fodder, supplies, fences and farm buildings. Rural land-holders in affected regions will be contacted to assess the impact of the flood, identify any animal welfare issues and identify the immediate and ongoing needs of farm businesses and communities. Assistance will be provided to those affected to re-establish their businesses and communities as quickly as possible through advice on sourcing assistance such as stress management and financial counselling.

Using the emergency provisions under the Environment Protection Act (1970), the Department of Sustainability and Environment has approved a temporary exemption to flood-affected communities from paying landfill levies for waste generated as a result of the floods.

This government continues to assess the impact of this flood event and is committed to helping families, primary producers and businesses recover as quickly as possible.

I thank you for raising this matter with me.

**Costerfield mine: ministerial visit**

**Raised with:** Minister for Agriculture and Food Security

**Raised by:** Mr Lenders

**Raised on:** 13 March 2012

**REPLY:**

I refer to the matter you raised during the adjournment debate in the Legislative Council on 13 March 2012 regarding the Mandalay Resources mine at Costerfield.

The Mineral Resources (Sustainable Development) Act 1990 (MRSDA) provides for an economic assessment and evaluation process where agricultural land might be impacted by mining activity and allows for land to be excised from a mining licence on application from the landowner if the minister decides that the economic benefit to Victoria from such land remaining in agricultural production is greater than that which would arise from the proposed mining activity.

The potential impacts of the dewatering on existing groundwater aquifers has been the subject of several studies by the consulting firm URS Australia on behalf of the operator. None of these studies have provided any evidence that the dewatering is having a regional impact on local groundwater.

Both myself and the Minister for Energy and Resources, Mr Michael O'Brien, are aware of community concerns regarding the Mandalay Resources operation, including potential impacts on local groundwater as a result of dewatering activities. I understand that Minister O'Brien has asked Mr John Mitas, acting director, earth resources regulation, of the Department of Primary Industries to visit the site and speak with both Mandalay and community members regarding these matters.

Thank you for raising these matters with me.

**Department of Human Services: restructure**

**Raised with:** Minister for Community Services

**Raised by:** Ms Mikakos

**Raised on:** 13 March 2012

**REPLY:**

Thank you for your interest in ongoing support for people with a disability within the north and west metropolitan region.

The reduction of 500 positions in the Department of Human Services workforce to which your question refers is part of the sustainable government initiative, announced in December 2011.

I can assure you that no front-line roles will be lost as part of this initiative.

The department's front-line workforce, including disability support workers, child protection workers, housing services officers, youth justice workers and allied health positions, have been specifically excluded from any staffing reductions under this initiative.

The restructure of the department is being undertaken on the basis of the recommendations of a comprehensive review conducted between June 2011 and January 2012, guided by two leading experts. The review identified a number of ways the department can improve the quality of services to make a real difference for vulnerable and disadvantaged Victorians.

**Bushfires: emergency management**

**Raised with:** Minister for Bushfire Response

**Raised by:** Ms Pulford

**Raised on:** 13 March 2012

**REPLY:**

As part of its response to the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission recommendations, the Victorian government established the \$11.3 million Municipal Fire and Emergency Management Resourcing Program (MFEMRP).

This initiative, undertaken in conjunction with the Municipal Association of Victoria, was established, as you highlight, to ensure that Victorian councils are better placed to prepare for and respond to future emergency and natural disaster events that include, but are not limited to, bushfires.

The first round of the MFEMRP provided funding for 25 positions, working across 34 municipalities across the state, including some of those in Western Victoria. These were funded as fixed-term positions within councils to the end of June 2012, and were subject to review.

In December 2011, a review of these funding arrangements was undertaken by Local Government Victoria in consultation with the Municipal Association of Victoria and the fire services commissioner.

This review took into account feedback from municipalities that did not receive any funding in this first round. The subsequent restructure will allow for every council in rural and regional Victoria, and outer metropolitan Melbourne, to benefit from the program, and assist them in providing an appropriate level of emergency management services to help protect their communities from future disaster events.

Furthermore, the expanded program will provide guaranteed funding for the next two years, providing greater certainty to the councils involved, and allowing them to do more long-term planning.

I acknowledge that the proposed restructure of the program requires councils to share resources across municipal boundaries, and that a small number of municipalities have expressed concerns about this.

The Department of Justice, in conjunction with the Municipal Association of Victoria and fire services commissioner, are further considering what options may be available to address these concerns.

However, this should not be interpreted as a commitment that changes to the restructure will be possible, other than to allow councils that were set to share a resource to split their allocated funding on a basis agreed to by them.

