



FINN IN THE HOUSE

Speeches August 2011 to December 2011



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Public transport: ferry service

Raised with the Minister for Public Transport on 29 June 2011

REPLY:

The Department of Transport (DOT) has received numerous letters suggesting that a bay commuter ferry service be provided as an alternative public transport option for commuters from the Wyndham, Geelong and Bellarine Peninsula areas.

DOT has previously engaged consultants to evaluate commuter ferries on Port Phillip Bay. The consultants concluded that there are a number of challenges that limit the appropriateness of ferries for Melbourne.

Journey times would be significantly longer than existing land-based means. Ferry operation along the Yarra River to the CBD is hampered by the combination of a 5-knot speed limit and numerous low bridges. The use of Station Pier as an alternative suffers from its remoteness from the CBD and the need for commuters to make a connecting tram journey into Melbourne.

Due to the weather conditions that are commonly experienced on Port Phillip Bay, including large swells, it is considered that a ferry service would suffer from cancellations and uncomfortably rough trips on a regular basis. Larger vessels could provide a reliable all-weather service, although these vessels would be too large for the anticipated patronage.

Interstate and overseas experience shows that successful commuter ferry services offer short direct trips between two population centres that are otherwise distant by land-based routes. The large size of Port Phillip Bay limits new opportunities to create routes that offer time advantages over existing land-based routes.

The upgrade of land-based transport modes will provide higher capacity, faster and more reliable journey times than could be realistically achieved by a commuter ferry service.

Rail: Newport station

Raised with the Minister for Public Transport on 24 May 2011

REPLY:

The coalition government is committed to improving Newport railway station and is working closely with Metro to develop a detailed scope of works to upgrade the car park and associated drainage.

The broad scope of works calls for an additional 200 car spaces, with a fully asphalted surface, line marking and signage.

Drainage will be improved as part of the car park works and a footpath will be provided to connect the car park to the existing council footpath.

Additional lighting and closed-circuit television cameras will also be installed to improve safety.

Metro has been notified of the presentation of the station and asked to investigate and rectify issues in line with its franchise agreement with the government.

Autism: program funding

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Education. I doubt there would be many members of this house who are unaware of my intense personal interest in the educational needs and general welfare of children with autism. As a result of this interest, I have become aware of a program operating in the Moomba Park Primary School serving children in both Western Metropolitan Region and Northern Metropolitan Region. The IDEA — Innovative Developments in the Education of Children with Autism — program is something very special. It is my strong view, and the view of many others, that this program is the education of the future for children on the autism spectrum.

While this program is cause for great optimism and enthusiasm among families, the same cannot be said for the Department of Education.

For some years there has been a grouping within the department

which has continually attacked the program with a passion that might otherwise be laudable. After reneging on an earlier commitment of \$100 000 for the continuation of IDEA throughout 2011, the department promised the school at least \$50 000 for the funding of this program by the end of this past financial year, with a very strong prospect of a further \$46 000 for the rest of the year. However, no money has been forthcoming and the department has left those running the program to foot the bill. As things stand, there will be no funding — real or promised — for the program next year, effectively killing the one great hope for the future of these children.

As you can imagine, their families are devastated, but that seems to mean nothing to those in department backrooms wielding the axe with no regard for the children who need this program desperately. The IDEA program must not be allowed to die. It is far too important for the future of children with autism and their families.

I implore the minister to ensure that the IDEA program not only survives but thrives. I ask that he ensure that this program is funded for this current year and beyond.

The IDEA program achieves wonderful results for less than the Department of Education is currently spending per capita on children with autism. It really is exceptional value for money. Better results for less expenditure — what more could the boffins possibly ask for? How anyone could attempt to scuttle it is totally beyond me. It makes no sense at all. The program must be extended and expanded for the sake of thousands. Children with autism need the IDEA program far more than they need those who want to destroy it.

Interjections from gallery.

The PRESIDENT — Order!

People in the gallery are not allowed to participate in the proceedings of Parliament, although I understand that they are very supportive of the position Mr Finn has put.

Carbon tax: health sector

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Health, who is also the Minister for Ageing. I ask: can the minister

inform the house what impact the commonwealth government's carbon tax will have on Victorian health services and whether there is any compensation being offered?

Hon. D. M. DAVIS (Minister for Health) — I thank the member for his question. It is clear that the proposed commonwealth government carbon tax will have a significant impact on the health sector. Whether you are opposed to a carbon tax or in favour of a carbon tax, there ought to be compensation for Victoria. Victoria is going to be hit hardest; it is going to be hit earliest.

Hon. M. P. Pakula interjected.

