

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

FIFTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT

FIRST SESSION

WRITTEN ADJOURNMENT RESPONSES

28 and 29 February 2012

(Extract from book 4)

Internet: www.parliament.vic.gov.au/downloadhansard

By authority of the Victorian Government Printer

The Governor

The Honourable ALEX CHERNOV, AC, QC

The Lieutenant-Governor

The Honourable Justice MARILYN WARREN, AC

The ministry

Premier and Minister for the Arts	The Hon. E. N. Baillieu, MP
Deputy Premier, Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister for Bushfire Response, and Minister for Regional and Rural Development.	The Hon. P. J. Ryan, MP
Treasurer	The Hon. K. A. Wells, MP
Minister for Innovation, Services and Small Business, and Minister for Tourism and Major Events	The Hon. Louise Asher, MP
Attorney-General and Minister for Finance	The Hon. R. W. Clark, MP
Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations, and Minister for Manufacturing, Exports and Trade	The Hon. R. A. G. Dalla-Riva, MLC
Minister for Health and Minister for Ageing	The Hon. D. M. Davis, MLC
Minister for Sport and Recreation, and Minister for Veterans' Affairs	The Hon. H. F. Delahunty, MP
Minister for Education	The Hon. M. F. Dixon, MP
Minister for Planning	The Hon. M. J. Guy, MLC
Minister for Higher Education and Skills, and Minister responsible for the Teaching Profession	The Hon. P. R. Hall, MLC
Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship	The Hon. N. Kotsiras, MP
Minister for Housing, and Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development.	The Hon. W. A. Lovell, MLC
Minister for Corrections, Minister for Crime Prevention and Minister responsible for the establishment of an anti-corruption commission	The Hon. A. J. McIntosh, MP
Minister for Public Transport and Minister for Roads	The Hon. T. W. Mulder, MP
Minister for Ports, Minister for Major Projects, Minister for Regional Cities and Minister for Racing	The Hon. D. V. Napthine, MP
Minister for Gaming, Minister for Consumer Affairs, and Minister for Energy and Resources	The Hon. M. A. O'Brien, MP
Minister for Local Government and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs.	The Hon. E. J. Powell, MP
Assistant Treasurer, Minister for Technology and Minister responsible for the Aviation Industry	The Hon. G. K. Rich-Phillips, MLC
Minister for Environment and Climate Change, and Minister for Youth Affairs	The Hon. R. Smith, MP
Minister for Agriculture and Food Security, and Minister for Water.	The Hon. P. L. Walsh, MP
Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Women's Affairs and Minister for Community Services	The Hon. M. L. N. Wooldridge, MP
Cabinet Secretary	Mr D. J. Hodgett, MP

Legislative Council committees

Privileges Committee — Ms Darveniza, Mr D. M. Davis, Mr P. R. Davis, Mr Hall, Ms Lovell, Ms Pennicuik and Mr Scheffer.

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

Legislative Council standing committees

Economy and Infrastructure Legislation Committee — Mr Barber, Ms Broad, Mrs Coote, #Ms Crozier, Mr Drum, Mr Finn, #Ms Hartland, #Mr Leane, #Mr Ondarchie, Ms Pulford, Mr Ramsay and Mr Somyurek.

Economy and Infrastructure References Committee — Mr Barber, Ms Broad, Mrs Coote, #Ms Crozier, Mr Drum, Mr Finn, Mr Leane, #Mr Ondarchie, Ms Pulford, Mr Ramsay and Mr Somyurek.

Environment and Planning Legislation Committee — Mr Elsbury, #Mr Finn, #Ms Hartland, Mrs Kronberg, Mr Ondarchie, Ms Pennicuik, #Mrs Petrovich, Mrs Peulich, Mr Scheffer, #Mr Tarlamis, Mr Tee and Ms Tierney.

Environment and Planning References Committee — Mr Elsbury, #Mr Finn, #Ms Hartland, Mrs Kronberg, Mr Ondarchie, Ms Pennicuik, #Mrs Petrovich, Mrs Peulich, Mr Scheffer, Mr Tee and Ms Tierney.

Legal and Social Issues Legislation Committee — Ms Crozier, Mr Elasmr, #Mr Elsbury, Ms Hartland, Ms Mikakos, Mr O'Brien, Mr O'Donohue, Mrs Petrovich, #Mr Ramsay and Mr Viney.

Legal and Social Issues References Committee — Ms Crozier, Mr Elasmr, #Mr Elsbury, Ms Hartland, Ms Mikakos, Mr O'Brien, Mr O'Donohue, Mrs Petrovich, #Mr Ramsay and Mr Viney.

