

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

FIFTY-EIGHTH PARLIAMENT

FIRST SESSION

WRITTEN ADJOURNMENT RESPONSES

Tuesday, 1 May 2018

(Extract from book 5)

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By authority of the Victorian Government Printer

The Governor

The Honourable LINDA DESSAU, AC

The Lieutenant-Governor

The Honourable KEN LAY, AO, APM

The ministry

(from 16 October 2017)

Premier	The Hon. D. M. Andrews, MP
Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Minister for Emergency Services	The Hon. J. A. Merlino, MP
Treasurer and Minister for Resources	The Hon. T. H. Pallas, MP
Minister for Public Transport and Minister for Major Projects	The Hon. J. Allan, MP
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Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and Minister for Ports	The Hon. L. A. Donnellan, MP
Minister for Tourism and Major Events, Minister for Sport and Minister for Veterans	The Hon. J. H. Eren, MP
Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing, Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Equality and Minister for Creative Industries	The Hon. M. P. Foley, MP
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Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation, and Minister for Local Government	The Hon. M. Kairouz, MP
Minister for Families and Children, Minister for Early Childhood Education and Minister for Youth Affairs	The Hon. J. Mikakos, MLC
Minister for Police and Minister for Water	The Hon. L. M. Neville, MP
Attorney-General and Minister for Racing	The Hon. M. P. Pakula, MP
Minister for Agriculture and Minister for Regional Development	The Hon. J. L. Pulford, MLC
Minister for Finance and Minister for Multicultural Affairs	The Hon. R. D. Scott, MP
Minister for Training and Skills, and Minister for Corrections	The Hon. G. A. Tierney, MLC
Minister for Planning	The Hon. R. W. Wynne, MP
Cabinet Secretary	Ms M. Thomas, MP

Legislative Council committees

Privileges Committee — Mr Dalidakis, Mr Mulino, Mr O’Sullivan, Mr Purcell, Mr Rich-Phillips, Ms Springle, Ms Symes and Ms Wooldridge.

Procedure Committee — The President, Dr Carling-Jenkins, Mr Davis, Mr Jennings, Ms Pennicuik, Ms Pulford, Ms Tierney and Ms Wooldridge.

Legislative Council standing committees

Standing Committee on the Economy and Infrastructure — Mr Bourman, #Mr Davis, Ms Dunn, Mr Eideh, Mr Finn, Mr Gepp, Mr Leane, #Mr Melhem, Mr Ondarchie, Mr O’Sullivan and #Mr Rich-Phillips.

Standing Committee on the Environment and Planning — Ms Bath, #Mr Bourman, Mr Dalla-Riva, Mr Davis, #Ms Dunn, Mr Elasmarr, Mr Melhem, #Mr Purcell, #Mr Ramsay, #Dr Ratnam, Ms Shing, #Ms Symes, Ms Truong and Mr Young.

Standing Committee on Legal and Social Issues — #Ms Crozier, #Mr Elasmarr, Ms Fitzherbert, Mr Morris, Mr Mulino, Ms Patten, Mrs Peulich, #Dr Ratnam, #Mr Rich-Phillips, Mr Somyurek, Ms Springle and Ms Symes.

participating members

Legislative Council select committees

Port of Melbourne Select Committee — Mr Mulino, Mr Ondarchie, Mr Purcell, Mr Rich-Phillips, Ms Shing and Ms Tierney.

Fire Services Bill Select Committee — Ms Lovell, Mr Melhem, Mr Mulino, Mr O’Sullivan, Mr Rich Phillips, Ms Shing and Mr Young.

Joint committees

Accountability and Oversight Committee — (*Council*): Mr O’Sullivan, Mr Purcell and Ms Symes. (*Assembly*): Mr Angus, Mr Gidley, Mr Noonan and Ms Thomson.

Dispute Resolution Committee — (*Council*): Mr Bourman, Mr Dalidakis, Ms Dunn, Mr Jennings and Ms Wooldridge. (*Assembly*): Ms Allan, Mr Clark, Ms Hutchins, Mr Merlino, Mr M. O’Brien, Mr Pakula and Mr Walsh.

Economic, Education, Jobs and Skills Committee — (*Council*): Mr Bourman, Mr Elasmarr and Mr Melhem. (*Assembly*): Mr Crisp, Mrs Fyffe, Ms Garrett and Ms Ryall.

Electoral Matters Committee — (*Council*): Ms Bath, Ms Patten and Mr Somyurek. (*Assembly*): Ms Asher, Ms Blandthorn, Mr Dixon and Ms Spence.

Environment, Natural Resources and Regional Development Committee — (*Council*): Mr O’Sullivan, Mr Ramsay and Mr Young. (*Assembly*): Mr J. Bull, Ms Halfpenny, Mr Richardson and Mr Riordan.

Family and Community Development Committee — (*Council*): Dr Carling-Jenkins and Mr Finn. (*Assembly*): Ms Britnell, Ms Couzens, Mr Edbrooke, Ms Edwards and Ms McLeish.

House Committee — (*Council*): The President (*ex officio*), Mr Eideh, Ms Lovell, Mr Mulino and Mr Young. (*Assembly*): The Speaker (*ex officio*), Mr J. Bull, Mr Crisp, Mrs Fyffe, Mr Staikos, Ms Suleyman and Mr Thompson.

Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Committee — (*Council*): Mr Ramsay and Ms Symes. (*Assembly*): Mr Hibbins, Mr D. O’Brien, Mr Richardson, Ms Thomson and Mr Wells.

Law Reform, Road and Community Safety Committee — (*Council*): Mr Gepp and Ms Patten. (*Assembly*): Mr Dixon, Mr Howard, Ms Suleyman, Mr Thompson and Mr Tilley.

Public Accounts and Estimates Committee — (*Council*): Ms Patten, Ms Pennicuik and Ms Shing. (*Assembly*): Mr Dimopoulos, Mr Morris, Mr D. O’Brien, Mr Pearson, Mr T. Smith and Ms Ward.

Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee — (*Council*): Ms Bath and Mr Dalla-Riva. (*Assembly*): Ms Blandthorn, Mr J. Bull, Mr Dimopoulos, Ms Kilkenny and Mr Pesutto.

