

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

FIFTY-EIGHTH PARLIAMENT

FIRST SESSION

**WRITTEN RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS
WITHOUT NOTICE**

4 May to 10 May 2018

(Extract from book 6)

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

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
Minister for Industry and Employment	The Hon. B. A. Carroll, MP
Minister for Trade and Investment, Minister for Innovation and the Digital Economy, and Minister for Small Business	The Hon. P. Dalidakis, MLC
Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, and Minister for Suburban Development	The Hon. L. D' Ambrosio, MP
Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and Minister for Ports	The Hon. L. A. Donnellan, MP
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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 Families and Children, Minister for Early Childhood Education and Minister for Youth Affairs	The Hon. J. Mikakos, MLC
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Attorney-General and Minister for Racing	The Hon. M. P. Pakula, MP
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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

President:

The Hon. B. N. ATKINSON

Deputy President:

Mr K. EIDEH

Acting Presidents:

Ms Dunn, Mr Elasmr, Mr Melhem, Mr Morris, Ms Patten, Mr Purcell, Mr Ramsay

Leader of the Government:

The Hon. G. JENNINGS

Deputy Leader of the Government:

The Hon. J. L. PULFORD

Leader of the Opposition:

The Hon. M. WOOLDRIDGE

Deputy Leader of the Opposition:

The Hon. G. K. RICH-PHILLIPS

Leader of The Nationals:

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 RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Responses have been incorporated in the form provided to Hansard and received in the period shown.

2 May to 10 May 2018**Unlicensed shooters**

Question asked by: Mr Bourman
Directed to: Minister for Corrections
Asked on: 29 March 2018

RESPONSE TO SUBSTANTIVE QUESTION:

To bolster the police response across the state the Andrews Labor Government is funding an additional 3135 frontline police over the next five years. This is the biggest boost to frontline police in Victoria's history and is crucial to dealing with the growing demand on police services.

Victorian communities can look forward to seeing an increased police presence across the State with the roll out of additional frontline police. Commencing in May, Victoria Police will deploy a total of 825 additional police officers during 2018-19. This boost in resources is funded as part of the Government's \$2 billion investment in police under the Community Safety Statement 2017. It is the second wave of police resources to hit the beat since the deployment of additional frontline police funded under the 2016-17 State Budget.

The location and deployment of police officers is a matter for the Chief Commissioner of Police, as determined by the staff allocation model. The model maximises the efficiency of police resourcing by assessing demand and allocating resources. Accordingly, police officers are assigned and transferred within divisions by local command based on operational need.

Victoria Police works closely with partner agencies, including the Game Management Authority (GMA) which is the primary regulator of game hunting in Victoria, to address illegal shooting and hunting and to ensure hunters are complying with the relevant laws governing hunting and the use of firearms. All agencies continue to work together and engage with the community to educate and to ensure compliance with hunting and public safety law standards.

RESPONSE TO SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:

The Firearms Act 1996 contains provisions for the surrender and forfeiture of firearms and ammunition, in certain circumstances. Where a person's firearms licence has been cancelled or suspended there are mechanisms for the surrender of their firearm and ammunition. Where a person has been found guilty of an offence against the Firearms Act or another offence involving firearms or becomes a 'prohibited person' the courts may order the forfeiture of any firearm or ammunition in the possession of or used or carried by the person.

Separate to the surrender and forfeiture of firearms under in the Firearms Act, which is primarily focused on firearm licensing outcomes and certain court orders, the Confiscation Act 1997, administered by the Attorney-General, is the principal legislative scheme for the forfeiture of property obtained from or used in the commission of criminal offences.

While the Confiscation Act is focused on serious criminal offences, depending on the circumstances the forfeiture regime could extend to other property or assets involved in illegal hunting. Importantly, for the purposes of the tools available under the Act, it includes specific offences that relate to hunting. Amongst other tools, the Act provides for an application to the court for a forfeiture order to deprive offenders of property that is linked with criminal offending.

Small business assets

Question asked by: Mr Davis
Directed to: Minister for Small Business
Asked on: 1 May 2018

RESPONSE TO SUBSTANTIVE QUESTION:

I refer to my answer previously provided to the House on a matter raised by the Member for Southern Metropolitan on 22 February 2018: I do not deal in hypotheticals and therefore not in a position to answer that question.