Hon. D. M. DAVIS — Mr Pakula is Labor first and Victorian second. It is time he stood up.

Honourable members interjecting.

The PRESIDENT — Order! I say to members on my left that that is just too noisy. I am not sure how Hansard staff can cope with that sort of a barrage. The minister to continue.

Hon. D. M. DAVIS — There will be a significant impact of the proposed carbon tax on Victorian hospitals and the health-care system. It is important that Victorians are prepared to advocate to the federal government to say, 'Look, if you are going to introduce this carbon tax, you need to compensate Victorian hospitals; you need to make sure that surgeries are not cancelled.'

Hon. M. P. Pakula — What about the direct action model?

Hon. D. M. DAVIS — You are Labor first and Victorian second. It is about time you stood up and indicated that Victoria deserves compensation.

Mr Leane — On a point of order, the Leader of the Government knows well that he should be directing his response through the Chair and should not point aggressively across to this side of the chamber.

Hon. D. M. DAVIS — On the point of order, President, I was clearly being provoked and I was responding directly to interjections. It is true that Mr Pakula is Labor first and Victorian second.

Hon. M. P. Pakula interjected.

The PRESIDENT — Order! If Mr Pakula wishes to be with us for the remainder of question time, he might take into account when I am standing on my feet, as might other members.

To start with, interjections are unruly and are not technically within the bounds of the parliamentary proceedings. Whilst they are tolerated, I do not encourage the minister to respond directly to those

interjections. Mr Leane is correct in saying that proceedings should be directed through the Chair. There are good reasons for that, as we all know. The minister's answer was otherwise consistent with the way he was being challenged in some of those interjections. The minister to continue, but members of the chamber might be mindful that these proceedings are being televised.

Hon. D. M. DAVIS — The member's question is a fair question, and a carbon tax will have a heavy impact on key hospitals.

Costs would increase by more than \$257 000 at Box Hill Hospital, by \$136 000 at Casey Hospital, by \$171 000 at Maroondah Hospital, by at least \$428 000 at the Royal Children's Hospital, by \$758 000 at the Royal Melbourne Hospital and by \$1.228 million at the Austin Hospital. These are significant impacts of the direct cost, which is to say nothing of the indirect costs through increased supply costs and the increased costs of services and goods that come to those hospitals.

I have to say it is about time that people understood there is going to be a significant impact on our health sector, on Victorian hospitals and on Victorian health care in general, yet there is no compensation offered by the commonwealth government. The Leader of the Opposition in the Assembly, Daniel Andrews, and the Labor Party have not been prepared to stand up for our hospitals.

There will be less opportunity to deal with the problems that patients present with if hospitals have to pay the costs without compensation for the additional carbon tax impost. This is a tax on health.

When John Howard introduced the GST, he made health care GST free; people could claim back the rebates. But when it comes to the carbon tax proposed by the commonwealth, it is not carbon-tax free; health will have a carbon tax imposed on it. Every health-care provider will pay more and every health-care provider will push up their costs to the community. Public hospitals will not be compensated unless we find additional sources of revenue. The commonwealth is planning to impose this tax. If the commonwealth imposes this additional tax on the community, it will need to think of ways to compensate the health-care sector.

The Austin will be paying more than \$1.2 million in extra costs for electricity and gas, and that is just the direct costs at the Austin. The indirect

costs will push that up even more. The compensation from Julia Gillard is zero, and the silence from Daniel Andrews and Labor is deafening.

**COUNCIL | Adjournment
17 August 2011**

Carbon tax: health sector

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — My adjournment matter this evening is for the attention of the Minister for Health and Minister for Ageing. It concerns the not-inconsiderable impact of the proposed Gillard-Brown carbon tax on state public hospitals in my electorate of Western Metropolitan Region. In particular I refer to the Footscray and Sunshine hospitals, both part of Western Health. It has to be said that after 11 years of neglect by Labor they need every cent — every dollar, in fact — that they can get. They certainly do not need Canberra stealing precious funds from their coffers.

The information I have suggests that direct energy cost increases for gas and electricity alone will be substantial — at least \$330 803 at Footscray and \$321 781 at Sunshine — and that will be on an annual basis. These are just the direct costs.

There will be additional costs faced as a result of increases in the costs of goods and services supplied to Western Health. That cannot be good for Western Health, and it cannot be good for people in the west of Melbourne. There will be increased pressure on Western Health that will result in fewer services, and it will impact directly on waiting times and waiting lists, clearly disadvantaging my constituents in the west of Melbourne.