Heads of parliamentary departments

Assembly — Acting Clerk of the Legislative Assembly: Ms Bridget Noonan

Council — Acting Clerk of the Parliaments and Clerk of the Legislative Council: Mr A. Young

Parliamentary Services — Secretary: Mr P. Lochert

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

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Deputy President:

Mr K. EIDEH

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The Hon. J. L. PULFORD

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The Hon. G. K. RICH-PHILLIPS

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Mr L. B. O'SULLIVAN

Leader of the Greens:

Dr S. RATNAM

Member	Region	Party	Member	Region	Party
Atkinson, Mr Bruce Norman	Eastern Metropolitan	LP	Mikakos, Ms Jenny	Northern Metropolitan	ALP
Barber, Mr Gregory John ¹	Northern Metropolitan	Greens	Morris, Mr Joshua	Western Victoria	LP
Bath, Ms Melina ²	Eastern Victoria	Nats	Mulino, Mr Daniel	Eastern Victoria	ALP
Bourman, Mr Jeffrey	Eastern Victoria	SFFP	O'Brien, Mr Daniel David ⁸	Eastern Victoria	Nats
Carling-Jenkins, Dr Rachel ³	Western Metropolitan	AC	O'Donohue, Mr Edward John	Eastern Victoria	LP
Crozier, Ms Georgina Mary	Southern Metropolitan	LP	Ondarchie, Mr Craig Philip	Northern Metropolitan	LP
Dalidakis, Mr Philip	Southern Metropolitan	ALP	O'Sullivan, Luke Bartholomew ⁹	Northern Victoria	Nats
Dalla-Riva, Mr Richard Alex Gordon	Eastern Metropolitan	LP	Patten, Ms Fiona ¹⁰	Northern Metropolitan	RV
Davis, Mr David McLean	Southern Metropolitan	LP	Pennicuik, Ms Susan Margaret	Southern Metropolitan	Greens
Drum, Mr Damian Kevin ⁴	Northern Victoria	Nats	Peulich, Mrs Inga	South Eastern Metropolitan	LP
Dunn, Ms Samantha	Eastern Metropolitan	Greens	Pulford, Ms Jaala Lee	Western Victoria	ALP
Eideh, Mr Khalil M.	Western Metropolitan	ALP	Purcell, Mr James	Western Victoria	VILJ
Elasmr, Mr Nazih	Northern Metropolitan	ALP	Ramsay, Mr Simon	Western Victoria	LP
Finn, Mr Bernard Thomas C.	Western Metropolitan	LP	Ratnam, Dr Samantha Shantini ¹¹	Northern Metropolitan	Greens
Fitzherbert, Ms Margaret	Southern Metropolitan	LP	Rich-Phillips, Mr Gordon Kenneth	South Eastern Metropolitan	LP
Gepp, Mr Mark ⁵	Northern Victoria	ALP	Shing, Ms Harriet	Eastern Victoria	ALP
Hartland, Ms Colleen Mildred ⁷	Western Metropolitan	Greens	Somyurek, Mr Adem	South Eastern Metropolitan	ALP
Herbert, Mr Steven Ralph ⁶	Northern Victoria	ALP	Springle, Ms Nina	South Eastern Metropolitan	Greens
Jennings, Mr Gavin Wayne	South Eastern Metropolitan	ALP	Symes, Ms Jaclyn	Northern Victoria	ALP
Leane, Mr Shaun Leo	Eastern Metropolitan	ALP	Tierney, Ms Gayle Anne	Western Victoria	ALP
Lovell, Ms Wendy Ann	Northern Victoria	LP	Truong, Ms Huong ¹²	Western Metropolitan	Greens
Melhem, Mr Cesar	Western Metropolitan	ALP	Wooldridge, Ms Mary Louise Newling	Eastern Metropolitan	LP
			Young, Mr Daniel	Northern Victoria	SFFP

¹ Resigned 28 September 2017

² Appointed 15 April 2015

³ DLP until 26 June 2017

⁴ Resigned 27 May 2016

⁵ Appointed 7 June 2017

⁶ Resigned 6 April 2017

⁷ Resigned 9 February 2018

⁸ Resigned 25 February 2015

⁹ Appointed 12 October 2016

¹⁰ ASP until 16 January 2018

¹¹ Appointed 18 October 2017

¹² Appointed 21 February 2018

PARTY ABBREVIATIONS

AC — Australian Conservatives; ALP — Labor Party; ASP — Australian Sex Party;
DLP — Democratic Labour Party; Greens — Australian Greens;
LP — Liberal Party; Nats — The Nationals; RV — Reason Victoria
SFFP — Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party; VILJ — Vote 1 Local Jobs

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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, 1 May 2018

Homelessness

Raised with: Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing
Raised by: Mr Purcell
Raised on: 18 August 2015

REPLY:

The Victorian Government believes that people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness should be supported to achieve sustainable housing and social inclusion. Currently, the government funds over \$200 million a year to community service organisations across Victoria to provide accommodation and support services to people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

In the 2016-17 Victorian State Budget, the Victorian Government committed \$152 million to the family violence Housing Blitz. With this investment, we will:

- build or upgrade up to 180 crisis accommodation units,
- provide 184 social housing properties and head-lease up to 124 additional properties,
- redevelop four existing communal refuges and to provide 24 hour staffing at six refuges.
- assist people to access private rental housing
- provide flexible tailored support packages for victims of family violence, including assistance to stay safe at home.

In response to the significant recent rise in the number of people sleeping rough in inner city Melbourne, I allocated \$1.6 million to immediate actions to assist homeless people, including:

- extending the Rough Sleepers Initiative, which provides mobile support and access services,
- funding to purchase more emergency accommodation
- deliver 38 additional crisis accommodation beds to provide additional capacity over winter
- provide additional workers to staff a safe, warm shelter that will be opened in the inner city during winter.

Building on this immediate response, I have established an 18 month Rough Sleeping Response Taskforce to advise on practical actions to address the significant rise in rough sleeping in the CBD. The Taskforce held its first meeting on 24 August 2016 and has been challenged to be bold in its goals to significantly reduce the number of people sleeping rough in the CBD.

There is more we can do. I am committed to looking at ways in which we can improve these services to ensure they deliver better outcomes for people. I would be more than happy to arrange a briefing to your office on these matters if required.

Homelessness

Raised with: Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing
Raised by: Mr Purcell
Raised on: 30 August 2016

REPLY:

The Victorian Government takes very seriously the right of every Victorian to use and enjoy shared public space free from the threat or impact of physical violence.

This includes people who are fortunate enough to be stably and securely housed, as well as those members of our community who for a myriad of reasons may be unwell or otherwise vulnerable.

This Government believes that people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness should be supported to achieve sustainable housing and social inclusion, rather than stigmatised. Currently, the government funds over \$200 million a year to community service organisations across Victoria to provide accommodation and support services to people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Family violence, unemployment and lack of affordable housing are among the factors driving an increase in the number of people who are homeless. Being without safe, secure and affordable accommodation can have devastating effects on a person's life.

Through the 2016-17 budget, we committed \$152 million to the family violence Housing Blitz to increase opportunities for vulnerable households to access safe and sustainable housing. With this investment, we will:

- build or upgrade up to 180 crisis accommodation units,
- provide 184 social housing properties and head-lease up to 124 additional properties,
- redevelop four existing communal refuges and provide 24 hour staffing at six refuges.
- assist more people to access private rental housing
- provide flexible tailored support packages for victims of family violence, including assistance to stay safe at home.

In response to the significant recent rise in the number of people sleeping rough in inner city Melbourne, I allocated \$1.6 million to immediate actions to assist homeless people, including:

- extending the Rough Sleepers Initiative, which provides outreach and support,
- funding to purchase more emergency accommodation
- deliver 38 additional crisis accommodation beds to provide additional capacity
- provide additional workers to staff a safe, warm shelter in the inner city during cold weather.