RESPONSE TO SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:

I am advised that as of 1 May 2018 my office had not received any such representations.

FURTHER RESPONSE TO SUBSTANTIVE QUESTION:

The Andrews Labor Government continues to support small business operators across Victoria, and I reject the premise of the Member's question.

North Richmond supervised injecting facility

Question asked by: Ms Fitzherbert
Directed to: Special Minister of State
Asked on: 1 May 2018

RESPONSE:

People leaving the medically supervised injecting room will be subject to the same drink and drug driving laws as all other Victorians.

School cleaning contracts

Question asked by: Mr Ondarchie
Directed to: Minister for Small Business
Asked on: 1 May 2018

RESPONSE TO SUBSTANTIVE QUESTION:

As these reforms fall within the Department of Education and Training the Member may wish to raise matters relating to this process with the Minister for Education.

RESPONSE TO SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:

As reforms to school cleaning contracts fall within the Department of Education and Training the Member may wish to raise matters relating to this process with the Minister for Education. However, the question raised by the Member reminds me of the Book of Matthew 6:5 "And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full."

Electorate office budgets

Question asked by: Mr Rich-Phillips
Directed to: Special Minister of State
Asked on: 1 May 2018

RESPONSE:

As I outlined in my answer to the House, the Australian Labor Party determined to repay the full amount to the Department of Parliamentary Services to avoid any doubt or require any further examination of the quantum that was acquitted performing duties within the scope of Electorate officer duties or outside the scope as deemed by the Ombudsman.

It is most likely that a sum greater than 25 percent has already been paid.

Electorate office staff

Question asked by: Mr Ramsay
Directed to: Minister for Corrections
Asked on: 1 May 2018

RESPONSE TO SUBSTANTIVE QUESTION:

The issue of staffing arrangements in my electorate office were questions asked of me by the Ombudsman in her recent inquiry on these matters.

I fully cooperated with the Ombudsman in her inquiry, which included answering questions on the very matter that the Member raises in his question.

The Ombudsman notes in her report that the Members of Parliament involved in the staff pooling arrangements acted in good faith and derived little or no personal benefit from the use of parliamentary funds in this way.

The Ombudsman makes no recommendations that action be taken against anyone involved in these arrangements.

RESPONSE TO SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:

Again, the issue raised in the Member's supplementary question is also contained in the Ombudsman's report.

FURTHER RESPONSE TO SUBSTANTIVE QUESTION:

The Ombudsman notes in her report that the Members of Parliament involved in the staff pooling arrangements acted in good faith and derived little or no personal benefit from the use of parliamentary funds in this way.

The Ombudsman makes no recommendations that action be taken against anyone involved in these arrangements.

I provided answers and documentation throughout the Ombudsman's inquiry and therefore I would refer the Member to the Ombudsman's Report.

In the interests of public confidence, the Premier requested that the State Secretary of the Victorian Branch of the Australian Labor Party reimburse, in full, funds expended through the staff pooling arrangements.

The Ombudsman recommends that the Parliament consider giving greater clarity to the role of electorate office staff and improve transparency around the expenditure of MP allowances.

The Government is already taking a number of steps to make the Parliamentary allowance system for MPs more transparent and accountable — something the previous Liberal Government refused to do.

We support all of the Ombudsman's recommendations and will ensure the Parliament is provided with all the support required to implement them.

FURTHER RESPONSE TO SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:

The Ombudsman notes in her report that the Members of Parliament involved in the staff pooling arrangements acted in good faith and derived little or no personal benefit from the use of parliamentary funds in this way.

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The Government is already taking a number of steps to make the Parliamentary allowance system for MPs more transparent and accountable — something the previous Liberal Government refused to do.

We support all of the Ombudsman's recommendations and will ensure the Parliament is provided with all the support required to implement them.

Firearm regulation

Question asked by: Mr Bourman
Directed to: Minister for Corrections
Asked on: 1 May 2018

RESPONSE TO SUBSTANTIVE QUESTION:

A number of agencies have a role in the overall regulation of firearms in Australia. At the Commonwealth level, the Department of Home Affairs (Home Affairs) is responsible for border management and the importation of firearms and this can extend to items once they have been imported into Australia.