Participating member

Joint committees

Dispute Resolution Committee — (*Council*): Mr D. Davis, Mr Hall, Mr Lenders, Ms Lovell and Ms Pennicuik. (*Assembly*): Ms Allan, Mr Clark, Ms Hennessy, Mr Holding, Mr McIntosh, Dr Napthine and Mr Walsh.

Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee — (*Council*): Mr Leane, Mr Ramsay and Mr Scheffer. (*Assembly*): Mr Battin and Mr McCurdy.

Economic Development and Infrastructure Committee — (*Council*): Mrs Peulich. (*Assembly*): Mr Burgess, Mr Foley, Mr Noonan and Mr Shaw.

Education and Training Committee — (*Council*): Mr Elasmr and Ms Tierney. (*Assembly*): Mr Crisp, Ms Miller and Mr Southwick.

Electoral Matters Committee — (*Council*): Mr Finn, Mr Somyurek and Mr Tarlamis. (*Assembly*): Ms Ryall and Mrs Victoria.

Environment and Natural Resources Committee — (*Council*): Mr Koch. (*Assembly*): Mr Bull, Ms Duncan, Mr Pandazopoulos and Ms Wreford.

Family and Community Development Committee — (*Council*): Mrs Coote and Ms Crozier. (*Assembly*): Mrs Bauer, Ms Halfpenny, Mr McGuire and Mr Wakeling.

House Committee — (*Council*): The President (*ex officio*) Mr Drum, Mr Eideh, Mr Finn, Ms Hartland, and Mr P. Davis. (*Assembly*): The Speaker (*ex officio*), Ms Beattie, Ms Campbell, Mrs Fyffe, Ms Graley, Mr Wakeling and Mr Weller.

Law Reform Committee — (*Council*): Mrs Petrovich. (*Assembly*): Mr Carbines, Ms Garrett, Mr Newton-Brown and Mr Northe.

Outer Suburban/Interface Services and Development Committee — (*Council*): Mrs Kronberg and Mr Ondarchie. (*Assembly*): Ms Graley, Ms Hutchins and Ms McLeish.

Public Accounts and Estimates Committee — (*Council*): Mr P. Davis, Mr O'Brien and Mr Pakula. (*Assembly*): Mr Angus, Ms Hennessey, Mr Morris and Mr Scott.

Road Safety Committee — (*Council*): Mr Elsbury. (*Assembly*): Mr Languiller, Mr Perera, Mr Tilley and Mr Thompson.

Rural and Regional Committee — (*Council*): Mr Drum. (*Assembly*): Mr Howard, Mr Katos, Mr Trezise and Mr Weller.

Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee — (*Council*): Mr O'Brien and Mr O'Donohue. (*Assembly*): Mr Brooks, Ms Campbell, Mr Gidley, Mr Nardella and Mr Watt.

Heads of parliamentary departments

Assembly — Clerk of the Parliaments and Clerk of the Legislative Assembly: Mr R. W. Purdey

Council — Clerk of the Legislative Council: Mr W. R. Tunnecliffe

Parliamentary Services — Secretary: Mr P. Lochert

MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
FIFTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT — FIRST SESSION

President: The Hon. B. N. ATKINSON

Deputy President: Mr M. VINEY

Acting Presidents: Ms Crozier, Mr Eideh, Mr Elasmr, Mr Finn, Mr O'Brien, Ms Pennicuik, Mr Ramsay, Mr Tarlamis

Leader of the Government:

The Hon. D. M. DAVIS

Deputy Leader of the Government:

The Hon. W. A. LOVELL

Leader of the Opposition:

Mr J. LENDERS

Deputy Leader of the Opposition:

Mr G. JENNINGS

Leader of The Nationals:

The Hon. P. R. HALL

Deputy Leader of The Nationals:

