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Dear Liberals

Although the Coalition was defeated at the Federal Election, John Howard and Peter Costello will be long remembered for delivering a strong and robust economy for all Australians. The Liberal Party now must rise to the challenge of national renewal and move towards rebuilding for the future.

My congratulations to David Hawker on retaining the seat of Wannon, and on behalf of supporters thank Stuart McArthur for 23 years of dedicated service to the people of Corangamite.

Recent heavy spring rain has been most welcome across much of Western Victoria, replenishing many urban water supplies and farm dams, but water security remains a major issue, especially in the north.

An emergency rescue helicopter for Western Victoria, police resources, transport links, school maintenance, public housing, planning issues and local government funding are among the other major issues for Western Victoria. The Brumby Government spends record amounts on promoting itself and expanding government bureaucracy but fails to meet the growing demand for infrastructure renewal and services, especially in provincial and regional Victoria.

Increasing cost of water

Revelations that the cost of the Wimmera-Mallee pipeline has blown out from \$501 million to beyond \$750 million and still growing, confirms yet again the Brumby Government's lack of responsibility in managing crucial fiscal and infrastructure development programs. The Premier says he will contribute \$99 million of the present \$248 million overrun if it is matched by Federal funds. He expects customers to pick up another \$50 million on top of \$167 million they are already paying.

Wimmera Mallee farmers will bear an average 17.1% increase for water from next year, well above CPI, with some paying a staggering 81.3% increase. This price hike will be followed by bigger annual increases if customers are forced to pay more for the pipeline.

The Premier has capped metropolitan water cost increases at 15% a year but refuses to cap regional increases or acknowledge that rate bases in country Victoria are exhausted after eight years of drought and

cost shifting. The Government should have created a stand-alone pipeline construction authority with the expertise to oversee planning, tendering and construction of major pipeline infrastructure instead of abrogating its responsibility to water authorities.

The Brumby Government has continually signed off on fuzzy cost overruns for major projects without warning the community and in the process has wasted millions of tax payer dollars.

Emergency rescue helicopter

Over 16,000 residents from across Western Victoria signed a petition calling for an emergency rescue helicopter service to be based in the only region of Victoria that has been denied this life saving resource. The Premier's *ill-advised decision to deny funding* continues to place in jeopardy the lives of those who live, work or visit Western Victoria.



Supporting calls for the WestVic Emergency Rescue Helicopter

Police resources

Crime and antisocial behaviour around popular night spots in Geelong have long been of concern to the community. As part of a broader safety strategy, Greater Geelong Council has submitted an application for Federal funding under the National Community Crime Prevention program to supplement the city's CCTV camera network by introducing a mobile closed-circuit television system where footage from strategically located cameras is transmitted directly to police on patrol. The State Government has also been called upon for funding assistance to improve public safety *but these calls remain unheeded*.

Princes Highway west of Geelong

The Brumby Government must accept its responsibility to upgrade the Princes Highway to a

dual carriageway between Geelong and Colac. Those travelling this 70km stretch of highway face a greater risk along this high accident zone and with the completion of the Geelong Ring Road in 2009, increasing traffic volumes will add to the danger of travelling on this already over-stressed highway.

Parliamentary sitting

I raised many matters of concern with Ministers during the Parliamentary sitting. These included querying VicRoads' decision to issue all over dimensional load permits from Melbourne, removing a previously well regarded system that saw local permit officers with local knowledge issuing permits in a timely, practical and consistent manner.

The relocation of transport safety service officers from Hamilton's VicRoads office to Warrnambool was also raised with the Minister for Roads. These officers assist heavy vehicle drivers comply with regulations.

Concerns were directed to the Minister for Water about an announcement to construct a new pipeline connecting Hamilton to the Wimmera-Mallee system. As no detail had been given as to why alternative water sources were ruled out, an undertaking was sought to ensure the most efficient option was used.

Funding for the Stawell Gift was raised with the Minister for Sport, in particular State Government sponsorship which runs out in 2008. The Minister was called on to consider the Gift as a Hallmark Tourism Event and to continue providing financial support for this iconic event.

A recent tender process used by Maryborough District Health Service for the supply of food and beverages was raised with the Minister for Health after concerns from small business operators in Avoca who were unable to bid for their local health service tender and they were not advised accordingly.



On-site with colleagues John Vogels and Donna Petrovich

Assurances were sought from the Minister for Water that the State Government would meet the cost overrun of the Wimmera Mallee pipeline and not force the community to pay more to complete the pipeline.

The Minister for Education was told of the substandard condition of facilities at Horsham Special School and was invited to visit the dual campus school to see first hand the need to prioritise the construction of a new purpose-built, single-site campus.

Other matters raised included the official opening of Anam Cara House respite and palliative care hospice in Geelong; the major contribution of local cemetery trusts which feared abolition under recommendations in the State Services Authority's recent report on the review of cemetery trusts in Victoria; the historic 150th running of the Coleraine Cup; and the formal opening of the Ballarat Cancer Research Centre.

Many of the above matters were raised in media releases that can be seen at www.davidkoch.com.au

New legislation

Recent legislation debated in the Upper House and of interest to farmers includes the *Grain Handling and Storage Amendment Bill 2007*, which regulates handling of storage services for grain to be exported from the Port of Melbourne, bringing it under the same regime as the ports of Geelong and Portland; the *Firearms Amendment Bill 2007*, which reviews gun ownership and licensing procedures, and defines the storage of firearms; and the *Transport and Animal Bill 2007*, which contains numerous shortfalls that appease city-centric animal rights groups who have no real understanding of animal welfare. Legislation details are at www.dms.dpc.vic.gov.au

Autumn 2008 Parliamentary sitting dates

	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
February	5	6	7	8*
	26	27	28	29*
March	11	12	13	14*
April	8	9	10	11*
	15	16	17	18*
May	6^	7	8	9
	27	28	29	30*
June	10	11	12	13*
	24	25	26	27*

* If required, Council only; ^ Assembly only

Season's greetings

Jenny, Ian and I wish you all a happy festive season and a prosperous 2008. With the Federal election behind us, I now look forward to working with you as we travel safely through the Christmas break and into the new year. Thank you for your support during 2007.

David Koch