Victoria Police advises that in March 2018, the Licensing and Regulation Division became aware that Home Affairs was moving to retrieve these rifles based on its review of the rifle's classification. Victoria Police also advises that Home Affairs would be contacting affected owners.

RESPONSE TO SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION

As indicated in the response to the substantive question above, there are a number of Commonwealth and state and territory agencies that have a role in the overall regulation of firearms. Victoria Police will continue to work closely with its federal and state and territory partners.

Prisoner social media access

Question asked by: Mr O'Donohue
Directed to: Minister for Corrections
Asked on: 8 May 2018

RESPONSE TO SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:

Corrections Victoria staff monitor social media relating to selected prisoners, with particular focus on maintaining the good order and security of the prison, any unlawful activity, and posts that could compromise the safety of any individual — in prison or in the community — or be offensive to victims.

Victorian prisoners do not have access to mobile phones or the internet and cannot upload or publish information themselves.

Prisoners do have the right to communicate with approved persons by mail and telephone, provided that it complies with the requirements of the Corrections Act.

Wild dog control

Question asked by: Ms Bath
Directed to: Minister for Agriculture
Asked on: 8 May 2018

RESPONSE:

This Government has made wild dog control a priority and supports affected landholders to reduce the impact of wild dogs through an integrated wild dog control program. The wild dog control program is centred around community involvement and includes baiting, trapping, shooting, exclusion fencing, guardian animals and community based control activities.

The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Regulations 2008 (POCTA Regulations), do not permit the use of leghold traps with a jaw spread greater than 15.5 cm for wild dog trapping.

However, traps greater than 15.5cm have continued to be used since 2008 under exemptions to the POCTA Regulations.

After a nine year transition period, the most recent exemption expired on 31 December 2017. History shows that it was the former government's decision to sunset this exemption.

The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning's Wild Dog Controllers already use traps with a jaw spread between 13-15.5 cm, and most prefer them.

Lemnos solar plant

Question asked by: Mr O'Sullivan
Directed to: Minister for Agriculture
Asked on: 8 May 2018

RESPONSE:

Land use applications for solar farm developments, and the development of guidelines to inform decisions on solar farm applications, are both matters for the Minister for Planning.

At the request of the Member for Shepparton, Suzanna Sheed MP and the Greater Shepparton City Council, the Minister for Planning has called in four planning permit applications for solar farm developments in Greater Shepparton City Council. The Minister for Planning appointed a Panel to consider the applications and public hearings will commence on 14 May.

Agriculture Victoria will support the development of guidelines for solar farm proposals.

Agriculture Victoria is working with the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning to provide evidence to inform the Panel's consideration of the solar farm applications.

I had discussions with Ms Suzanna Sheed MP, Member for Shepparton District several months ago, and raised the question of planning controls for solar farms with the Minister for Planning in 2017. Ms Sheed is actively involved in advocating for her constituency on the matter and the government will continue to work with her on these issues.

Electorate office budgets

Question asked by: Mr Rich-Phillips
Directed to: Minister for Corrections
Asked on: 8 May 2018

RESPONSE TO SUBSTANTIVE QUESTION:

None.

RESPONSE TO SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:

The Attorney-General became aware of Victoria Police's decision when that decision was made public.

Recycling industry

Question asked by: Ms Truong
Directed to: Special Minister of State
Asked on: 8 May 2018

RESPONSE:

The Andrews Labor Government is investing at record levels in waste and resource recovery. That includes programs to develop markets for recovered resources, facilitate private investment in resource recovery infrastructure, and educate households and businesses about how to better manage waste. The last four state budgets provided more than \$81 million to improve waste and resource recovery—the largest ever allocation by any Victorian Government.

This is in comparison to the Coalition Government who approved less than \$15 million in new spending from the Sustainability Fund over their entire four years in government.

A \$14.5 million package was included in the 2018-19 budget which is helping councils ensure continued collection of kerbside recycling and supporting industry to fast-track development of new infrastructure.