Building on this immediate response, I have established an 18 month Rough Sleeping Response Taskforce to develop practical actions to address the significant rise in rough sleeping in the CBD. The membership includes community service providers and Victoria Police. The Taskforce held its first meeting on 24 August 2016 and has been challenged to be bold in its goals to significantly reduce the number of people sleeping rough in the CBD.

The Government has also committed \$120 million to new housing development more recently, including \$30 million to the Flemington Estate to grow more social housing. The government is also implementing reform to create more housing options for Victorians, through measures such as the Victorian Housing Register that will provide a fairer and easier way to access social housing.

The Andrews Labor Government's significant additional investment and reform is in stark contrast to the State and Federal Liberals' agenda in housing, which was simply to cut \$470 million from housing in Victoria. Unfortunately the Federal Government provided no new money for housing growth in either its 2016/17 Budget or the recent election campaign and failed to appoint a responsible minister for housing and homelessness. There is an important role to play in these matters by the Federal Government and I am sure you would join with me in encouraging the Federal Government to step up on its responsibilities in this area.

There is more we can do, regardless of the Federal Government's inaction, to reduce homelessness. I am committed to looking at ways in which we can improve these services to ensure they deliver better outcomes for people, and a more inclusive community for us all.

Pakington Street, Newtown, CCTV cameras

Raised with: Minister for Police

Raised by: Mr Ramsay

Raised on: 12 December 2017

REPLY:

The Community Safety Statement, released in December 2016, outlines the range of new investment, powers, tools and capabilities that Victoria Police will be equipped with to stabilise the crime rate and begin to reduce the level of harm being caused in the community, including funding for 3135 additional frontline police and 100 new Protective Services Officers.

This investment has seen an additional 15 police officers deployed to the Geelong area. Geelong also has 21 Police Custody Officers on duty, which has freed up hundreds of shifts.

Analysis of the most recent crime statistics in the year ending 30 September 2017 show that the rate of offences per 100 000 population decreased by 5.1 per cent in Greater Geelong.

Greater Geelong has seen a significant reduction in a range of offences including a 4.1 per cent drop in burglary/break and enter offences and a 23.1 per cent drop in theft offences.

The Government also committed \$19.4 million in the 2016-17 State Budget for the Community Crime Prevention Program over two years. This funding continued the Public Safety Infrastructure Fund, which provided grants up to \$250 000 for local councils to improve safety and security infrastructure in public places, including funding for CCTV systems. The latest round closed on 25 September 2017 and I am advised that City of Greater Geelong Council did not submit an application.

CCTV can be an effective situational crime prevention tool at the local level, but the best outcomes are achieved when it is part of a combination of crime prevention strategies tailored to the specific local issues and context.

Residents and traders recently had the opportunity to discuss community safety issues regarding the Pakington Street shopping strip with their local police and council. The Government has also provided \$10 000 for the Pakington Street Traders Crime Prevention Project in partnership with the City of Greater Geelong.

I will continue to work closely with the Greater Geelong Council, residents and traders to ensure community safety and I would be pleased to consider, at the appropriate time, the merits of any specific proposal that Greater Geelong Council may wish to put forward for CCTV in the future.

Elishacare

Raised with: Minister for Emergency Services
Raised by: Mr Leane
Raised on: 6 February 2018

REPLY:

The Victorian Government values the work of organisations such as Elishacare that are committed to the health and safety of the community.

The Metropolitan Fire Brigade has advised that the site of the former Croydon Metropolitan Fire Brigade (MFB) Station is no longer listed for auction at this time.

I recently met with Elishacare at the site in Croydon and discussed how we could all work towards finding a solution, and the Government is investigating options to ensure Elishacare is able to continue its great work in the community.

Buch Avenue, Epping

Raised with: Minister for Police
Raised by: Mr Ondarchie
Raised on: 6 February 2018

REPLY:

I note the member's concerns, and I can advise that one person was arrested from the incident on 23 December 2017 and the investigation remains ongoing.

In response to these specific issues, I am advised that Local Police and the divisional Highway Patrol are working with Whittlesea Council and local businesses to seal the road surface to prevent further gatherings and address the alleged criminal activity in the area.

Hoon driving is an offence that the Andrews Government and Victoria Police take very seriously.

The Transport Legislation Amendment (Road Safety, Rail and other matters) Act 2017, which passed parliament last year reflects the Government's ongoing commitment to addressing hoon and reckless driving.

As part of this package of reforms, Victoria Police will be given new tools and powers to stop reckless drivers in their tracks. Police will have greater ability to immediately impound vehicles for different driving offences and have access to a range of new devices to assist in vehicle pursuits. Tougher penalties for excessive speeding, unlicensed driving and employing an unlicensed driver in a driving role will also apply.

Offenders will also need to meet substantial costs to secure the release of their vehicles. Where appropriate, this may include paying for any necessary repair and roadworthy costs before the vehicle can be released. They are also expected to meet any penalties related to the offences they have committed, including the loss of demerit points.

If a person is found guilty of three hoon-related offences inside three years, their vehicle can be permanently forfeited by the court. If a court order is granted, these vehicles can be disposed of in a manner determined by the Chief Commissioner.

It is also important for the public to contribute to the intelligence collected by Victoria Police to ensure that resources and operations are targeted where offending occurs. Northern Metropolitan constituents can assist police in the detection of hoon drivers and the identification of 'hoon hotspots' by reporting incidents on the 1800 333 000 Crime Stoppers Hoon Hotlines.

Melbourne tourism

Raised with: Minister for Tourism and Major Events
Raised by: Mr Elasmar
Raised on: 20 February 2018

REPLY:

Thank you for your positive comments regarding this year's White Night. Held on 17 February 2018, the sixth instalment of White Night Melbourne was another outstanding success. Over 600 000 patrons attended more than 120 installations from Carlton Gardens to Alexandra Gardens and everything in between. No city in Australia could possibly recreate White Night except Melbourne.

Tourism is Victoria's second largest services export, exceeded only by education. It generates around 210 000 jobs and delivers \$23.3 billion to the economy annually. Major events generate economic benefits of around \$1.8 billion to Victoria's economy, up from \$1.4 billion in 2010.

No one does events quite like Victoria, and Victoria's major events calendar is one of the most prestigious and successful major events calendar in the world.

Organisers from all around the world bring their events to Victoria for good reasons, and we will continue to work on our reputation as the ideal place to stage a major event. However, we recognise that the industry is competitive and we need to ensure our strategy keeps Victoria ahead of the pack.

Visit Victoria commenced formal operations on 1 July 2016, which brought together Tourism Victoria and the Victoria Major Events Company, with the Melbourne Convention Bureau.

