

Victorian Shadow Treasurer's 2013-14 Budget Reply

May 2013

On Thursday 10 May 2013, Victorian Shadow Treasurer Tim Pallas delivered his first Budget Reply speech to the Parliament of Victoria.

The full text of Mr Pallas' speech is available [here](#).

With the Victorian state election not scheduled to take place until 29 November 2014, this speech unsurprisingly contained no new policy announcements from the Labor Opposition. Instead, it focussed broadly on key issues where the Opposition have been critical of the Government's performance and spruiked Labor's previously released 'Plans for Jobs and Growth'.

More information on 'Labor's Plans for Jobs and Growth' is available [here](#).

Labor's position on key policy areas

Health

Opposition Leader Daniel Andrews believes that Premier Napthine has continued to damage the health system by cutting an additional \$209 million, bringing the total cuts by the Victorian Government since 2010 to \$826 million.

Mr Andrews also criticised the government for "outsourcing surgery to private hospitals" while Shadow Health Minister Gavin Jennings challenged the government to specify which hospitals would receive the promised 800 new hospital beds.

Shadow Treasurer Pallas outlined a series of core Labor beliefs on health including the need for:

- A 'reliable health system'
- A substantial increase in investment
- A reduction in hospital waiting lists as a matter of urgency
- A reduction in ambulance queues at emergency departments
- The reinstatement of Government cuts for the training and accreditation of health workers
- An increase in health projects in rural and regional areas

Education/TAFE/Skills/Jobs

Shadow Minister for Higher Education and Skills Steve Herbert said this year's state budget has failed to address the financial pressures on TAFEs around the state. In addition, Shadow Minister for Education, James Merlino, said that primary schools are also feeling the pinch as the Napthine Government has spent a statewide average of \$203 million a year on capital



works in schools compared to an average spend of \$469 million by Labor in its last term in office.

Mr Merlino also said that the budget papers revealed that funding for schools had not been itemised, so many questions still remain as to where allocated funding would be spent.

In the budget reply speech, Pallas identified a range of measures that would improve the Victorian education system. These included:

- Signing up to the Gonski school reforms
- Reinstating or replacing the School Focused Youth Service
- Reinvesting in the Apprenticeship Trade Bonus

Initiatives previously outlined in Labor's Plan for Jobs and Growth include:

- Fund TAFEs and invest in TAFE infrastructure to ensure delivery of Community Service Obligations
- Support TAFEs in establishment of Industry Skills Centres
- Support VET in Schools program
- Additional funding for apprenticeship programs
- "Support local jobs" through the Victorian Government's procurement processes

Infrastructure and Transport

The Napthine Government is yet to release a comprehensive integrated freight and logistics plan for Victoria, and in the 2013-14 Budget, the Government only offers \$110 million for a study into the Port of Hastings expansion, despite key industry figures outlining that the Bay West option was more feasible.

In addition, Shadow Minister for Roads Luke Donnellan voiced his concern over the lack of funding for road improvements in the state and said that the Liberal Government's budget does nothing to fix Victoria's immediate problems with congestion.

In his speech, Shadow Treasurer Pallas was critical of funding levels earmarked for:

- The East West Link (\$300 million)
- The Melbourne Metro rail tunnel (\$10 million)
- Integrated transport planning
- Level crossing upgrades
- Rail maintenance

Initiatives outlined in Labor's Plan for Jobs and Growth include:

- Establishment of 'Infrastructure Victoria' to provide "independent and transparent advice about key infrastructure projects and their priority".
- Establishment of 'Projects Victoria' to "oversee the scope and design of all major projects".



- Determine the viability of Bay West as the location for Victoria's future container port.

Mr Pallas also used the speech to assert Labor's opposition to the Liberal Government's financial position in a range of areas. These include:

- The Increases in levels of Government debt
- The current levels of taxation
- The increases in fines, fees and charges including stamp duty
- The Public sector job cuts
- The increased Government spending on prisons
- The funding cuts to community sporting clubs.