Mr D. DRUM

Member	Region	Party	Member	Region	Party
Atkinson, Hon. Bruce Norman	Eastern Metropolitan	LP	Leane, Mr Shaun Leo	Eastern Metropolitan	ALP
Barber, Mr Gregory John	Northern Metropolitan	Greens	Lenders, Mr John	Southern Metropolitan	ALP
Broad, Ms Candy Celeste	Northern Victoria	ALP	Lovell, Hon. Wendy Ann	Northern Victoria	LP
Coote, Mrs Andrea	Southern Metropolitan	LP	Mikakos, Ms Jenny	Northern Metropolitan	ALP
Crozier, Ms Georgina Mary	Southern Metropolitan	LP	O'Brien, Mr David Roland Joseph	Western Victoria	Nats
Dalla-Riva, Hon. Richard Alex Gordon	Eastern Metropolitan	LP	O'Donohue, Mr Edward John	Eastern Victoria	LP
Darveniza, Ms Kaye Mary	Northern Victoria	ALP	Ondarchie, Mr Craig Philip	Northern Metropolitan	LP
Davis, Hon. David McLean	Southern Metropolitan	LP	Pakula, Hon. Martin Philip	Western Metropolitan	ALP
Davis, Mr Philip Rivers	Eastern Victoria	LP	Pennicuik, Ms Susan Margaret	Southern Metropolitan	Greens
Drum, Mr Damian Kevin	Northern Victoria	Nats	Petrovich, Mrs Donna-Lee	Northern Victoria	LP
Eideh, Mr Khalil M.	Western Metropolitan	ALP	Peulich, Mrs Inga	South Eastern Metropolitan	LP
Elasmr, Mr Nazih	Northern Metropolitan	ALP	Pulford, Ms Jaala Lee	Western Victoria	ALP
Elsbury, Mr Andrew Warren	Western Metropolitan	LP	Ramsay, Mr Simon	Western Victoria	LP
Finn, Mr Bernard Thomas C.	Western Metropolitan	LP	Rich-Phillips, Hon. Gordon Kenneth	South Eastern Metropolitan	LP
Guy, Hon. Matthew Jason	Northern Metropolitan	LP	Scheffer, Mr Johan Emiel	Eastern Victoria	ALP
Hall, Hon. Peter Ronald	Eastern Victoria	Nats	Somyurek, Mr Adem	South Eastern Metropolitan	ALP
Hartland, Ms Colleen Mildred	Western Metropolitan	Greens	Tarlamis, Mr Lee Reginald	South Eastern Metropolitan	ALP
Jennings, Mr Gavin Wayne	South Eastern Metropolitan	ALP	Tee, Mr Brian Lennox	Eastern Metropolitan	ALP
Koch, Mr David Frank	Western Victoria	LP	Tierney, Ms Gayle Anne	Western Victoria	ALP
Kronberg, Mrs Janice Susan	Eastern Metropolitan	LP	Viney, Mr Matthew Shaw	Eastern Victoria	ALP

CONTENTS

WRITTEN ADJOURNMENT RESPONSES

TUESDAY, 28 FEBRUARY 2012

<i>Parks Victoria: land management</i>	1159
<i>Firewood: collection permits</i>	1159
<i>Foodbank Victoria: funding</i>	1160
<i>Rail: Laburnum service</i>	1160
<i>Melbourne Citymission: Women 4 Work</i>	1161
<i>Desalination plant: costs</i>	1161
<i>Floods: Benjeroop</i>	1162, 1163
<i>Bacchus Marsh Racecourse and Recreation</i>	
<i>Reserve: future</i>	1163
<i>Buses: Bannockburn</i>	1164
<i>Port Phillip Bay: beach renourishment</i>	1164
<i>Gas: Wandong-Heathcote Junction supply</i>	1165
<i>Water: charges</i>	1165
<i>Libraries: Sunshine</i>	1166
<i>Wedge-tailed eagle: statistics</i>	1166
<i>Murray-Darling Basin: federal plan</i>	1167
<i>Croydon and Maroondah secondary colleges:</i>	
<i>merger</i>	1167
<i>Victorian Commission for Gambling and Liquor</i>	
<i>Regulation: independence</i>	1168
<i>Bushfires: recovery services</i>	1168

WEDNESDAY, 29 FEBRUARY 2012

<i>Planning: Werribee employment precinct</i>	1171
<i>Walhalla: vegetation management</i>	1171
<i>Western Victoria Region: town planning</i>	1172

WRITTEN ADJOURNMENT RESPONSES

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

Tuesday, 28 February 2012

Parks Victoria: land management

Raised with: Minister for Environment and Climate Change

Raised by: Mr P. Davis

Raised on: 4 May 2011

REPLY:

Mitchell River National Park attracts approximately 50 000 visits each year, including around 28 000 day visits. The park offers a range of facilities to enable visitors to enjoy its spectacular landscape and remote setting.

As the walking track traverses the Mitchell River Gorge, it is subjected to a number of environment impacts. From time to time the exposed sections along the top of the gorge are subject to high winds and storms causing limbs and trees to fall across the track. The lower sections of the track are subjected to high water events from the Mitchell River during times of high rainfall and flood, this leads to erosion, sedimentation and accumulation of flood debris.

Parks Victoria must balance a range of priorities when delivering park management services. In early 2011 the primary priority for Parks Victoria resources in the area was to assist the delivery of the government's prescribed burn targets. This resulted in delays in other works.

In June 2011 Parks Victoria undertook maintenance works on the walking track, including cutting back overgrowing vegetation, removal of fallen limbs and addressing slip and trip hazards.