The Victorian Government has committed an additional \$20 million a year ongoing for the Major Events Fund to ensure that we continue to secure events for Melbourne and regional Victoria. Additionally, to further secure events for Victoria, the 2016-17 State Budget provided \$20 million for a Regional Events Fund, to attract, create and bring people to the biggest and best events all over regional Victoria.

Visit Victoria is working diligently to attract more events to Melbourne and regional Victoria, and since its establishment, it has secured a number of major events to be held over the coming years, such as the World Cup of Golf in November this year; Harry Potter and the Cursed Child, Come from Away, Australian Boomers v USA Dream Team, Real Madrid World of Football and the Men's and Women's Final of the T20 Cricket World Cup in 2020, with more announcements to come.

I look forward to working with Visit Victoria to ensure that all Victorians benefit from the international positioning and profile, tourism visitation, economic outcomes and branding and business linkages that major events bring to our State.

St Kilda police resources

Raised with: Minister for Police
Raised by: Ms Fitzherbert
Raised on: 20 February 2018

REPLY:

I thank Ms Fitzherbert MLC for her question and appreciate her concern for the residents of St Kilda in relation to the Regal Boarding Home.

As the member would be aware, on 8 March 2018, the Hon Martin Foley MP, Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing, announced the Government's investment of \$6 million to shut down and refit the Regal Boarding Home as a women's shelter.

This follows the formation, in December 2017, of a multi-agency working group relating to the Regal Boarding Home, which includes Victoria Police, Port Phillip Housing Association, St Kilda Housing Association, Star Health, Sacred Heart Mission, Launch Housing and the City of Port Phillip.

As part of the action plan identified by the working group, Victoria Police created a proactive taskforce focusing on daily patrols of Little Grey Street and Victoria Police being granted enhanced access to the Regal Boarding House, with all local police vehicles having swipe card access.

The Andrews Labor Government is committed to ensuring Victoria Police have the necessary resources to protect the community from harm.

Victorian communities can look forward to seeing an increased police presence in their area with 825 additional police being allocated across the state from May 2018 as part of the Government's commitment of 3135 extra police funded through the Community Safety Statement 2017.

As part of this deployment, an additional 6 police have been allocated to the Port Phillip Police Service Area, which services St Kilda. This is in addition to the 7 crime investigation unit resources and 6 family violence specialists that have been allocated across the broader division.

In addition to the Government's funding of additional police resources, the Community Crime Prevention Program has provided funding of between \$10 000 and \$250 000 to councils across Victoria through the Public Safety Infrastructure Fund to help improve community safety, security and confidence in public places. This includes funding for CCTV, lighting, good urban design and other crime prevention strategies.

The Government recognised the need for CCTV in Fitzroy Street, St Kilda and provided funding through the Public Safety Infrastructure Fund of \$246 250 to the City of Port Phillip for seven CCTV cameras in Fitzroy Street, between the Upper Esplanade and Grey Street, St Kilda through the Public Safety Infrastructure Fund in October 2015.

In March 2018, the Hon Martin Foley MP, also announced \$260 000 funding to extend the Fitzroy St CCTV into Little Grey Street, as part of the redevelopment of the Regal Boarding House. The Department of Health and Human Services is working with the City of Port Phillip regarding the installation of these additional cameras.

This also builds on the Andrews Labor Government's commitment in February 2018 of \$220 000 for improved public safety at the St Kilda foreshore. This funding will support City of Port Phillip to install bollards, boom gates and design upgrades to prevent hoons and unauthorised vehicles and to install CCTV cameras along the foreshore area.

Morwell crime prevention

Raised with: Minister for Police
Raised by: Ms Bath
Raised on: 20 February 2018

REPLY:

I note the concerns of Morwell traders and their work with Latrobe City Council to deter crime and improve community safety in the Morwell business district.

The Public Safety Infrastructure Fund (PSIF), provides grants up to \$250 000 for local councils to improve safety and security infrastructure in public places, including funding for CCTV systems. Funding for the PSIF program is currently fully committed and the availability of any future funding rounds is dependent on 2018 State Budget outcomes.

I am aware the Latrobe City Council applied for funding for ten CCTV cameras in the latest round of the PSIF, which closed on 25 September 2017. Council was considered not eligible for PSIF funding due to being awarded federal funding for the same project.

The PSIF program is part of the Labor Government's \$19.4 million investment in its Community Crime Prevention Program, aimed at tackling crime and its root causes.

This is in addition to our record \$2 billion investment in community safety, which includes the recruitment of 3135 police officers on top of attrition over the next four years.

It also includes the Community Safety Networks project which provides Victorian communities with a direct platform to discuss local crime issues and policing priorities. Latrobe is one of 12 communities where a Community Safety Network is being established, giving residents a greater voice in ongoing efforts to combat crime. If you would like to hear more about what's happening in the Latrobe Community Safety Network, please visit: <https://engage.vic.gov.au/communitysafetynetworks/latrobe-community-safety-network>.

Thompsons Road–Allen Street, Bulleen

Raised with: Minister for Roads and Road Safety

Raised by: Ms Dunn

Raised on: 21 February 2018

REPLY:

VicRoads advises me that it has undertaken an investigation to identify the need of a Keep Clear marking on Thompsons Road, at the intersection of Allen Street in Bulleen.

VicRoads has developed guidelines that it uses to assess requests for Keep Clear markings. Under these guidelines, Keep Clear markings are used primarily to minimise delays to through traffic on arterial roads caused by vehicles queuing to turn right. I understand that motorists turning left from Allen Street would be required to wait on the Keep Clear marking until the traffic queue clears at the nearby pedestrian-operated signals. As it is illegal to remain stationary on a Keep Clear marking, this situation is best avoided.

Although Keep Clear markings supplement the road rules and prohibit motorists from blocking intersections, the overuse of these markings may give drivers the impression that where the markings are absent, it is permissible to remain stationary within an intersection.

In context of the above, VicRoads does not currently support a Keep Clear marking.

VicRoads advises me that the area is served by a network of well-connected, adjacent local roads from which access to Thompsons Road can be gained in a more timely manner as an alternative to Allen Street.

Cannabis decriminalisation

Raised with: Minister for Attorney-General

Raised by: Ms Patten

Raised on: 21 February 2018

REPLY:

The Victorian Government does not support the legalisation of recreational cannabis. In the Government's view, there is no safe level of illicit drug use. An economic assessment of the costs and savings that may result from the legalisation of recreational cannabis will not account for the harm caused to an individual and the community by cannabis.

Cannabis use has an extremely detrimental impact on road safety. In 2015 a greater number of drivers killed on Victorian roads were impacted by cannabis than the number of drivers impacted by alcohol. Cannabis impacts a person's coordination, alertness, concentration, reaction time and ability to judge distance. These impacts increase the risk of a driver being involved in a road incident. Research shows that recent cannabis use increases a driver's crash risk.

While cannabis has different effects on different people, we know that cannabis has many harmful effects on health. The risks associated with long-term cannabis use include poor concentration, memory loss, learning difficulties and dependence. There is also increasing evidence that regular cannabis use precedes and causes higher rates of psychotic illness.