I ask the minister to inform me of the number of cases that will have to be cancelled due to the impact of the commonwealth government's carbon tax on Western Health. I seek the minister's action in urgently advocating for compensation for Western Health from the commonwealth government. As things stand at the moment, the people of the west will continue to suffer and will suffer more as a result of this particular tax.

Increased health costs will merely add to the misery of the people of Melbourne's west as a result of this great big tax on everything that will achieve precisely nothing for the environment.

Israel: Support

Ms CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) — I move:

That this house:

(1) acknowledges that Israel is a legitimate and democratic state and a good friend of Australia;

(2) notes the public backlash against the decision by Marrickville Council to boycott Israel;

(3) calls on all public organisations and entities to withdraw any support for this boycott that they may have previously provided; and

(4) calls on all members of the Victorian Legislative Council to declare their support for Israel, reject racist and inflammatory actions against Australia's allies and condemn the boycott of Israel.

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I rise this afternoon to very strongly support this motion. In doing so I commend Ms Crozier for having the foresight to list this motion on the notice paper for discussion in this house. I have to say that I listened to Mr Pakula's contribution with a little bit of amazement. He seemed to be suggesting the government had ulterior motives, which I have yet to detect. I read the motion, I reread the motion, and I read the motion for a third time and I could not see what he was possibly referring to. Then I heard Mr Jennings just a few minutes ago making some rather oblique references to the same sort of thing. Again, it mystifies me.

This is a very simple motion. It is a motion which supports the state of Israel and the people of Israel.

It makes it very clear that we as a Parliament will have no truck with those who would boycott the state of Israel or, as we have seen in recent weeks in our own city of Melbourne, involve themselves in violent protest against Jewish businesses. When I saw the violent protests against Max Brenner on our television screens a few weeks ago and in recent months a shiver went down my spine. As somebody who has taken a very keen interest in history and international affairs over a very long period of time — like Andrew Bolt, I have to say, Mrs Coote — it brought back memories of what I had seen in those black-and-white clips where Brownshirts and hoodlums were attacking businesses purely because those businesses were owned by people who were Jewish, and here it was happening in

Melbourne in 2011. I would not have thought that possible. Something that we have not seen since Germany in the 1930s and 1940s has happened here in Melbourne within the last few months.

We do not want and certainly do not need that sort of activity in Australia.

We do not want storm-troopers of the left attacking businesses purely because they are owned by people who are Jewish. Indeed we do not want them attacking any businesses for that matter, but particularly for that reason. It is of deep concern to me, as I have witnessed it over recent years, that there has been a revival of anti-Semitism by the loony left in Australia, and that has come from various places. We are fortunate that these people can certainly not be called mainstream, although it has to be said when you see organisations like the Marrickville Council, a prominent municipal body in New South Wales and in Australia, promoting the sort of anti-Semitic activity that it has been involved in, you have to wonder just how deeply rooted this feeling is within the left. The boycott of Israel by the Marrickville Council was just an expression of its hatred of the Jewish state. That is what it was: pure and simple hatred of the Jewish state by the loony left in that council.

As I say, there are various organisations and people around this country that over the last couple of years have, unfortunately, revived this degree of anti-Semitism that is totally unacceptable.

I have to say there is one person in a Parliament in this country who probably exemplifies exactly what I am talking about. If she were not a member of the Australian Senate, and had I been asked to comment on her before 1 July, I would refer to her as an extreme Left nut bag. Of course I cannot do that now, because Lee Rhiannon is now a senator for New South Wales and member of the Australian Parliament, so I would be ruled out of order. My view is, however, that we do not need people like Lee Rhiannon in Canberra. We do not need people in the federal Parliament who express the sorts of extremist loony views that she does. Nor do we need them here in Melbourne. It is interesting to note that Bronwyn Halfpenny, the member for Thomastown in another place, has been appointed by Trades Hall —

Mr Elsbury — Sister Halfpenny.

Mr FINN — Sister Halfpenny, indeed. She has been appointed by

Trades Hall to oversee and report back on the protests against Max Brenner. She is a member of this Parliament. It is extraordinary that a member of the Victorian Parliament would involve themselves in this sort of protest movement to the point where they would establish official observer status with the Victorian Trades Hall Council. As I say, it is only a very small group, but it is one that should concern us all.

In the few remaining minutes I have to make my contribution to this debate I have to say I have always been a very strong supporter of Israel. With Mrs Coote and a number of other members I was fortunate to visit Israel a little over 18 months ago. Before I went I was speaking to my good friend and federal colleague Senator Scott Ryan, a senator for Victoria, who had been to Israel.

He said to me, 'Mate, you reckon you're a supporter of Israel now; wait until you go there and see the place and come back more convinced than ever that Israel is worth supporting.'