Since June 2011, the area has experienced a number of high rainfall and storm events that has lead to further damage. In November 2011 the track was inspected and maintenance works identified. These works include clearing of fallen trees and branches, clearing of trackside vegetation and clearing of minor soil slips from the track surface that have occurred since the previous work was completed.

Firewood: collection permits

Raised with: Minister for Roads

Raised by: Mr Lenders

Raised on: 31 August 2011

REPLY:

The Victorian coalition government carefully considered a range of options and took into account public feedback when determining the changes to firewood collection on public land. These changes make firewood collection more affordable and straightforward for Victorians.

The new approach simplifies access to firewood for personal use by removing the requirement to obtain a permit to collect firewood from state forests (and parks where collection is allowed), and introducing consistent statewide rules about where and when collection can occur.

This approach makes firewood collection from public land more straightforward and affordable for all Victorians, while balancing community safety and the protection of the environment.

VicRoads's position is that it does not permit the public to collect (or cut) firewood from the roadsides on arterial roads. There are road safety risks associated with the public stopping on high-speed rural roads to collect firewood. There is also a potential for a significant impact on native vegetation within the road reserves.

Foodbank Victoria: funding

Raised with: Minister for Community Services

Raised by: Ms Darveniza

Raised on: 1 September 2011

REPLY:

Funding for this program was originally granted by the previous government on a non-recurrent basis over a fixed two year period. However, to ensure that the improvements made as a result of this program can be sustained into the future the government has agreed to provide ongoing funding for one full-time project officer. This funding will enable Foodbank Victoria to maintain and consolidate the progress that has been made.

Rail: Laburnum service

Raised with: Minister for Public Transport

Raised by: Mr Leane

Raised on: 12 October 2011

REPLY:

I have responded directly to Ms Lucy Krelle regarding trains at Laburnum railway station.

Train frequency is an important part of any public transport system. However, this must be balanced with the need to improve capacity and performance along each individual train line as well as across the entire train network.

The previous government's contract with Metro required the introduction of a new timetable in order to address the delays caused by a tangled web of lines where trains crossed from one track to another. There may have been costly commercial implications if the coalition government had dishonoured this contract. Therefore, as you are aware, a new timetable was introduced in May 2011.

Before the May timetable change, trains on the Belgrave and Lilydale lines merged with trains from the Glen Waverley line prior to entering the city loop. This limited the number of trains that could be scheduled on these lines, and also meant that a delay on one line interacted with all other lines, such that reliability for all passengers was affected. The new timetable changed the operating and stopping patterns for trains on both of these lines and removed the need for them to merge.

To enable this alteration, stopping patterns were changed along the Belgrave/Lilydale line, including at Laburnum, Camberwell and Glenferrie railway stations. These changes allow for a more even distribution of stopping-all-stations and express trains, and also assist in balancing passenger loads.

The new approach is intended to simplify the timetable by separating lines, thereby improving the reliability of the entire rail network.

Metro recommends that passengers travelling to Laburnum railway station from the outer-east change at Blackburn railway station. Twelve city-bound trains run to Laburnum railway station each weekday between 7.45 a.m. and

8.50 a.m., including five originating from Blackburn railway station. Blackburn is staffed from first to last train to assist passengers on request.

I have carefully considered the new operating pattern and train frequency at Laburnum railway station; however, there are no current plans to change the stopping patterns at this time.

Melbourne Citymission: Women 4 Work

Raised with: Minister for Corrections

Raised by: Ms Hartland

Raised on: 25 October 2011

REPLY:

Employment is recognised as an important component of successful transition of offenders into the community and, therefore, to reducing re-offending. I am advised that Corrections Victoria recently reviewed its model of employment support for women offenders. It determined that a more focused approach can better link training and education, employment skills, employment programs and knowledge of employers' needs, in order to promote the development of networks and pathways to assist women offenders to find and remain in employment after release.

Accordingly Corrections Victoria has developed a preferred vocational pathways approach, to enable support that is better tailored to each woman's individual circumstances. This new approach aims to develop links between women's involvement in industry and education, and pre and post-employment support.

Once implemented, it is envisaged that the revised vocational pathways model will include support services at both the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre and Tarrengower Prison, including referral and information about employment support services, ways to address common employment barriers faced by ex-offenders, and the development of associated skills.

The Women 4 Work program was established in 2006 as a partnership between Melbourne Citymission, the Department of Business and Innovation (DBI, then known as the Department of Industry, Innovation and Regional Development) and Corrections Victoria.

I am advised that funding for the Women 4 Work program was predominantly provided under the Victoriaworks employment program of the Department of Business and Innovation. In June 2011 DBI changed the focus of this program to indigenous clients.