The Government takes the issue of illicit drug use very seriously. On 31 October 2017 the Government launched the Drug Rehabilitation Plan to address illicit drug use across Victoria and support Victorians who have been affected by illicit drug use. The Drug Rehabilitation Plan outlines the Government's commitment to a number of evidence based initiatives which include a two year trial of a medically supervised injecting room at the North Richmond Community Health Centre, the expansion of treatment and training programs and the supply of 100 additional residential rehabilitation beds.

The Victorian Government does not have plans to legalise cannabis for recreational use, but will continue to deliver evidence based initiatives to address illicit drug use across Victoria. The Government will also carefully consider the recommendations of the Victorian Law Reform, Road and Community Safety Committee's report on the Inquiry into Drug Law Reform when the report is released.

St Albans Leisure Centre

Raised with: Minister for Sport
Raised by: Mr Finn
Raised on: 21 February 2018

REPLY:

Providing high quality sport and recreation facilities in Victoria is a key aim of the Andrews Labor Government, and is integral to increasing participation opportunities and enhancing the health and wellbeing of all Victorians.

That is why the Andrews Labor Government has invested \$420 million towards community sports infrastructure to ensure Victorians have access to sport and recreation facilities. Such upgrades and developments seek to increase participation for people of all ages and abilities.

I look forward to visiting St Albans Leisure Centre. Thank you for raising this matter with me, I trust this information has been of assistance to you.

School cleaners

Raised with: Minister for Education
Raised by: Mr Ondarchie
Raised on: 21 February 2018

REPLY:

I am informed as follows:

The new area-based school cleaning model has been designed to protect the school cleaning workforce. This new model will guarantee that every cleaner working in a Victorian government school will receive their legal wages and entitlements. The cleaning needs of schools are wide and varied and the existing cleaning workforce consists of selfless individuals who raise no objection to meeting these needs. This guarantee will ensure that all school cleaners are remunerated for any extra work they carry out in servicing our schools.

Following the feedback that the Department of Education and Training received from its consultation process, a tailored program of practical support has been developed to address the needs of affected school cleaning business owners and their staff.

This program of practical support includes private business mentoring sessions, targeted business development workshops, retraining and wellbeing support. All components are free to affected business owners. The mentoring and wellbeing support are strictly confidential and the content of which will not be shared with the Department.

The private business mentoring and business development workshops will deliver strategic thinking and skills to support cleaning business owners who want to continue to run their own cleaning business and diversify their customer base. For those who are seeking employment in the new school cleaning model or elsewhere, the retraining offers a qualification in cleaning management that is recognised by the cleaning industry and will support business owners, managers and supervisor during the transition time.

The Department has held information sessions across greater metropolitan Melbourne to introduce the components of this program of practical support. All school cleaning contractors were invited and they were encouraged to review the options available to them through this program of practical support.

In addition to services that are available in the program of practical support, the incoming service providers for metropolitan Melbourne will be required to recruit from the existing school cleaning workforce at first instance. This requirement is designed to ensure that school cleaners, those valued members of school communities who know the needs of their schools better than most, are offered work in the new model.

The program of practical support and the requirement for the incoming school cleaning service providers to prioritise recruitment from the existing school cleaning workforce will assist everyone to transition to the new model: business owners, managers, supervisors and cleaners.

South Melbourne public housing estate

Raised with: Minister for Police
Raised by: Ms Fitzherbert
Raised on: 21 February 2018

REPLY:

I thank Ms Fitzherbert for her question and appreciate her concern for the safety of the residents and neighbouring residents of Park Towers estate in South Melbourne.

I am advised by Victoria Police that there are various initiatives in place to combat crime in the estate, including a multi-faceted policing operation underway titled Operation Shrine. This operation comprises members for the South Melbourne Police Station, Port Phillip Criminal Investigation Unit, Divisional Response Unit, Frontline Tasking Unit and Multi-Cultural Unit. This joint response provides a visible and covert police presence enabling the targeting of recidivist and associate offenders residing in and around the Park Towers Estate.

Victoria Police are also invested in the Homelessness Working Group together with a number of our agency partners. In addition, police are endeavouring where appropriate, to engage potential offenders identified by those within the working group in a proactive manner.

In addition to localised responses, Victoria Police supports the consideration of an enhanced security presence at the facility by the current security contractors during daytime hours in the form of concierge model. This model would both enhance perceptions of safety and enable to the delivery of timely information to police where required.

In relation to police resources, I can assure you that the Andrews Labor Government is committed to ensuring Victoria Police have the necessary resources to protect the community from harm.

Earlier this month, the Chief Commissioner announced that 825 new police officers will commence deployment from May 2018, as part of the Government's commitment of 3135 extra police funded through the Community Safety Statement 2017.

As part of this deployment, an additional 6 police have been allocated to the Port Phillip Police Service Area, which services South Melbourne. This is in addition to the 7 crime investigation Unit resources and 6 family violence specialists what have been allocated across the broader division. This rollout is the second wave of police resources to hit the beat, since the deployment of the additional resources funded under the 2016-17 State Budget.

Retail gift cards

Raised with: Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation
Raised by: Ms Lovell
Raised on: 22 February 2018

REPLY:

The Victorian Government acknowledges the legitimate concerns of some consumers who have been unable to redeem gift cards due to short expiry periods.

In Victoria, gift card providers are regulated by a number of national laws including:

- the Australian Consumer Law, which prohibits false and misleading conduct and representations and unfair contract terms
- the Australian Securities and Investments Commission's (ASIC) Corporations (Non-Cash Payment Facilities) Instrument 2016/211, which requires that any expiry date for a gift card or voucher be prominently disclosed, and that the card or voucher can be spent in multiple transactions, and
- the ASIC voluntary ePayments Code, which requires subscribers (mainly banks and credit unions) to adopt minimum expiry dates of at least 12 months for prepaid cards, including gift cards.

The best protection for Victorian consumers will be achieved by imposing the national framework. A national approach is necessary given the national trade in gift cards, including through the internet, and the legal and practical issues with a single-jurisdiction approach. A national approach will also reduce red tape and conflicting requirements for businesses operating across Australia.

Therefore, I have written to the Commonwealth Government seeking support for better consumer protections in respect of gift cards, including longer and consistent expiry dates.

The Victorian Government will continue to work with the Commonwealth Government to progress this issue, and to ensure that the national regulation of gift cards is operating effectively and meets the needs of Victorian consumers and businesses.

Sex work legislation

Raised with: Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation
Raised by: Ms Springle
Raised on: 22 February 2018

REPLY:

I am aware of the developments internationally regarding the regulation of sex work, and the variety of responses that have been adopted, including the decriminalisation of sex work, and the criminalisation of clients of sex workers.

The government is considering the question of the need for a review, and the potential ambit of such a review if one proceeds in the future.