**Employment: Geelong**

**Raised with:** Minister for Ports

**Raised by:** Ms Tierney

**Raised on:** 13 March 2012

**REPLY:**

The feasibility study into relocating the motor vehicle importing and exporting to the port of Geelong is currently being finalised by the Department of Transport.

The feasibility study has involved a robust consultation process with all sections of the automotive supply chain including car manufacturers, transport providers, shipping lines, peak bodies, local government and community



groups. There are a range of concerns that manufacturers have raised with the government in submissions and meetings. The department has taken these concerns into account in conducting the feasibility study.

The study will determine the technical, environmental, social and economic feasibility of relocating the motor vehicle trade to the port of Geelong. Once the feasibility study has been finalised, the future location for the motor vehicle trade will be considered within the context of the government's broader port policies.

### **Leadbeater's possum: habitat**

**Raised with:** Minister for Agriculture and Food Security

**Raised by:** Mr Barber

**Raised on:** 14 March 2012

#### **REPLY:**

Thank you for your adjournment debate question. The request for a review of the habitat of Leadbeater's possum does not fall within my portfolio responsibilities. I recommend you direct any future questions on the matter to the Minister for Environment and Climate Change. The Department of Primary Industries is not aware of an intention to update the regional forest agreement at this stage.

### **Stamp duty: young farmers**

**Raised with:** Minister for Agriculture and Food Security

**Raised by:** Ms Darveniza

**Raised on:** 15 March 2012

#### **REPLY:**

I refer to the matter you raised for my attention during the adjournment debate on 15 March 2012 in the Legislative Council regarding Stamp duty: young farmers.

This program is a key election commitment of the coalition to support young farmers to enter and get a head start in their industry, and help to ensure the long-term profitability, productivity and efficiency of Victoria's food and fibre producers. There are broader benefits of this initiative to rural communities, many of which are dependent on the viability of the agriculture sector. This program, through supporting the profitability of this important sector, will help drive new investment and job creation in these communities.

The Baillieu-Ryan government has delivered on its election commitment. Prior to the 2010 election the coalition government promised \$6 million over four years to this program. In the last budget we doubled this commitment to \$12 million over four years. That equates to \$3 million per year and was a significant win for young farmers in a tight budgetary environment.

For the financial year to February 2012, 55 contracts involving young farmers attracted stamp duty savings of \$521 000, of which 51 applicants received the full stamp duty exemption.

I further note your concern that young farmers who had been part of a family trust that had owned farmland to be ineligible for this scheme. These young farmers are deemed by the State Revenue Office to have legally owned farmland and, as this program is for young farmers who purchase their first farmland, they do not qualify for such support. This is the same way family trusts are treated in relation to the first home buyers scheme.

Thank you for raising these matters with me. The coalition government is proud of its policies to support and encourage young rural Victorians to invest in a future in food and fibre production.

**Minister for Housing: comments**

**Raised with:** Minister for Housing

**Raised by:** Ms Mikakos

**Raised on:** 15 March 2012

**REPLY:**

The member should not confuse comments about the failings of the former Labor government with comments about departmental staff.

During my time as the shadow Minister for Housing I experienced firsthand the way people in crisis were treated by the former government, who presided over record housing waiting lists, a massive deterioration in housing's financial position and negligent mismanagement of the housing portfolio.

The Auditor-General has highlighted these issues in his recent report on access to public housing.

Put simply, the Auditor-General's report into access to public housing is a scathing report card on Labor's inability to properly manage public assets that are meant to support those in need.

**Special schools: Officer**

**Raised with:** Minister for Education

**Raised by:** Mr O'Donohue

**Raised on:** 15 March 2012

**REPLY:**

I am advised as follows:

The Officer precinct structure plan has been formally endorsed by the Minister for Planning.

A site for the Officer Special School is currently being acquired, and schematic design planning commenced on 17 February 2012. Design development and tender documentation will follow. Once tender is awarded, construction will commence.

Construction is expected to take 14 months from the award of tender. Work has already started on access roads and services to the site by the developer.

**Mental health: women's facilities**

**Raised with:** Minister for Mental Health

**Raised by:** Mr Ramsay

**Raised on:** 15 March 2012

**REPLY:**

Women can feel vulnerable in mixed-gender inpatient mental health services, where there can be more males than females, an inability to lock rooms or protect belongings, and limited privacy.

Ensuring that services are sensitive to women's needs and their safety is important for the government. Women have the right to receive mental health treatment and care, free from fear of victimisation, violence, sexual assault and retraumatisation.