I do not think he has ever uttered a truer word in his life. When I got to Israel I was astounded by what I saw. Here was a country that 70 years ago was sand. By and large it was sand. The Jewish people had been given this land in the middle of nowhere, and they had turned it into a civilisation. They had turned it into a modern place of industry, of business and of arts and culture. Here was a place in the middle of nowhere that 70 years ago, as I said, was a sandy desert. Here was a place that nobody could criticise, surely, in terms of what the Jewish people had done on this land. It was quite an extraordinary performance, particularly given what they have had to put up with over those years. They are surrounded by states that wish to destroy them. Every single one of them wants to destroy the state of Israel. Every single one of them wants as many dead Jews as there possibly can be. That is what Israel is surrounded by.

I well recall on a visit to one small town, the name of which I forget just at the minute — I am looking at Mrs Coote, who may prompt me with the name of the town? Was it Sderot we visited in Israel? This town had been under rocket attack shortly before we arrived, and as the bus pulled up in the town we were advised that if we heard the air raid siren we would have 30 seconds to get to a bomb shelter. I have to say that focuses the mind!

I spent a good degree of time in that particular place looking upwards.

Mrs Coote interjected.

Mr FINN — I was just about to get to that, Mrs Coote. The thing that really hit home with me came when we visited a children's playground. We all know what children's playgrounds are like. This was a suburban playground that could have been anywhere in the world, except that in this children's playground in Israel the big, brightly painted cement structures — they were worms and —

Mrs Coote — Caterpillars.

Mr FINN — That is right, caterpillars. They were not just ordinary kids' playthings, structures kids would get into, climb on and that sort of thing; they were bomb shelters.

This is something that Israeli children have grown up with. The threat of death is with them constantly, to the point where their playgrounds have to incorporate bomb shelters for the protection. As I said, Israel is a truly amazing place, one I will never forget visiting and one I quite look forward to visiting again.

I briefly go to Mr Barber's amendment. He wishes the motion to state:

That this house supports the aspirations and rights of each of the Palestinian and the Israeli peoples to independent states, living in peace and security.

There is somewhat of a conflict here. There is no doubt that the Israeli people wish for an independent state and to live in peace and security, but the aspirations of the Palestinians are all about the destruction of Israel. I am afraid you cannot have both.

You either have a free, independent and safe Israel or you have the aspirations and rights of Palestinians holding sway. You cannot have both. This amendment is a nonsense. It makes no sense, and quite frankly I am disappointed with myself for having wasted my time reading it.

Israel is a beacon of freedom in the Middle East. As the only democracy in the region, it is the only country that respects its own people. It is the only country in the Middle East that allows its people to have freedom and live the way we live in Australia. Israel has my enormous admiration and strong support. I urge members to endorse this motion and in doing so to endorse Israel as a vitally important part of the international community.

**COUNCIL | Members Statements
18 August 2011**

Dangerous dogs: control

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I rise this morning to express my horror and deep sadness at the events in St Albans last night. In doing so I take the opportunity to express my deepest sympathy to the family of the young girl who was killed in tragic circumstances.

When I heard the news on the radio last night I felt physically ill. As a father of young children, it affected me in a way that is hard to describe. After all, what could be safer, you would think, than having your four-year-old in your own home playing with her five-year old cousin? What could be safer? As a parent I am always acutely aware of, and must know, where my children are. You would think you would have peace of mind in knowing that your child is at home. But, no; the horror of what occurred must have been beyond belief.

The dog entered the property, killed the four-year-old girl and mauled her two cousins, who then had to be hospitalised.

There has been much discussion about this this morning. I hope the Brimbank council will launch a crackdown on illegal dogs within its boundaries. Many people suggest there are too many there. I hope the Brimbank council will bring about that crackdown. I also appeal to people who own those dogs to show some care and responsibility and get rid of them. Get rid of those dogs! There is no time or place —

The PRESIDENT — Time!

**COUNCIL | Second Reading
30 August 2011**

Justice Legislation Amendment (Protective Services Officers) Bill 2011

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — It gives me a great deal of pleasure to rise to speak on this particular bill this

evening because I have quite often been a commuter travelling from the Sunshine railway station. This bill is a godsend to those of us who have used the Sunshine railway station; it is an answer to a prayer. Anybody who has been to the Sunshine station will know what a horrific hellhole it can be. It is surrounded by a bus depot which doubles as a gathering spot for people in gangs who participate in all sorts of sports against each other using various forms of violence. I think Mr Leane would quite enjoy it.