Werribee police numbers

Raised with: Minister for Police
Raised by: Mr Finn
Raised on: 22 February 2018

REPLY:

I appreciate the members concern regarding the incident that occurred in Werribee on 13 February 2018. I understand from Victoria Police that the investigation into this incident remains ongoing. As such it would not be appropriate for me to comment.

I can however assure the member that the Government and Victoria Police are committed to keeping the Victorian community safe. The latest crime statistics show that we are continuing to move in a positive direction, with both recorded criminal incidents and recorded offences showing a decrease by over eight per cent compared to the previous year.

While the allocation of police resources is appropriately a matter for the Chief Commissioner, I am pleased to advise that earlier this month an additional 12 frontline police and 6 specialist family violence officers were allocated to the Wyndham Police Service Area, which services Werribee. These additional resources will commence deployment from May 2018.

This rollout is the second wave of additional police resources to hit the beat in the Wyndham PSA, since the deployment an additional 27 officers funded under the 2016-17 State Budget.

Port Phillip Specialist School

Raised with: Minister for Education
Raised by: Ms Fitzherbert
Raised on: 22 February 2018

REPLY:

I am informed as follows:

The Andrews Labor Government is providing educational opportunities for all Victorians, including those with disabilities. Through the past three Budgets, we have allocated more than \$2.8 billion to deliver new and upgraded educational infrastructure. Our ongoing challenge, however, is to responsibly balance and prioritise the needs of over 1500 government schools, all in varying condition.

In relation to the Port Phillip Specialist School, I want to acknowledge the hard work and commitment of its teaching staff as well as the strong support given by the local community and its local Member, Martin Foley MP. Great schools depend on the dedication of their staff. For 20 years, the Port Phillip Specialist School has been highly innovative in meeting the learning and life-skill needs of its students.

The Department of Education and Training is aware that the school may have capital and maintenance requirements. The school's desire to upgrade its kitchen facilities is one of the many proposals that, at a state-wide level, contributes to the ongoing development of our school infrastructure.

With this in mind, I can assure you that the needs of all schools, including those of Port Phillip Specialist School, will be given equitable consideration when determining priorities for the capital works program and the allocation of resources in the State Budget.

Thank you for raising this matter with me.

Northern Metropolitan Region small business

Raised with: Minister for Small Business
Raised by: Mr Elasmar
Raised on: 6 March 2018

REPLY:

The Andrews Labor Government will always support Victorian small business, no matter if they are just starting out or striving to reach their next milestone.

Recent figures released by the Australia Bureau of Statistics show that Victoria is an attractive location to start a small business, with more than 20 000 small businesses created within the last year. This brings the total number of small business across the state to 576 000. Further, the Victorian small business sector is growing at a rate of 3.6 per cent, higher than the national average of 3.1 per cent.

The Northern Metropolitan Region is capitalising on this current confidence of the sector, with the number of small business in the region growing by 13 per cent over the last year. In 2016-17, there were 4526 new small businesses established in the Northern Metropolitan Region with the total number of small businesses reaching 103 636.

The industries that achieved particularly strong small business growth are those in electricity, gas, water and waste services, transport, postal and warehousing and education and training. These industries grew by 27.8 per cent, 29 per cent and 24 per cent respectively.

Wind energy

Raised with: Minister for Planning
Raised by: Mr Purcell
Raised on: 6 March 2018

REPLY:

Power lines throughout Victoria that are less than 220 000 kV capacity do not require a planning permit. It is only larger power lines that are more than 220 000 kV that require approval. Accordingly, the planning system does not have control over the location and appearance of these services. The government is not proposing to alter this.

However, I understand that, in line with the recommendations of the Finkel Review, the Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO) is developing an Integrated System Plan (ISP), due for release by mid-2018. A key aspect of the ISP will be the identification of renewable energy zones (REZs).

I understand that through this work the AEMO will identify transmission network routes to most efficiently connect REZs, and therefore new renewable energy generators, to the existing network.

North-east rail line

Raised with: Minister for Public Transport
Raised by: Mr Davis
Raised on: 6 March 2018

REPLY:

Unlike the former Liberal/National Government, who, in the words of the Member for Southern Metropolitan, did “nothing for the people of the North-east”, the Andrews Labor Government recognised an opportunity to properly address the issues on the North-east line by working with the Commonwealth Government.

I am pleased to advise the Member that the Andrews Labor Government has successfully secured an additional \$135 million commitment (further to the previously committed \$100 million) from the Commonwealth

Government, to upgrade the North-east line to at least Class 2 standard for passenger rail services. The works will be delivered by the Australian Rail Track Corporation.

The Commonwealth Government agreed with the Andrews Labor Government that, in order to run new trains on this line, we first needed to upgrade the track to the appropriate standard.

The Andrews Labor Government has also committed to procuring and delivering new standard gauge rolling stock for the North-east line, to be ready when the track upgrade works on the line are completed.

Land 400 project

Raised with: Minister for Industry and Employment

Raised by: Mr Ramsay

Raised on: 6 March 2018

REPLY:

The Andrews Government made every effort to secure LAND 400 Phase 2 for Victoria.

We relentlessly advocated for Victorian industry, and our exceptional, long-established and globally competitive capability in land military vehicles.

Our hard work resulted in our partnership with BAE Systems Australia to centre its LAND 400 operations in Victoria should its bid have been successful.

As you are aware, the Commonwealth Government chose to award the project to the tenderer that will base its operations in Queensland.

Considering the depth of manufacturing capability in Victoria, our proven track record delivering armoured vehicles, our highly skilled workforce and value for money, it makes no sense for this project to be based outside of Victoria.

Over the last three decades, Victorian workers have designed, built and upgraded over a thousand military vehicles, some of which have successfully served with Australian troops in Iraq, Afghanistan and East Timor, including the world class Hawkei and Bushmaster vehicles. Rheinmetall's vehicle has never been tested in combat.

After abandoning our automotive sector, sending ship building contracts to South Australia and Western Australia, submarine contracts to South Australia, this Commonwealth Government has now sent defence vehicles to Queensland.

Regardless, our manufacturing sector is growing. We have more manufacturing jobs than any other State, and the Australian Industry Group's Performance of Manufacturing index has shown 14 consecutive months for Victoria's index. This is the best result since 2003 and its achievement in the midst of the automotive manufacturing closure is a clear example of the success of the Andrews Government support for manufacturing.

We have been proud to support the endeavours of local companies in the defence industry, including companies like Marand, and will continue to support Victoria's highly capable defence industry seek and capture opportunities in the future.

I would appreciate any assistance the member can provide to ensure decisions such as this can be made on common sense and not politics in the future.

Regional forest agreements

Raised with: Premier
Raised by: Ms Dunn
Raised on: 7 March 2018

REPLY:

On March 27 2018, the Victorian Labor Government announced it would extend the Regional Forest Agreements (RFAs) in East Gippsland, Central Highlands and North East until 2020. This will modernise the state's RFAs to support jobs and improve the long-term management of Victoria's forests.