Women exiting prison with complex needs continue to be eligible for assessment for participation in intensive transitional support programs such as the Women's Intensive Support Program for women identified with moderate to high risk needs, and Konnect, for indigenous men and women exiting prison. These transitional programs include education, training and employment components.

Desalination plant: costs

Raised with: Minister for Water

Raised by: Mr Lenders

Raised on: 27 October 2011

REPLY:

The Victorian coalition government has been completely transparent about the costs of the Victorian desalination project.

In February 2011, the government released the annual forecast costs for each water ordering scenario for each year of operation in nominal terms. This made the annual costs transparent to the community for the first time.

The cost of the project has not changed since the contract was signed in July 2009 by the previous government. The total maximum net present cost was released in November 2009 as \$5.7 billion, which is the total cost over the 30-year contract if 150 billion litres of water is ordered each year of operation. In nominal terms, this could cost the state more than \$23 billion.

The contract with AquaSure is based on making payments when water is delivered, and based on how much water is ordered. Increases in design and construction costs due to productivity, inclement weather and design issues are matters for AquaSure and their design and construct contractor.

Melbourne's water users are already paying the costs of this and other water infrastructure projects such as the north-south pipeline and the eastern treatment plant upgrade through increased water bills.

Floods: Benjeroop

Raised with: Minister for Water

Raised by: Mr Lenders

Raised on: 8 November 2011

REPLY:

I understand that the flood study being referred to is the Swan Hill regional flood study. This was released to the community in 1999 and sought to develop an integrated regional strategy across state borders. The strategy took into account a number of earlier studies developed in the 1980s and 1990s for the Lower Loddon, Avoca, Murray River, Kerang Lakes and Edward-Wakool rivers and their flood plains.

The strategy was driven by a cross-border consultation and review group and provided recommendations to implement a series of works in both Victoria and New South Wales (NSW). These recommended works included maximising temporary flood storage capacity in Victoria by providing flood spill structures, improving hydraulic capacities between levees, stabilising overflows to NSW, opening up of some downstream floodways in NSW and upgrading levees to provide a protection level of 1 in 25 years.

The guiding principles used in evaluating options included accepting the current level of protection on both sides of the river as historical fact and a starting point for the recommended strategy, and ensuring that, at the local level, no area or individual landowners should be worse off. I have also been advised that implementation of the recommended measures in NSW would have limited benefit to the residents of Benjeroop.

I have discussed the matter of effluent flows into NSW with Katrina Hodgkinson MP, the NSW Minister for Primary Industries, on several occasions, and I will continue to do so where appropriate. However, advice from the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage is that this would be met with resistance by land-holders in NSW, unless associated with additional flood storage in Victoria.

In April 2011, I announced a \$21 million assistance package for flood-affected irrigators to help the region recover and ensure it is in a stronger position to reduce the impacts of future flooding. This will provide an opportunity for farmers to consider changing farm operations to something more tolerant to flooding, to sell their property and move to a less flood-prone area, and if they choose to stay, having a ring levee constructed around their dwellings. I believe this to be a more effective solution than implementing works that will eventually overtop and require costly ongoing maintenance.

Bacchus Marsh Racecourse and Recreation Reserve: future

Raised with: Minister for Environment and Climate Change

Raised by: Ms Pulford

Raised on: 8 November 2011

REPLY:

The Bacchus Marsh Racecourse and Recreation Reserve has been permanently reserved for racecourse, public park and general recreation since May 1887. Under this reservation the land cannot be sold or reduced in area without an act of Parliament.

The reserve has been administered under various forms of management regimes from trustees to the current committee comprising community volunteers and representatives from the user groups.

To help clarify the rights and responsibilities of management and the user groups the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) has been endeavouring to establish a range of tenures for all user groups of the reserve since 2006.

The Moorabool Shire Council recognises the importance of this large reserve to the Bacchus Marsh community and has expressed interest in assuming the management role. This is seen as a benefit to the community as the council has the capability to obtain grants and development contributions to further assist this reserve cater for the growth of Bacchus Marsh and surrounds.

DSE is in discussions with the council, the existing committee and user groups to establish the future management regime and put in place appropriate tenures for the user groups and will continue to do so until a resolution is reached.

Should the council be appointed to manage the reserve, all user groups, current and new, will have the option to enter into tenure arrangements with the council as the delegated land manager if they have not already done so. Any current tenures will continue to run their respective terms under any change of management.

Floods: Benjeroop

Raised with: Minister for Water

Raised by: Mr Lenders

Raised on: 9 November 2011

REPLY:

The Lower Loddon Irrigators Recovery Package aims to increase the resilience of the community by protecting assets and changing the use of land from more intensive to less intensive agriculture. To that end the Victorian government is offering a voluntary buyback option that gives priority to the more intensive types of farming businesses.