The government has also established a taskforce to develop a strategic plan to assist the recycling industry to reset in the medium to long term. The taskforce is considering all available information, including input directly from the recycling industry and local government, and approaches taken by other jurisdictions. The taskforce is identifying effective ways to transition to a more sustainable and resilient recycling sector. The strategic plan will examine the role of different actors in promoting a more circular economy and will be considered by government shortly. The government will then be in position to consider next steps, and any additional investment required in resource recovery.

Logging coupe planned burns

Question asked by: Ms Dunn
Directed to: Minister for Agriculture
Asked on: 8 May 2018

RESPONSE:

VicForests advises it has not been engaged in emergency meetings with the Department of Health and Human Services or the Environment Protection Agency.

Aboriginal cultural support plans

Question asked by: Ms Springle
Directed to: Minister for Families and Children
Asked on: 9 May 2018

RESPONSE:

The Victorian Budget 2018/19 includes \$47.3 million to support implementation of Wungurilwil Gagapduir: Aboriginal Children and Families Agreement — a ground breaking tripartite partnership between the Aboriginal communities, government and community service organisations.

The Agreement, and the accompanying Strategic Action Plan, aims to address the over-representation of Aboriginal children and young people in the child protection and care system by:

- Continuing assistance for Aboriginal organisations to allow them to support more Aboriginal children and young people on protection orders
- Transitioning case management of more Aboriginal children in out-of-home care to Aboriginal Controlled Community Organisations
- Improving cultural connection for Aboriginal young people in care
- Strengthening evidence-based policy and practice for services involving Aboriginal families and children.

I am advised that there are currently deficiencies in the data reporting for cultural planning. These deficiencies in data reporting are being addressed. Advice from Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations who are required to approve cultural support plans indicate that the number of plans and their quality has vastly improved.

The member appears to be unaware that the former Aboriginal Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People, Andrew Jackomos tabled his report — Always was, always will be Koori children in our Parliament. This was an investigation into the circumstances of 980 Aboriginal children and young people in out-of-home care in Victoria including the preparation of cultural plans.

I am grateful to Mr Jackomos for highlighting the issues in his report that led to significant investment in our 2016 Budget, including the appointment of 18 cultural planners responsible for ensuring cultural plans are completed. The Andrews Labor Government also funded the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency to create an online cultural portal which aids in the preparation of cultural plans.

Child protection

Question asked by: Ms Springle
Directed to: Minister for Families and Children
Asked on: 9 May 2018

RESPONSE:

The permanency changes were passed by the Victorian Parliament in September 2014 and commenced in March 2016.

I requested the Commission for Children and Young People complete an independent inquiry into the permanency changes following the first six months of their operation to examine if the stated objectives were being met and whether they were having any unintended consequences.

‘Safe and Wanted — an inquiry into the implementation of permanency arrangements’; the Victorian Government’s response to the findings and recommendations of the inquiry into the implementation of the Children, Youth and Families Amendment (Permanent Care and Other Matters) Act 2014 was published on 14 December 2017.

The Victorian Government has adopted the majority of the recommendations relating to additional resourcing, training and workforce, improving policy and practice, and is committed to monitoring the impact of the changes.

The Commission for Children and Young People has been provided with the Government's response. Of the forty recommendations, the department has fully implemented one recommendation and has commenced work to progress implementation of the remaining twenty five accepted recommendations. These recommendations include conducting a further independent review in two years' time, informed by a longitudinal study of children affected by the amendments.

The recommended longitudinal study will commence upon completion of a tender process to identify a suitable organisation to undertake the study. The tender process is under way, and I will have more to say about this in due course. I am advised that an update was provided to the Commission for Children and Young People on 1 February 2018. The new Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People, Mr Justin Mohamed, will also receive an update upon his commencement in the role.

Firearm regulation

Question asked by: Mr Bourman
Directed to: Minister for Corrections
Asked on: 9 May 2018

RESPONSE TO SUBSTANTIVE QUESTION:

Victoria Police advises that its Licensing and Regulation Division (LRD) interacts with clients via a number of channels including face to face, online and through its dedicated customer service line. Emails can be sent outside of these communicated hours and are addressed as soon as practicable by customer service representatives. Further, Victoria Police advises that email communication has been well received by stakeholders as it provides clarity and clear hours of operation to ensure that other important business priorities can be met.