The Government is committed to achieving an appropriate balance between sustainable timber harvesting and protection of Victoria's forest values.

The short-term extensions will provide time for extensive consultation with scientific bodies, industry and the community to modernise the state's RFA framework and better manage Victoria's forests.

At the same time, the Labor Government announced it will provide immediate protection to approximately 2500 hectares of high environmental-value forest in and around the Kuark Forest.

About half this area is old growth forest and provides essential habitat for threatened species, including the greater glider.

In addition, the Labor Government will protect all large, old trees greater than two-and-a-half metres in diameter across Victoria.

The Labor Government will now engage with Victorian communities — including Traditional Owners and industry — to ensure the next set of RFAs provide for the long-term sustainable management of Victoria's forests.

While the Greens Political Party have no concern for the workers of this state, the Labor Government has provided certainty for workers while we protect Victoria's forests and modernise the way they are managed.

Serrated tussock control

Raised with: Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change
Raised by: Mr Finn
Raised on: 7 March 2018

REPLY:

The matters raised fall within the portfolio responsibilities of the Minister for Agriculture. The member will need to redirect his question to the Hon Jaala Pulford.

Shepparton infrastructure projects

Raised with: Treasurer
Raised by: Ms Lovell
Raised on: 7 March 2018

REPLY:

I thank the Member for raising this issue. I am aware of the infrastructure projects raised by the Member and they have been brought to my attention previously by the Member for Shepparton, Susanna Sheed.

This Government has delivered for Shepparton with investments including:

- \$169 million to redevelop the Goulburn Valley Health
- Funding to upgrade Bouchier Street Primary School Shepparton, Kialla West Primary School, Mooropna Park Primary School and Orrvale Primary School.

- \$43.5 million to improve transport connectivity between Seymour and Shepparton
- \$10.2 million to develop a business case and commence preconstruction activities for the Shepparton Bypass
- A 25% payroll tax cut for employers based in Shepparton

These investments, alongside numerous smaller commitments, represent the consistent investment we have made in regional Victoria. We have invested more in regional Victoria than the Coalition did in their entire term.

It would be contempt to do as the Coalition did and ignore the needs of the Shepparton region for too many years, only to rediscover them in Opposition.

Kingston City Council

Raised with: Special Minister of State
Raised by: Mrs Peulich
Raised on: 7 March 2018

REPLY:

I thank the Honourable Member for raising this issue.

The Local Government Act creates a framework within which local governments can independently exercise the functions and powers that the Parliament has granted to them.

The Local Government Investigations and Compliance Inspectorate is responsible for receiving complaints about and investigating matters relating to council operations and alleged breaches of the Local Government Act.

The Inspectorate operates independently of the Executive Government, and it is a matter for them to determine whether it is appropriate to initiate an investigation in relation to these matters. It would be inappropriate for me or the Executive Government to investigate these allegations.

My Department has referred the issue to the Chief Municipal Inspector for his consideration.

North-east rail line

Raised with: Minister for Public Transport
Raised by: Mr Davis
Raised on: 8 March 2018

REPLY:

Unlike the former Liberal/National Government, who, in the words of the Member for Southern Metropolitan, did “nothing for the people of the North-east”, the Andrews Labor Government recognised an opportunity to properly address the issues on the North-east line by working with the Commonwealth Government.

I am pleased to advise the Member that the Andrews Labor Government has successfully secured an additional \$135 million commitment (further to the previously committed \$100 million) from the Commonwealth Government, to upgrade the North-east line to at least Class 2 standard for passenger rail services. The works will be delivered by the Australian Rail Track Corporation.

The Commonwealth Government agreed with the Andrews Labor Government that, in order to run new trains on this line, we first needed to upgrade the track to the appropriate standard.

The Andrews Labor Government has also committed to procuring and delivering new standard gauge rolling stock for the North-east line, to be ready when the track upgrade works on the line are completed.

Melbourne Sports and Aquatic Centre

Raised with: Minister for Sport
Raised by: Ms Fitzherbert
Raised on: 8 March 2018

REPLY:

I refer to your adjournment debate matter requesting clarification on the policies surrounding the Melbourne Sports and Aquatic Centre raised in Legislative Council on 08 March 2018.

My department works closely with the State Sport Centres Trust to ensure that Melbourne Sports and Aquatic Centre balances the provision of access to both elite sport and community sport and recreation.

The State Sport Centres Trust is estimating an increase in visitation of 100 000 people for the 2017-18 financial year to approximately 2 million people. This has been attributed to State Sport Centres Trust implementing a range of initiatives, to increase participation and visitation at each of their facilities.

In addition to this, the State Sport Centre Trust ensures that government objectives of providing fair and equitable access to their facilities are met as far as possible. They do this by providing support to a range of both elite and community sporting bodies. The Melbourne Sports and Aquatic Centre is a centralised hub for many state, national and local sporting organisations. The State Sport Centres Trust ensures that access to competition, administration and training facilities are offered to sporting bodies at a fair and equitable rate. This enables these sporting bodies to drive participation and improve community engagement.

I assure you that the State Sport Centre Trust, responsible for the management of the Melbourne Sports and Aquatic Centre is committed to providing the best experience for all centre users.

Perth Avenue–Ballarat Road, Albion

Raised with: Minister for Roads and Road Safety
Raised by: Mr Finn
Raised on: 8 March 2018

REPLY:

VicRoads will continue to monitor the safety and operation of this section of Ballarat Road, and any upgrade will be considered against other state-wide priorities.

Bus services

Raised with: Minister for Public Transport
Raised by: Mr Dalla-Riva
Raised on: 8 March 2018

REPLY:

The Andrews Labor Government is committed to delivering quality bus services to all Victorians.

I announced on 16 February 2017 that the Victorian Government intends to modernise the metropolitan bus contracts that run Melbourne's huge bus network to improve services and put passengers first. At the same time, I made it clear that choices will be provided to support both big and small operators to transition to more flexible contracts.

These choices are the cornerstone of the negotiation process underway with incumbent operators for new contracts. The process provides bus operators with the ability to choose options that best suit the needs of their businesses. As the negotiation process is ongoing, it is not appropriate for me to comment further on contract details at this stage.

However, I can say that the option to explore the potential sale, lease or retention of business assets is a key choice available to each operator at their election, and is not compulsory. Should an operator choose to make assets available at contract-end, the sale or lease would be at full market value and would comply with appropriate policy and guidelines to ensure a fair and transparent process for both the State and bus operators.

Docklands Demons Ice Racing Club

Raised with: Minister for Sport
Raised by: Mr Elasmar
Raised on: 27 March 2018

REPLY:

The Sporting Club Grants program provides grants of up to \$1000 to clubs across Victoria to buy new team uniforms or equipment. Grants of up to \$2000 are also available to expand the skills of coaches and officials, and clubs can receive up to \$5000 for initiatives that strengthen their operations and sustainability.

I am delighted to inform you that Docklands Demons Ice Racing Club was successful in their application for funding under the 2017-18 Sporting Club Grants Program, Round 2, Category 1 — Uniforms.