Despite what Mrs Peulich tells me about Frankston and Dandenong being right up there — and I have no doubt that they are; I understand the mayor of Frankston is very keen to get this program up and running in Frankston as soon as possible — I think they would really have to be working very hard to get anywhere near what we have faced in Sunshine over a long period of time.

Mrs Peulich — You should tell that to the young women!

Mr FINN — There are not many out there!

What we have had over a long period of time at the Sunshine station is fear. I recall that at a time when I had staff members working at my office — and my office is not far from the Sunshine station — I would allow them to knock off early and go home because, quite frankly, I did not think it was safe for them to enter that station after dark, particularly the subway.

Over the last few years we have seen some closed-circuit television footage of individuals having the living suitcase kicked out of them by hooligans and gang members. I have said this before, and I tried to get it fixed by the previous government. Thank God this government has come to the party. Quite frankly it is not safe, certainly not after dark, and even during the daylight hours I am a bit loath to go down there. As I said before, for anybody who is going to use the Sunshine station or anybody who wants to get on a train at the Sunshine station this bill is manna from heaven. This is something we have long hoped for and long wanted, and it is something the residents of Sunshine will rejoice in.

I recall that there was a rally of local residents outside the Sunshine railway station just a couple of years ago protesting against the level of violence at the station and in the surrounds of the station. I spoke at that rally. Sadly I was the only MP there.

Despite the fact that there were many Labor MPs who allegedly represent the area I was the only MP who actually showed up at that rally, and I think that gave a fair indication of the level of concern that Labor MPs have for what they regard as their home turf.

Mrs Peulich — Black Rock is far.

Mr FINN — Black Rock is a long way away from Sunshine whichever way you look at it, Mrs Peulich, and I am sure Mr Pakula will attest to that. I do not know whether he has ever been to Sunshine or not, but if he has ever been to the Sunshine station, he would be up singing the praises of this legislation as well, as I am this evening.

This is a piece of legislation which we will celebrate throughout the city of Brimbank, in particular within the precincts of Sunshine and surrounds — not just in the car park, not just at the station, not just in the bus depot but also in the surrounds of local retailers who have also faced the terror that these gangs pose. I urge this house to give this bill a speedy passage, and I commend the minister and the government on putting this legislation up. Of course it was voted for by the people of Victoria last year, and that includes the people of Sunshine.

**COUNCIL | Questions without Notice
30 August 2011**

Information and communications technology: employment

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Technology, who is also the Assistant Treasurer. Can the minister inform the house of any new employment developments in the technology sector?

Hon. G. K. RICH-PHILLIPS (Minister for Technology) — I thank Mr Finn for his question and his interest in employment in the technology sector. Technology is an important sector for the Victorian economy. The ICT field employs around 145 000 Victorians across the entire economy, turns over \$29 billion and produces around \$2.5 billion in exports. Importantly, employment in the ICT sphere in Victoria has been growing at around double the national average — that is, at around

5 per cent.

I am pleased to inform the house that there is further good news in employment in ICT here in Victoria. Last week I had the great pleasure of opening the new Victorian headquarters for Juniper Networks, which is a \$4 billion major global player in computer networking. It is the third-largest networking firm in the world, with a turnover of around \$4 billion. It has opened a new headquarters here at Southbank and currently employs around 50 Victorians at that site.

Hon. D. M. Davis interjected.

Hon. G. K. RICH-PHILLIPS — Around 50 are currently employed, Mr Davis. Importantly, it has announced that it will be creating a further 50 jobs at that new headquarters at Southbank. I was also very pleased last week to open the new Australian headquarters for DB Results. DB Results is an extraordinarily strong Victorian success story. This is a company that undertakes ICT consulting primarily to the utility sector.

It is a company that was formed with two people just seven years ago in Victoria. Two people, seven years ago, started this business, and it now turns over around \$14 million a year and employs 80 people. It has had extraordinary growth in a short seven years, and importantly, in opening the new headquarters last week, DB Results was pleased to announce that it plans to employ an additional 100 Victorians in the next two to three years. This is another major commitment by a private sector technology company to growing employment in this state.

Victoria has had very strong performance in ICT employment, and I am delighted that we are seeing further confidence among major Victorian employers in this sector. We look forward to these additional 150 jobs at these two companies coming to fruition in the technology sector in the next two to three years.

**COUNCIL | Adjournment
31 August 2011**

Western Hospital: upgrade

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Health. It follows a visit I made on Monday of this week to the Western Hospital at Footscray.

I am somebody who is used to Labor neglect in the western suburbs, but even I was stunned by what I saw at this particular hospital on Monday. I was quite shocked. Firstly, there is very little car parking there. I had to park some three blocks from the hospital. I am able-bodied, or reasonably able-bodied. How would somebody who was either ill or perhaps had a broken leg or some other disability cope with walking for 20 minutes or 25 minutes to get to the boundaries of the hospital?