The regional task force that I established to implement the voluntary buyback devised the following prioritisation criteria for making offers to land-holders:

- number of delivery share entitlement to be terminated, as an indicator of intensive agriculture;
- position within the high flood risk area, because even within the high-risk areas, risk decreases up the flood plain due to better access, and
- value for money, where the other two criteria are equally met.

Intensive agriculture is the first priority, because it is most vulnerable to flood damage in the Lower Loddon. Once the target irrigation properties have been addressed, properties that fit the other criterion may be considered for voluntary buyback if there are funds remaining.

The task force provided the community consultative committee these criteria on 18 August 2011. The committee sought no changes and the task force endorsed the same criteria on 23 August 2011.

Buses: Bannockburn

Raised with: Minister for Public Transport

Raised by: Ms Tierney

Raised on: 9 November 2011

REPLY:

The Department of Transport (DOT) advises me that the 4.35 p.m. bus from Geelong to Bannockburn was introduced on 19 October 2009 on a trial basis. This bus was introduced to help the local community return home earlier from Geelong and to avoid overcrowding on the 5.35 p.m. V/Line coach from Geelong to Ballarat.

DOT has advised me that the average number of passengers using the 4.35 p.m. bus is 7.2. The return 5.00 p.m. (Bannockburn to Geelong) trip is essentially a positioning trip for connections from Geelong.

I have agreed for the route to be continued for a further six months. At the end of this period, the route will be subject to a further review to ensure it is meeting the community's expectations. I will await DOT's recommendation following the review before making a final decision on its future.

Port Phillip Bay: beach renourishment

Raised with: Minister for Environment and Climate Change

Raised by: Mr Jennings

Raised on: 10 November 2011

REPLY:

The shape of the coastline between Parkdale and Mordialloc is dynamic, with natural coastal processes shifting sand southwards each winter towards Mordialloc Beach. The resulting thinner beaches at Mentone and Parkdale limit the recreational opportunities and exposes built assets such as seawalls to damage from wave attack and storm surges.

In May 2011, the government announced funding of \$9.536 million for the Protection of Port Phillip Beaches and Foreshore program.

The current program includes renourishment of a number of metropolitan bay beaches.

Gas: Wandong-Heathcote Junction supply**Raised with: Premier****Raised by: Ms Broad****Raised on: 10 November 2011****REPLY:**

The Victorian government recognises the benefits of connecting natural gas to communities and that is why we are investing \$100 million in the Energy for the Regions program over the next four years to extend natural gas across regional Victoria.

Regional Development Victoria (RDV) has commenced a staged approach to implementation of this program. The first stage involves direct discussion with gas distribution businesses regarding the capture of early opportunities through a negotiated process. The bid process for this stage closed on 31 August 2011. RDV has now commenced the task of assessing the commercial and technical merit of the bids received through this process.

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

All towns, including the communities of Wandong-Heathcote Junction, will have the opportunity to be considered under the program, subject to a supporting bid from one of the private gas distribution businesses.

Thank you for raising this matter with me.

Water: charges**Raised with: Treasurer****Raised by: Mr Lenders****Raised on: 22 November 2011****REPLY:**

Prices for the regulated water, sewerage and drainage services provided by the metropolitan water businesses are determined by the independent pricing regulator, the Essential Services Commission (ESC), through each water plan process.

The ESC pricing process allows for phased cost recovery over the water plan period. Where there is a significant change in costs in a particular year the ESC may provide for pricing impacts to be phased over a number of years. This allows the price impacts to be manageable from the customers' perspective.

In the event that there is a change in the timing of costs relative to the funds collected (i.e. due to changes in the timing of the commissioning of the desalination plant) the ESC is likely to consider this as part of the next pricing review.

Dividends are determined by the Treasurer after consultation with the board of each business and the Minister for Water.

The dividends for 2011–12 and 2012–13 will be determined having regard to the financial position and outlook for each business.

Libraries: Sunshine

Raised with: Minister for Local Government

Raised by: Mr Finn

Raised on: 23 November 2011

REPLY:

I thank the member for western metropolitan for raising this matter. I am pleased to advise that on 12 December 2011 I announced that Brimbank City Council had been successful in their application for the redevelopment of the Sunshine library under round 1 of the Living Libraries infrastructure program 2011–12 for a grant of \$750 000. In addition, I was also pleased to announce a further grant of \$500 000 for the project as part of the community support grants, bringing the Victorian government's contribution to \$1.25 million.

The Victorian government has committed \$17.2 million over four years to the Living Libraries infrastructure program to modernise existing building and build new libraries across the state. I recently announced 10 projects were successful in securing funding totalling \$3.421 million under round 1 of the 2011–12 program.