Sport and Recreation Victoria, within the Department of Health and Human Services, will be in contact with the club shortly regarding funding arrangements for the above activity.

Merrilands Community Centre

Raised with: Minister for Training and Skills
Raised by: Ms Patten
Raised on: 27 March 2018

REPLY:

I am informed as follows:

The work of the Adult Community and Further Education (ACFE) Board is central to ensuring every individual has the opportunity to excel in education, regardless of their background, location, ability or circumstance. The Government, through the ACFE Board, allocated \$28 million in the 2017-2018 State Budget to support adult education in Victoria through Learn Local providers. Current funding does not include provision for infrastructure projects such as those raised.

Merrilands Community Centre in Darebin is a facility used by a larger group of organisations which has been managed by Preston Reservoir Adult Community Education Inc (PRACE) since 2003. Like all Learn Local organisations, the work of PRACE is critical in providing further opportunities in education and training. The ACFE Board currently provides approximately \$250 000 per annum to PRACE to provide a range of community-accessible pre-accredited courses, including those delivered from the Merrilands Community Centre in Darebin.

Learn Local providers also have access to funding for projects to improve access for disadvantaged learners to pre-accredited training through the Capacity and Innovation Fund. PRACE received \$49 600 through the last funding round to support a pre-apprenticeship project for disadvantaged learners to assist them to pathway into apprenticeships.

Whilst the Training and Skills portfolio provides extensive support for the Merrilands Community Centre as detailed above, unfortunately there is not a relevant funding program in my portfolio for infrastructure projects such as this.

Belgrave railway station car parking

Raised with: Minister for Public Transport
Raised by: Mr O'Donohue
Raised on: 27 March 2018

REPLY:

On Tuesday 10 April the Andrews Labor Government announced that it will provide funding in the Victorian Budget 2018/19 to deliver increased car parking at key stations across the network, including Belgrave.

A new multi-deck car park will be built in the Belgrave station precinct, providing over 300 additional car parks for commuters and visitors to Puffing Billy. This will free up more car parking in the town centre for local traders, shoppers and residents.

The station precinct will also be safer and easier to access with new lighting, CCTV, better parking and drop off points for coaches, and clearer signage.

Planning work for this project, including stakeholder and community engagement, will commence in the second half of 2018.

North-east link

Raised with: Minister for Roads and Road Safety
Raised by: Ms Dunn
Raised on: 27 March 2018

REPLY:

The community drop in sessions were rescheduled and will take place in the coming weeks in Watsonia, Rosanna, CBD, Blackburn North, Bulleen, Greensborough and Doncaster. The North East Link Authority (NELA) will be promoting these sessions in advance.

Short-stay accommodation

Raised with: Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation
Raised by: Mr Morris
Raised on: 27 March 2018

REPLY:

In its response to the Environment and Planning Committee's Inquiry into the Owners Corporations Amendment (Short-stay Accommodation) Bill 2016, the Victorian Government supported Recommendation 3, which proposed a review of the regulatory imbalance between the emerging short-stay and traditional accommodation sectors in Victoria.

The review responds to the issues various stakeholder groups from both sectors raised during the Inquiry, and acknowledges that those issues are not widely understood.

The Office of the Commissioner for Better Regulation will undertake the review over the next two years. It will examine the nature and extent of the problem, and will provide information and findings that will better inform future Government decision-making in this area.

Oromo community

Raised with: Premier
Raised by: Ms Truong
Raised on: 28 March 2018

REPLY:

As I stated in 2016, we recognise the plight of the Oromo people and are committed to supporting the Oromo community living in Victoria. Since 1999, the Victorian Government has provided funding to the community for a range of programs, festivals and events to support the preservation of the Oromo history and culture and the continuation of the Oromo language.

The Victorian Labor Government supports the Victorian Oromo community members and reaffirms their right to peaceful protests.

While direct engagement on an international level is the responsibility of the Federal Government, I note the Member for Essendon also expressed his support for Victorian Oromo people in Parliament on 9 March 2016.

We will continue to support Victorian Oromo people by promoting and maintaining harmony in our diverse multicultural community, as well as building resilience in communities who are dealing with the trouble in their homelands.

Bus contracts

Raised with: Minister for Public Transport
Raised by: Mr Davis
Raised on: 28 March 2018

REPLY:

I announced on 16 February 2017 that the Andrews Labor Government intends to modernise the contracts that cover Melbourne's bus network, to improve services and put passengers first.

Negotiations commenced in early 2017 with detailed consultation with all operators and the Bus Association Victoria (BAV), taking them through the Government's objectives, the contract packages on offer, and contract principles.

In early 2017, all operators signed a process deed governing the negotiation process, confidentiality requirements and probity obligations. As these negotiations concern commercial matters for each bus company and the State, it is important to ensure that the integrity of the negotiation process is maintained, with all parties upholding the agreements they have signed.

The Government has and continues to treat each bus operator's commercial business information with confidentiality.

As the letter to which Mr Davis refers states, public statements were made by the BAV relating to contract negotiations. The text of the letter continues as "an opportunity to remind [each operator] of your confidentiality obligations". This letter was not sent to a particular or individual bus company, but to all companies involved in the relevant stage of negotiations. The letter is in no way threatening, but simply seeks to clarify each party's requirements in light of public comments that had been made.

The Government concurs with the objectives that Mr. Davis raises in terms of achieving "good outcomes in terms of costs and results for communities" and "in terms of new routes and the quality and reliability of services". These have been key objectives of this process.

A number of contracts have been signed so far as part of this process. The new contracts provide the Government with more flexibility to improve and expand services where they are needed most. The contracts also emphasise on-time running and customer service to provide passengers with a more professional and reliable service.

Contract negotiations are progressing as planned, in good faith, with each remaining operator. The Andrews Labor Government remains committed to delivering quality bus services to all Victorians.

African-Australian community task force

Raised with: Minister for Multicultural Affairs
Raised by: Ms Springle
Raised on: 29 March 2018

REPLY:

The terms of reference for the African Australian Taskforce are to provide:

1. contemporary and relevant information to Victoria Police on emerging issues and trends;
2. a consolidated point of community expertise that can work with Victoria Police on the possible development and delivery of initiatives that focus on youth offending, recidivism, and anti-social behaviour;
3. a consolidated point of community expertise on the root causes and aggravating circumstances leading to youth offending. This advice will be used to influence whole of government responses;
4. advice to Victoria Police on issues and instances of racial vilification, lateral violence, and other crimes affecting the African communities of Victoria.

The Taskforce is exclusively comprised of people of African backgrounds, with diversity of age, gender, cultural background and areas of interest. Each Taskforce member brings a range of unique skill sets and perspectives. There are currently 27 members across the state representing 16 Local Government Areas with a further four pending endorsement from the convenor. All task force participation is voluntary.

The work plan is under development, and the Taskforce is expected to operate for 12 months from its commencement which was 12 January, 2018.