I walked into the hospital and I was overcome by the smell. It was horrendous.

There was a stench being emitted from the pipes underneath the floor that I cannot really describe, but it was extraordinarily unpleasant and certainly made me think that it was not the sort of smell that you would particularly welcome in a hospital.

I then walked to the lifts and went up to the fourth floor with some patients who were coming straight from surgery because there are no lifts specifically for patients; they have to share the lifts with visitors and cleaners and everybody else. Everybody is in together. It is just extraordinary and I have to say quite intolerable. I then went on a tour of the hospital and witnessed doors, walls, floors literally crumbling before my very eyes. It was just staggering. You have to remember that this hospital was built before Sir Henry Bolte became Premier — that was in 1953 — and it has barely been touched since. It is absolutely extraordinary. The lack of space meant that it was cramped. I noticed that there were very few offices for doctors. In one part of the hospital specialists and GPs were consulting in corridors because that was the only place they could find to talk to each other.

Clearly we need a new hospital building for Footscray and for the Western Hospital in Footscray. In the meantime there is a very large, grey building — with quite extraordinary views of Melbourne, I might say — at the hospital which has been empty for quite some time.

If we were able to refurbish it and use it for any manner of purposes, this building would have a huge impact on the services provided by the hospital. I ask the minister to examine it and see if we could get that up and running very quickly.

Western Region Health Centre: dental service funding

To the Legislative Council of Victoria:

This petition of residents of Victoria draws to the attention of the Council that:

1. the Western Region Health Centre provides annual emergency and general dental care to over 10 000 children and adults from sites at Geelong Road and Paisley Street, Footscray;
2. these services are the major dental facility for some of the most disadvantaged residents of the west, who have poor oral health compared to the state average and are otherwise unable to access dental care;
3. we are disappointed with the lack of commitment in the Victorian state budget 2011-12 to redevelop these ageing facilities in line with the recommendations of several reports; and
4. we are concerned that these vital services now face a critical threat of closure.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Council of Victoria:

1. take all necessary steps to ensure the safety, quality and future viability of the services, including a commitment to the provision of urgently needed capital upgrades for a new facility.

By Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) (2000 signatures).

Laid on table.

Retail sector: government initiatives

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — My question without notice is to the Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations, and I ask: can the minister outline to the house the importance of improving the productivity and competitiveness of

Victorian industry to generate high-value jobs and investment?

Honourable members interjecting.

Hon. R. A. DALLA-RIVA (Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations) — I thank the member for his question. It may be difficult for the opposition to understand productivity, because it would not know what it means. We do know that the country and Victoria are facing difficult times for industry.

Fewer are doing it tougher at present, as we know, than those in the retail sector in particular. We are seeing an industry confronting the challenges of soft consumer demand at home and intense competition globally, notably through online shopping. Yet for all the challenges, this state remains an attractive place to invest and to employ. I note the no. 1 livable city status that we achieved this week, even after 10 years of the previous government not achieving it.

I also note the recent comments of the managing director of retail giant Costco Australia, Patrick Noone. He was praising the announcement by my colleague Minister Guy of a new and more flexible approach by the Baillieu government on the location of bulky goods stores. Mr Noone told the Australian Financial Review —

Hon. M. P. Pakula interjected.

Hon. R. A. DALLA-RIVA — They do not want to hear the good news. He said, 'It means Victoria wants to do business,' and that is exactly what it is about. In the same report the executive director of the Bulky Goods Retail Association, Phillippa Kelly, said, 'This will mean hundreds of millions of dollars of investment in Victoria over time.'

There have been other votes of confidence in the vibrancy of retailing here in Victoria from some of the giants of the retail industry. We have seen the recent opening of Zara in the heart of the Bourke Street mall. Later this year we will see TopShop make its first foray into the Australian market with new premises at the Jam Factory in Chapel Street, which Mrs Coote is very keen to see. Together they will count for hundreds of jobs. Sadly it is a fact of life that we are currently seeing some smaller retailers cut trading hours and cut staff.

They are saying that they are doing so because they are struggling to meet wages conditions and entitlements under the modern award system as prescribed by Labor's Fair Work Act.

The 4 August draft report on the retail sector by the commonwealth's Productivity Commission has touched

on these themes. It found that trading hours were proving restrictive and disadvantageous for retailers, employees and consumers alike. It found that workplace legislation and instruments were too rigid in relation to wages and entitlements as well as discouraging productivity.

Hon. M. P. Pakula interjected.