Wedge-tailed eagle: statistics

Raised with: Minister for Environment and Climate Change

Raised by: Mrs Petrovich

Raised on: 24 November 2011

REPLY:

The wedge-tailed eagle is an iconic bird and is the most common of the world's large eagles. The species is Australia's largest bird of prey and found throughout mainland Australia. It is remarkable how often these magnificent birds can be seen close to regional communities, circling for prey. Within Victoria, it can be found from sea level to alpine regions in the mountains, but prefers wooded and forested land and open country, generally avoiding rainforests and coastal heaths.

The consistent sighting of wedge-tailed eagles provides sufficient information to determine that the population of the species is healthy and that it has good representation across Victoria.

Within Victoria, the wedge-tailed eagle is recorded as 'common' and the last review of the status of Victoria's fauna distribution completed in 2007 highlighted that the numbers of the species are sustainable. The Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) has a database of recorded sightings of wedge-tailed eagles. Many of these records are provided by recognised field zoologists, ecologists and bird enthusiasts. This species is protected by the Wildlife Act 1975 and is not listed as threatened under the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988.

Information from recorded sightings is used to establish the common or threatened status of a species. These records are reviewed by an expert panel approximately every five years. The panel evaluates the records against a set of criteria published by the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources known as the Red List. DSE will continue to review the status of Victoria's fauna and flora to monitor distribution and populations of these species. Specific records on sightings of individual birds can be accessed upon request to DSE or through biodiversity interactive maps on the DSE website.

Murray-Darling Basin: federal plan

Raised with: Minister for Water

Raised by: Mr Drum

Raised on: 6 December 2011

REPLY:

The Victorian coalition government holds significant concerns about what is in the Murray-Darling Basin Authority's draft basin plan released on 28 November 2011. The draft plan proposes to move 2750 gigalitres of water away from consumptive use to secure a range of environmental health outcomes for basin river systems.

That number is made up of individual in-valley targets and a separate northern and southern basin downstream contributions target. In Victoria's case, the aggregate of its in-valley targets has already been met through water savings projects and the commonwealth government purchasing program.

The Victorian government believes that the 970 gigalitres that is proposed as the southern basin downstream contribution should be able to be found through environmental works and measures and better running of the river system in the southern basin.

As a result of the drought, we have seen farmers become more efficient in how they use water and in how to produce more with less water. We should consider applying a similar principle to how we manage environmental water.

The Victorian government wants to ensure that Victorians get an opportunity to have a say on the draft basin plan.

We set up a Basin Advisory Group with a cross-section of people from across northern Victoria — environmental groups, community groups, irrigation groups and industry groups that could come together to consider basin plan matters. Any information the Victorian government has is put out to this group because it is important that it has access to a comprehensive flow of information.

During the recently completed round of initial meetings and workshops that the Murray-Darling Basin Authority held across the basin, people came along and started to engage in the authority's consultation process. We will encourage our communities to continue that involvement when the authority commences its second round of engagement in early 2012.

The Victorian government wants to ensure that the basin plan is a balanced plan that considers the social, economic and environmental issues and provides certainty.

As Minister for Water, I will be making sure that everyone in Victoria who wants to have a say will get an opportunity to do so, and as a government we will be strongly putting forward their case.

Croydon and Maroondah secondary colleges: merger

Raised with: Minister for Education

Raised by: Mr Leane

Raised on: 7 February 2012

REPLY:

The decision to merge was made by both the Croydon Secondary College school community and the Maroondah Secondary College school community in 2011. The new school was established in January 2012 under the interim name Croydon Maroondah College. The decision to merge was made on the basis of providing better educational

opportunities and pathways for students in the Croydon and Maroondah areas. An executive principal, Mr Terry Bennett, has been appointed to the school to support the merging of the two communities.

The interim school council will now commence a consultation process regarding the preferred school site. This process will be informed by relevant data, information and criteria provided by the newly established school community.

The recommendation from the interim school council will then be forwarded to the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development for consideration and a final decision by the Minister for Education. This process will be supported by the executive principal.

Victorian Commission for Gambling and Liquor Regulation: independence

Raised with: Minister for Gaming

Raised by: Hon. M. P. Pakula

Raised on: 7 February 2012

REPLY:

Consistent with longstanding practice under successive governments, when shadow ministers are seeking briefings on policy or operation matters, a request in writing should be made to the responsible minister.

It is a courtesy that, from time to time, briefing opportunities for new legislation or portfolio matters are extended to shadow ministers. These are provided at the discretion of the responsible minister.