Law enforcement agencies at both the State and Commonwealth level, including agencies within the Department of Home Affairs portfolio, are able to contact the LRD and Victoria Police with requests or advice via alternate channels for all requests.

RESPONSE TO SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:

Victoria Police advises that LRD operates under a framework of risk based regulation where risks and compliance activities assist in the proficient use of resources to meet the needs of the regulatory functions to ensure community safety.

Through the Government's Statement of Expectation (SOE) framework, LRD is committed to reducing the regulatory burden by promoting greater efficiency and effectiveness in the administration and enforcement of firearms and private security regulation.

The SOE sets out the Minister for Police's expectations of the LRD to meet these goals and also outlines the Minister's continued expectations on improvements for the LRD's performance.

The SOE is available on Victoria Police's website and highlights the focus of the LRD over the past few years and will continue to help drive efficiencies for the broader regulatory role and its priorities for its operations.

Electorate office budgets

Question asked by: Mr Rich-Phillips
Directed to: Special Minister of State
Asked on: 9 May 2018

RESPONSE TO SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:

The Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal and Improving Parliamentary Standards Bill 2017 will lift parliamentary standards and creates new rules for the use of public resources from the start of the next Parliament. This includes the obligation that the Electorate Office and Communications Budget and allowances can only be used for the dominant purpose of performing public duties. These new obligations will be enforced by the Clerks of Parliament and the Secretary of the Department of Parliamentary Services, who will be given a wide range of powers to administer the monitoring, compliance and enforcement regime.

The Bill proposes a 25% penalty to be imposed on top of the verified amount of allowances or Electorate Office and Communications Budget misused or claimed inappropriately. The 25% penalty will apply equally to all MPs who breach this obligation.

I look forward to the Opposition's support for the full implementation of these provisions in the Bill.

In relation to the retrospective element of your question, the Government has supported all of the Ombudsman's recommendations contained in her report on this matter, and notes that the report did not make any recommendations about the repayment of money or the imposition of a 25% penalty in this circumstance.

GOTAFE

Question asked by: Mr O'Sullivan
Directed to: Minister for Training and Skills
Asked on: 9 May 2018

RESPONSE TO SUBSTANTIVE QUESTION:

This Government does welcome scrutiny to improve training quality in the vocational education and training sector, and as I have previously advised the house, I ordered an inquiry in February this year to get to the bottom of the problems identified by the Department of Education and Training. The final report has now been received by the Department and me, and its findings are under consideration, and I look forward to saying more about this very shortly.

RESPONSE TO SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:

I am considering the report and I will be making an announcement shortly, and in those considerations I will take on board that question.

Prisoner social media access

Question asked by: Mr O'Donohue
Directed to: Minister for Corrections
Asked on: 9 May 2018

RESPONSE TO SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:

Firstly, the twitter account that Mr O'Donohue continues to raise, and in doing so is publicising, is not operated by a prisoner but by a member of the public.

Secondly the Corrections Act does not prevent community members from establishing social media accounts on behalf of prisoners, as Mr O'Donohue asserts.

Prisoners' written communications with approved persons may constitute a breach of the Corrections Act if they are, for example, threatening, harassing, abusive, encouraging unlawful activity, which put the good order of the prison or the community at risk, or contain material that may be regarded by a victim as distressing or traumatic.

The misuse of telephones by prisoners is proscribed by the Corrections Regulations, and such breaches of the regulations are also commonly detected at correctional facilities.

Dhurringile Prison

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RESPONSE TO SUBSTANTIVE QUESTION:

A staff member resigned from Dhurringile Prison earlier this year following allegations of misconduct. I was advised about this matter within an appropriate timeframe.

RESPONSE TO SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:

To date, I have been satisfied with Corrections Victoria's response to incidents that have occurred at the minimum-security Dhurringile Prison. This has included incident investigations and implementation of corrective actions, and, where appropriate, consultation with the local Community Advisory Group.

The Community Advisory Group, along with the communications protocol, was set up in response to the spate of escapes that occurred in 2013 and 2014 under Mr O'Donohue's time as Corrections Minister. During this time, Dhurringile had a record ten escapes — a hallmark of the Coalition's bungled rapid expansion.