Hon. R. A. DALLA-RIVA — We have Mr Pakula asking what we are going to do about it. I will tell him what I did. Mr Pakula takes a point.

On 10 August I raised this issue with the workplace relations federal minister, Senator Evans. I asked that he take on board the concerns being raised by industry and bring forward with greater urgency the commonwealth's review of the operations of the Fair Work Act.

Hon. M. P. Pakula interjected.

Hon. R. A. DALLA-RIVA — That is what I did. Mr Pakula might not like it, but that is what I did. I sought the minister's assurance that the states and other key stakeholders would be fully consulted, because I think it is important that the commonwealth government engage with all stakeholders, not just the trade union movement. It should sit down and listen to the concerns of all stakeholders.

I subsequently wrote to Senator Evans and to my counterparts in the other states seeking that they have these issues of labour productivity brought to the fore of the ministerial council agenda. That is what we are doing. We are about productivity and competitiveness for Victorians.

Local Government Amendment (Electoral Matters) Bill 2011

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I rise to support this bill, and in doing so I join Mrs Peulich in commending the minister for the work she has done. I do not wish to speak unduly or for an extended period on this particular bill, but there is one section of the bill that I find it necessary for me to make a few comments on.

Mr Barber was fascinating. Mr Barber is often fascinating, and today was no different. Mr Barber spoke about the return to democracy in Brimbank. Democracy in Brimbank can be a fascinating concept — almost as fascinating as Mr Barber. Over the years we have seen things happen in Brimbank that have brought local government generally into disrepute. We have seen things happen in the City of Brimbank that have brought great shame on those responsible for those misdoings. We have seen Labor Party members in Brimbank conducting themselves in a shameful manner. We have seen a factional brawl get completely and totally out of control prior to the removal of the elected council.

One thing that Mr Barber did not mention in his summing up of Mr Seitz, who, we are told by anybody who wanders down a street anywhere in Brimbank, will be the next mayor of Brimbank after the 'return to democracy', is that Mr Seitz was attacking the council — that is, attacking the empire led by Hakki Suleyman and his daughter Natalie Suleyman. We all remember — —

Mrs Coote interjected.

Mr FINN — Let me assure Mrs Coote that we will get to Justin Madden's office very shortly, because that is worth mentioning.

One thing Mr Barber did not tell us was that all this relating to this supposed champion of the people was in fact part of a factional brawl in the Labor Party. The other crowd, as it were, was getting on top, so George thought he would hit the nuke button. And he did! George hit the nuke button and wiped out everybody, including himself. I have never seen anything quite like it. He was the suicide bomber of Brimbank. He blew everybody up, including himself. It was quite an extraordinary thing.

Hon. D. M. Davis — And that did take courage!

Mr FINN — He did show a fair bit of courage. The extraordinary thing about this chap is that he now seems to be fully recovered and is making a comeback.

You do not see a lot of that in the suicide bomber business! He is preparing to run as a councillor in the City of Brimbank elections next year, which take place in October, as this bill outlines. I have to say there is a great deal of fear in the City of Brimbank about what will eventuate as a result of the return of elected councillors next year. There are a good number of people who are terrified

of what is coming. They saw what happened in the past — —

Mr Barber interjected.

Mr FINN — They are terrified of an election — yes, they are! Mr Barber may laugh and think it is highly amusing, but if he had been subjected to the tyranny of the Brimbank council for as long as those people had been, he would not think it funny; he would be scared too. He would be worried about what is coming after October next year, because he — —

Ms Hartland — I don't see a reason to be.

Mr FINN — Ms Hartland does not see a lot out there, but the situation is that people see a return to what they had before. They see a return to the corruption and a return to the kickbacks. It seems to me that they see a return to the threats, the abuses and all of the misdeeds of the Brimbank City Council of the previous era. We remember that the corruption at Brimbank City Council was not just about the councillors who were there; it spread much further than the council chamber itself, and there were a number of very prominent Labor Party figures — people like Stephen Conroy and Bill Shorten — who were connected very publicly to the corrupt activities in Brimbank. That is something that unfortunately has not been investigated to this point.

It concerns me that some of the same people sitting around the federal cabinet table — and God knows they are getting into enough of a mess there on a number of other fronts — were very much involved in the Brimbank debacle of just a couple of years ago. We know that at least one of the factions had a state cabinet minister — at least we think he was involved, because we are not sure whether the former Minister for Planning, Justin Madden, who is now the member for Essendon in the Assembly, knew what was going on in his electorate office. In fact we were never sure whether Justin Madden was aware of what was going on around him at all, but we know that the activities of the Suleyman empire were being orchestrated and conducted from the electorate office of Justin Madden in Keilor — not that Justin Madden was ever there, but that is beside the point.