It is not appropriate for shadow ministers to receive briefings from public or statutory body officials at will. It is hoped that shadow ministers undertake their own portfolio work to deepen their understanding of the key issues.

The government will extend the same courtesy to the opposition as was extended to the Liberal-National coalition by the former Labor government.

Bushfires: recovery services

Raised with: Minister for Bushfire Response

Raised by: Mrs Petrovich

Raised on: 8 February 2012

REPLY:

The Victorian government has made a commitment to continue to support the changing needs of communities and people affected by the fires through a coordinated range of both new and existing services.

Support will be provided through both specific recovery programs and ensuring that there is capacity in the government's core service delivery agencies to meet the needs of fire-affected communities.

The Bushfire Communities Support Program is providing a combination of individual and community services including:

- the Bushfire Community Support Helpline
- bushfire community support workers who are employed by community agencies providing locally based support to bushfire-affected communities
- drop-in information and advice centres in Hurstbridge, Kinglake and Marysville.

The fire recovery unit is providing a clear point of contact for information and connection to available services within the Victorian government, with three community engagement officers working closely with affected councils and community groups.

A bushfire recovery interdepartmental committee is supporting the fire recovery unit in the coordination of recovery activities across government.

The Rebuilding Advisory Service (RAS) will continue to provide people with information, advice and assistance from qualified building professionals, on all aspects of rebuilding. The service is located at Kinglake and Marysville and provides a mobile service that visits affected landowners across the state.

The government also recognises that many people may not want to rebuild. That is why the government's \$50 million bushfire buyback scheme was announced in October 2011. The scheme will assist the recovery of property owners who are unable to sell their land privately or who face difficulties in rebuilding a new dwelling. An application process will run from 1 March to 31 May 2012.

The availability of small business mentors for businesses directly affected by the fires has been extended to 30 June 2012. Eligibility to receive mentoring has also been broadened to include businesses that lost trade as a result of the fires.

As well as activity by the government, the Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund will also continue to be a key source of support for fire-affected people through initiatives such as:

- the Housing Assistance Gift
- provision of psychological counselling and wellness vouchers
- 'Tune In' youth counselling services
- community projects and programs to be approved under the \$20.5 million medium to long-term allocation.

We are committed to the medium to long-term recovery needs of bushfire-affected Victorians and will continue to monitor funded services to ensure they meet the ongoing needs of people recovering from the bushfires.

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

WRITTEN ADJOURNMENT RESPONSES

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

Wednesday, 29 February 2012

Planning: Werribee employment precinct

Raised with: Minister for Planning

Raised by: Mr Elsbury

Raised on: 12 October 2011

REPLY:

Government agencies such as the Department of Planning and Community Development, the Department of Transport, the Growth Areas Authority and Wyndham City Council are working collaboratively to activate development of the site.

The Growth Areas Authority has recently been requested to prepare a precinct structure plan for the site.

Walhalla: vegetation management

Raised with: Minister for Environment and Climate Change

Raised by: Mr P. Davis

Raised on: 8 November 2011

REPLY:

Due to high winter/spring rainfall and poor ground conditions, track works scheduled in spring were deferred. Parks Victoria had re-scheduled vegetation clearing and track works to be completed by the end of November 2011 but due to further storms and rain the works commenced on 26 November 2011.

As of 1 December Parks Victoria staff in partnership with Conservation Volunteers Australia had completed 30 per cent of the required work on the tramway section of track. The contractor engaged by Parks Victoria also re-commenced the tracks work for the Great Walhalla Alpine Track and completed all works on the west bank and 25 per cent on the east bank.

Parks Victoria's track-clearing programs for the area were completed in December 2011.

Close liaison occurs between Parks Victoria and DSE regarding track maintenance in the Walhalla area.

Parks Victoria is also working with Conservation Volunteers Australia to undertake additional works in and around Walhalla over summer.

Western Victoria Region: town planning**Raised with: Minister for Planning****Raised by: Mr Ramsay****Raised on: 8 December 2011****REPLY:**

I appreciate the resource and planning challenges faced by regional and rural municipalities. The Rural Planning Flying Squad is a new initiative which provides assistance to rural and regional councils in relation to major projects and developments, long-term land use issues, strategic plans as well as immediate planning support. The flying squad has funding of \$2.8 million over three years to June 2014.

During 2011 I met with representatives from most of Victoria's regional and rural councils. I look forward to continuing to meet with rural municipalities on a regular basis.

I am pleased to have recently joined you on a visit to a number of rural municipalities including Pyrenees, Ararat, Hindmarsh, West Wimmera, Yarriambiack, Horsham, Northern Grampians and Central Goldfields; and towns including Beaufort, Nhill, Ararat, Kaniva, Warracknabeal, Murtoa, Stawell and Maryborough.