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Western Victoria Region Half Yearly Newsletter No. 4 - June 2008

Dear Liberals

The Brumby Labor Government has benefited from record state tax and GST revenue, but has again failed in the 2008-09 Budget to use its huge windfalls for delivering better services in regional Victoria. Its ongoing neglect in repairing and maintaining crumbling infrastructure and inadequate funding for new infrastructure, particularly in rural areas shows its city-centric focus at the expense of country Victorians.

Revenue has doubled from \$19 billion in 1999 to \$38 billion in 2008-09. No other state in Australia has experienced this level of revenue growth. But instead of directing a fair share of its overflowing coffers to rural and regional Victoria, the Brumby Government wastes millions of tax-payer dollars on an ever-expanding bureaucracy, gloating self promotion and costly consultant reviews that go unheeded.

Victoria's public sector debt, estimated to more than quadruple from \$4 billion in 2005 to almost \$20 billion in 2011, shows a Government incapable of managing Victoria's booming economy.

Despite one of the most severe droughts in Victoria's history persisting in 2008, the Brumby Government's poorly designed and poorly managed water and drought management policies again represent its Melbourne-centric bias. The staggering price hike for water, the failure to address the Fire Services Levy that unfairly hits already over-taxed property owners and the recently scuttled Network Tariff Rebate Scheme that kept rural electricity bills within reasonable limits, all add up to further penalising those who live and work in country Victoria.

Major arterial roads across the region desperately need upgrading. While funding has been committed to duplicate the Princes Highway from Pettavel Road to Winchelsea, no State funding has been allocated towards duplicating the Western Highway from Ballarat to Stawell or for more passing lanes to the South Australian border. In addition, the full length of the Henty Highway urgently needs upgrading and will deteriorate further as the volume of export freight moved by road to Portland dramatically increases as primary producers are forced to move more and more grain by road next summer.

After an eight-year struggle, the Brumby Government has at last promised Western Victoria an emergency rescue helicopter to be based in Warrnambool. The announcement only came after one of the largest ever petitions, nearly 30,000 signatures, to be tabled in the Parliament and an extensive community awareness program using posters and the internet. The hard work and persistence of police, ambulance and CFA personnel, health professionals and local residents to secure a helicopter for the only region in the State without one has finally paid off.

As one of those who campaigned strongly alongside Denis Naphine, Member for South-West Coast; John Vogels, fellow Member for Western Victoria; and Hugh Delahunty, Member for Lowan; this funding commitment is very welcome news.



Geoff Downes helps dismantle poster after successful campaign.

The voluntary time and effort so willingly given by many across the region is gratefully appreciated and I extend my thanks to all, particularly Keith Meerbach of Portland; Dominique Fowler of Terang; Geoff Downes of Hamilton; and former Chairmen of the WestVic Helicopter Rescue Service Committee, Inspector John Robinson; and his successor, Chairman Stephen Lucas, for achieving this great outcome.

The Brumby Government must now make sure the helicopter is in service as soon as possible and provide an actual start date so no more lives are lost due to unnecessary delays.

Parliamentary sitting

Numerous matters of concern to the region were raised with Ministers during the autumn sitting. These included the Premier's refusal to release information on the viability of an emergency rescue helicopter for Western Victoria; the Government's reluctance to support Ford Australia by not demanding the Rudd Federal Government keep the former Howard Government's promise to maintain car manufacturing jobs in Victoria, particularly in Geelong; seeking a guarantee of future water security for the Glenelg River and Balmoral's water supply by reviewing the connection of Hamilton to Rocklands Reservoir; the effect of government policy on the survival of country taxi services and the need to increase the maximum multipurpose taxi program subsidy, especially for children and adults with disabilities who live in rural and remote areas; relocating roll-on/roll-off vehicle movements to the Port of Geelong to ease congestion at Melbourne's Webb Dock; querying the Government on why the Lexton police residence remains vacant despite a permanent officer being appointed to reside in Lexton; calls for an inquiry into Government funding for the Anglesea riverbank development on the basis that the submission for the grant under the Small Towns Development Fund misrepresented the Anglesea community's views; scrapping by the Brumby Government of funding for successful children's health promotion programs in Geelong; addressing shortfalls in the Victorian Electoral Council's terms of reference for the electoral representation review of the Greater Geelong City Council; State Government funding for regional library services; congestion at the Geelong-Portarlington road roundabout at Drysdale; the urgent need to support Geelong police with more resources to fight ongoing street crime; and Grampians Wimmera Mallee Water's unpopular compulsory rating regime on currently unrated landholders who do not want access to piped water.

Spring 2008 Parliamentary sitting dates

	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
June	10	11	12	13*
	24	25	26	27*
July	29	30	31	1*
August	19	20	21	22*
September	9	10	11	12*
October	7	8	9	10*
<i>Regional sitting</i>		15 Assembly only	16 Council only	
November	11	12	13	14*
December	2	3	4	5*

* If required, Council only.

Other matters of concern included resourcing domestic violence outreach services in Hamilton and Portland for the growing number of women experiencing domestic violence; compensation for diving industry operators on the Bellarine Peninsula who are affected by the dredging of Port Phillip Bay; upgrading of the Nigretta Road-Glenelg Highway intersection near Hamilton; the outcome of the Geelong 2020 summit; attendance at the recent Wyndham City Council citizenship ceremony in Werribee; and the convincing win by Andrew Katos following the Deakin Ward by-election at Geelong.

These matters and others were also raised in media releases that can be seen at www.davidkoch.com.au

New legislation

Recent legislation debated in the Upper House included the Environment Protection Amendment (Landfill Levies) Bill that essentially adopts Liberal Party policy taken to the 2006 election of not establishing a new toxic waste dump in country Victoria and to work with industry to reduce the level of toxic waste consigned to landfill. But the primary purpose of this legislation, although masquerading as a measure to protect the environment, is to increase taxes on industry and local government, which manages municipal waste collection.

Further details of this and other current legislation can be seen at www.dms.dpc.vic.gov.au

Congratulations

A large crowd of well-wishers were delighted to join David Hawker on 3 May 2008 in celebrating 25 years as Federal Member for Wannan. Congratulations to David and Penny on this special occasion.



With Dr Brendan Nelson and John Vogels at 25th anniversary celebrations for David Hawker as Federal Member for Wannan.

Thanks

Thank you to all members and friends of the Liberal Party for your ongoing support and encouragement.

David Koch