Peter Ryan  

Law enforcement plays a central role in stamping out illicit drugs and the harm they bring to our community. Victorians expect the Government to do everything in its power to stamp out the drug trade and its effects on our communities. Intellectual property and resources are released into the community when the drug trade operates. Community and law enforcement efforts, drug-related activity would be even more prevalent in today's society. The Victorian Government is concentrating as much effort and resources as it can to support the intensive work Victoria Police undertakes on this front, including bringing 1700 more police online by 2014. Recently, I launched the Serious Crime and Organised Crime State Conference 2012 in Melbourne, attended by police from interstate and overseas, which focused largely on co-ordinated efforts to disrupt and treat the illegal drug trade.

The Government recognises the importance of helping those in our community caught up in the terrible nightmare of drug addiction but to assume this type of activity can somehow be controlled through a legalised commercially operated drug market is a fiction. In conjunction with the strong role of law enforcement is the need to resource diversion and treatment programs for those with a drug dependence.

There is also clear evidence of the health problems associated with illicit drug use, such as the increasing evidence about the potential for cannabis use to have very adverse physical, psychological and social outcomes, particularly for those who first use at an early age. It has been proven since Victoria last had a plan to tackle drugs in our community.

The Government is in the process of developing a whole-of-government alcohol and drug strategy to decrease the rates of alcohol and other drug abuse in Victoria. Reduce the harm that alcohol and drug abuse cause in the community, and increase access to treatment.

In addition, the Government is investing $188 million in new funding for prevention and treatment services for those with drug and alcohol addiction. The Victorian Government will continue to campaign against the use of drugs in every respect. Peter Ryan is the Minister for Police and Emergency Services.

Chris DeRose  

The institution has just been refreshed with a new facility, which includes a backyard that will be supported by this paper and the media as we all come together to support a hospital that exists for our children. A children's hospital as good as any in the world.

As parents we never know when we will need to draw on all the goodness contained within the hospital. But as sure as night follows day, we know we will.

The AFL has softened its stance on Matt Rendell. If so, that would be appropriate. But it beg the question why the AFL decided to make Rendell's private comments public six weeks after he made them. The AFL expressed outrage and ensured Rendell "resigned" from the Adelaide Crows.

Rendell's name and reputation were dragged through the mud. The AFL could have handled this issue in-house, privately, without the pain it caused by making the issue public.

The AFL ought to reiterate Rendell in a meaningful job and should also apologise to him and his family for the unnecessary hardship he endured. It will be interesting to see if the AFL is big enough to admit to its own mistakes.

Jeff Kennett is former president of the Hawks.

Live export cruelty a blot on the nation  

A USTRALIA is a proud and beautiful country. The people are warm, progressive, well educated and known across the globe for their outstanding hospitality.

Sadly, the world was shocked when we became aware of the horrific circumstances that Australia’s live export industry was willing to subject animals in order to provide them to the Middle East, South-East Asia, North Africa.

Images of Australian cattle being eye-gouged, kicked, whipped and tortured created an outpouring of rage across the globe. The vision the world had of Australia as an ethical and forward-thinking nation changed that moment.

We were stunned to learn that, despite years of evidence documenting the cruel treatment of Australian animals throughout the Middle East, the live export industry has continued to receive unconditional support from the federal government. Moreover, this support was in direct conflict with the views of the vast majority of Australians, who were appalled by the country’s participation in this trade.

Australia’s willingness to sell animals to countries that fail to comply with international animal welfare guidelines has actively undermined the work to encourage animal welfare improvements in those countries.

How can an industry that has been responsible for the suffering and deaths of countless millions of animals maintain government support and be allowed to continue? Providing animals to countries where there are no laws to protect them from cruelty is simply the clearest evidence of the immoral nature of the industry and the failure of the Australian Government to listen to its people.

Every decent person across the world applauded the action taken by the Gillard Government to suspend the trade to Indonesia, as well as the tabling of legislation to ban live exports. It was taken for granted that a vote in the Australian Parliament to end the trade would be unanimous.

We were therefore appalled to learn that both main political parties refused to support this legislation, despite overwhelming support from the Australian community. The questions need to be asked: why do the operators of an industry that brings such shame on Australia and is responsible for such suffering have a stranglehold over the Australian government? How can so few counter the importance of helping those in our community caught up in the terrible suffering have a stranglehold over Australia’s decision-makers? How can so few counteract the opinions of so many? Some things are just wrong and no amount of profit, no amount of excuses, will make them right.

Present initiatives by the Gillard Government to regulate that trade are all too little, too late, and they are not working. Animals Australia recently released footage of the continued brutality, even after the new framework to protect animal welfare was put in place.

Despite promises from the Minister for Agriculture, Joe Ludwig, the Gillard Government has not made any progress in preventing Australia’s animals from being tortured.

The only way to repair the damage done is for the trade to be banned and, through doing so, to finally send the right message to importing nations: animals and their welfare matter.

To all of you united in opposition to this cruel trade, be heartened by the fact the international animal welfare community and all who are compassionate worldwide are with you. Our message to do good is not going unheard.

We will throw our weight and support behind your efforts until your Government recognizes its responsibility to ban this cruel and immoral trade in living beings: a trade that brings great shame not only on Australia but on humanity itself.

Chris DeRose is the president and founder of Last Chance for Animals, a US international animal rights organisation.