This year, 11 inpatient mental health services will share in \$1 million to improve safety and comfort of female consumers. Projects include: creating women-only bedroom corridor wings; installation of nurse call buzzers in bedrooms and bathrooms; developing female-only lounge rooms, quiet rooms, bathrooms and toilet areas.

The Baillieu government has committed to making the safety, comfort and security of women in mental health a priority. To ensure that women have safer facilities, \$4 million has been made available for modification works to improve safety for women in psychiatric facilities.

I am pleased to inform you that under this initiative South West Healthcare will receive over \$33 000 in the first round of funding to support the hospital's good work in caring for women in mental health care. The service has a dedicated women-only corridor, but it is not possible for patients to lock bedroom doors. This funding will improve the comfort and safety of consumers by being used to replace handles and locks to allow patients to lock their own bedroom doors.

### **Wallan Secondary College: funding**

**Raised with: Minister for Education**

**Raised by: Ms Broad**

**Raised on: 28 March 2012**

#### **REPLY:**

I am informed as follows:

The Victorian coalition government is committed to upgrading government primary and secondary schools across the state. Priority projects included in the capital works program for the first term of government are identified in the *Victorian Liberal Nationals Coalition Plan for Education*, released in November 2010. Further schools were identified for capital funding in the Victorian state budget 2011–12, released on 3 May 2011.

The Victorian government is currently engaged in state budget planning to determine how best to allocate public resources in the 2012–13 financial year. The outcome of this process will be announced in the 2012–13 Victorian budget released in May.

A master-plan completed in 2005 for Wallan Secondary College identified a capital works program allowing for the delivery of school facilities in stages to meet enrolment demand. Facilities for 750 students have already been provided in three stages. The enrolment in 2012 is 549 students.

The department will continue to work closely with Wallan Secondary College on its future plans for capital improvements.

**Barwon Valley School: recreation facilities****Raised with: Minister for Education****Raised by: Ms Tierney****Raised on: 28 March 2012****REPLY:**

I am informed as follows:

Barwon Valley School is a school for high-needs students which moved into new state-of-the-art facilities in 2006. The school was specifically designed with input from the school community so that the site provided a number of smaller outdoor areas where students can engage in outdoor play.

I am informed that the school has also provided the opportunity for students to utilise spaces both on the school site and at a local football oval, where they can engage in outside team sports.

The principal of Barwon Valley School has also been in discussion with the neighbouring secondary college and has arranged for supervised use of the adjoining oval.

In regard to Nelson Park School, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development representatives continue to work closely with the school's principal to ensure adequate arrangements are in place when they vacate the temporary accommodation at the previous Flinders Peak Secondary College site at Hendy Street in June 2012.

**WRITTEN ADJOURNMENT RESPONSES**

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

**Wednesday, 18 April 2012**

**Skills training: i-STEP program**

**Raised with:** Minister for Manufacturing, Exports and Trade

**Raised by:** Mr Somyurek

**Raised on:** 13 October 2011

**REPLY:**

The Department of Business and Innovation continues to work closely with NORTH Link on industry support initiatives in the Northern Metropolitan Region and there continues to be close ongoing collaboration supporting the government's current business engagement model.

I look forward to working with NORTH Link in support of the business community in the Northern Metropolitan Region of Melbourne.

**Manufacturing: government initiatives**

**Raised with:** Minister for Manufacturing, Exports and Trade

**Raised by:** Mrs Coote

**Raised on:** 9 February 2012

**REPLY:**

I would like to thank Andrea Coote MLC, member for Southern Metropolitan Region and Parliamentary Secretary for Families and Community Services for her continued support of the manufacturing industry in Victoria.

A strong manufacturing sector is critical to the Victorian economy. Manufacturing employs 310 900 people and this important industry contributes \$28 billion to Victoria's economy, equivalent to 9.2 per cent of gross state product.

The Southern Metropolitan Region is home to a diverse group of manufacturing businesses including Boeing Aerostructures Australia, Futuris Automotive Group and Cablex. As Minister for Manufacturing, Exports and Trade, I have visited many manufacturing businesses in the region.

On 19 December 2011, I was pleased to announce the release of our manufacturing strategy (the strategy), *A More Competitive Manufacturing Industry*, a strategy to lift the productivity and competitiveness of Victoria's manufacturing sector. The strategy will help our manufacturers to succeed in an increasingly competitive and rapidly changing economic environment.

The strategy establishes a new policy approach based on sound economic fundamentals and has been developed following extensive discussions with industry and a detailed review of manufacturing policy by the Victorian Competition and Efficiency Commission (VCEC). The strategy sets out the five key priorities to be delivered, which are:

- A specialist manufacturing service — helping manufacturers overcome market failures and barriers, and raising productivity and competitiveness;
- Productivity and innovation networks — providing flexible support networks seeking to expand their activities;
- Investing in technology — supporting businesses to invest in new and transformative technologies that will improve business performance;
- Support for small manufacturers — providing more targeted assistance to small manufacturers through specialist workshops, improved access to information and encouraging innovation; and
- Niche and specialist skills — supporting manufacturers with a systemic and structured approach to identifying and addressing priority specialist skill needs for key trades.

To maximise the benefits from this new policy approach, the Victorian government has moved to a more direct, localised approach to its ongoing engagement with Victorian businesses. Through an expanded network of Victorian government business offices (VGBOs), the Department of Business and Innovation's business development managers can provide tailored support to find the solutions most appropriate to the needs of individual businesses.

The recently established VGBOs in Melbourne CBD and Dandenong provide assistance to all businesses within the Southern Metropolitan Region, to identify and help overcome issues that may be impeding productivity growth, innovation and competitiveness.

I again thank the member for raising this matter with me.

### **Higher education: TAFE funding**

**Raised with: Minister for Manufacturing, Exports and Trade**

**Raised by: Mr Eideh**

**Raised on: 9 February 2012**

#### **REPLY:**

The Victorian coalition government is committed to generating job opportunities through the strengthening of industry in this state. We are working with Victorian businesses to improve productivity, grow export markets, and increase business investment. We have developed a coherent strategy to strengthen our manufacturing sector, and we are actively working to build opportunities for industry in growing markets such as India and China.

As announced last December in *A More Competitive Manufacturing Industry*, the government's new business engagement model will be a critical element in supporting growth of Victorian businesses. With a doubling of business development managers and expansion of the network of Victorian government business offices, we are working at the enterprise level with Victorian business to help resolve productivity constraints, facilitate investment, support job generation and increase access to new markets.

I note your silence regarding decisions made by federal Labor that have impacted upon industry in Victoria, in particular the introduction of a carbon tax. I also note your failure to actively support Thales and BAE Systems, two significant local defence manufacturers overlooked by your Labor colleagues in favour of overseas suppliers.

The Baillieu government is committed to growing the Victorian economy and generating new job opportunities for Victorians. In the current global economic environment, government efforts to support business and productivity growth are vital. This financial year to date, the government has helped facilitate business investment projects valued at over \$330 million which will generate over 2000 new jobs in Victoria. Furthermore, the Victorian training guarantee is providing expanded opportunities for Victorians to gain the skills that will improve their employment prospects now and into the future.

Thank you for raising this matter with me.

## WRITTEN ADJOURNMENT RESPONSES

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

**Thursday, 19 April 2012**

**Mental health: women's facilities**

**Raised with:** Minister for Mental Health

**Raised by:** Mr Ondarchie

**Raised on:** 14 March 2012

**REPLY:**

Women can feel vulnerable in mixed-gender inpatient mental health services, where there can be more males than females, an inability to lock rooms or protect belongings, and limited privacy.

Ensuring that services are sensitive to women's needs and their safety is important for the government. Women have the right to receive mental health treatment and care, free from fear of victimisation, violence, sexual assault and retraumatisation.

The Baillieu government has committed to making the safety, comfort and security of women in mental health a priority. To ensure that women have safer facilities, \$4 million has been made available for modification works to improve safety for women in psychiatric facilities.

This year, 11 inpatient mental health services will share in \$1 million to improve the safety and comfort of female consumers. Projects include: creating women-only bedroom corridor wings; installation of nurse call buzzers in bedrooms and bathroom; developing female-only lounge rooms, quiet rooms, bathrooms and toilet areas.

I am pleased to inform you that under this initiative:

- Austin Health will receive \$16 000 to create a female bedroom wing with swipe card access and see the installation of motion sensor lights in all bedroom areas, affording women improved safety both day and night;
- Forensicare's Thomas Embling hospital will receive \$234 600 for the creation of a women-only quiet space within the hospital's acute unit;
- Royal Melbourne Hospital will be provided \$88 772 to establish a women-only bedroom corridor, a women-only lounge and designated toilets for both women and men;
- St Vincent's Hospital will receive \$387 900 to develop two women's designated areas (on separate floors), each including 4–6 bedrooms, a sitting room and a bathroom.