The great irony and the great justice of this is that that very same electorate office is now occupied by Andrew Elsbury, a Liberal member for Western Metropolitan Region.

One of the reasons that Andrew Elsbury was elected and that the

Liberal Party vote went up by over a third at the election last year was as a result of what happened in Brimbank. It was because people saw the Labor Party for what it was. People saw that the Labor Party would use and abuse people. They saw that the Labor Party would have no regard for real people and that it would go about activities that would actually hurt real people.

That is the tragedy of Brimbank. It is not about the fun and games that were had between factions. It is not about what Bill Shorten, the federal member for Maribyrnong, did. It is not about what was done by Hakki Suleyman, George Seitz, the Theophani or whoever may have been involved in all the activities that occurred in Brimbank. The real tragedy of the Brimbank situation is that real people — decent, honest, hardworking people — were hurt. A real fear that those people have is that if 'democracy', in inverted commas, is returned to Brimbank in October next year, they will be hurt again.

I am hoping that between now and then common sense will prevail.

Hon. D. M. Davis — That is labouring under the assumption that there was democracy there before!

Mr FINN — As Mr Davis quite correctly points out, we have to ask whether there was democracy at Brimbank before. You would have to ask the question, 'Are Brimbank and democracy mutually exclusive?'. There are more than a few people around who would have to say yes. You do not have to go very far to find them. There are any number of people at Brimbank who are more than happy to stick their hand up and say, 'We are very concerned about the direction we are going with regard to this return to democracy', as Mr Barber refers to it. They are very concerned; in fact, they are terrified about what is coming, because they remember the shambles in Brimbank when the previously elected councillors were there. They remember what the then Labor government did to bury this issue. It sacked the council, but it sacked the wrong one.

Certainly a number of councillors were involved in both councils — there are no two ways about that — but the Brumby Labor government would have done anything to get Brimbank off the radar. The Labor Party just wanted Brimbank to go away. It did not want the people of Victoria to know the depths of Labor involvement in this corrupt council. It did not want the glare of publicity on the Labor Party activities within Brimbank, particularly with an

election looming. It just wanted it all to go away, so it sacked the council.

It should be remembered that Labor also created a new law that stops councillors from being able to work as electorate officers and for members of Parliament. It has to be said that that is a very strange law. It was created in a total panic by a government that did not quite know what else to do. I remember Richard Wynne, the member for Richmond in the other place, who was at the time the Minister for Local Government, having no idea at all. I raised this issue with him time and again. His hands must have been almost flat from the time he spent sitting on them. He did nothing as the Minister for Local Government. He just wanted it to go away, and that was also the attitude of the Brumby government.

This issue is not going to go away because the people of Brimbank will not allow it to go away. They remember what the Labor Party did to them over such a long period. They remember that corruption. They remember the shenanigans and the carry-on at this council.

But let me tell you — Ms Hartland may be about to get up in a minute and deny this — that the people of Brimbank are terrified of what may be coming their way as a result of the elections next year.

I am hoping that the cover-up by the Labor Party will be exposed. I am very hopeful that the activities that we saw carried out by Brimbank councillors and others — even activities carried out by those sitting around the cabinet table of the commonwealth government — will be exposed and justice will be brought to the people of Brimbank. That is all those people are asking for. They are just asking for justice.

Mr Barber — Will you sack the council again?

Mr FINN — I do not know what difficulties that council might have, but I say to Mr Barber that if the new council were anything like the former council as described in the Ombudsman's report, I would absolutely support sacking it. I do not have the power to sack the council, but I would certainly support the removal of it if it were anywhere near as bad as it was before. The people of Brimbank deserve better. They do not deserve a corrupt council. They do not deserve a council that will treat them with such contempt. I will stand up for the people of Brimbank every time. The concept, as Mr Barber puts it, of the return of democracy

is one that does create a feeling of great apprehension in many people's minds.

I will raise a question with Mr Barber just before I finish. I tried to get him to answer this question before, but he studiously avoided it. We really need an answer to this question before the election in October next year.

If any Greens councillors are elected to the Brimbank council next year — and there might be one — will they support George Seitz as mayor? People know that George Seitz was one of the great branch stackers of the western suburbs — and he still is one of the great branch stackers. He was involved in a number of activities, as was Hakki Suleyman. Before the people of Brimbank vote they need to know what the Greens will do. I challenge Mr Barber, or indeed Ms Hartland, to get up in this chamber today and tell us what the Greens will do if they have councillors in that council and George Seitz sticks his hand up to be the mayor.

Brimbank is a very important part of Melbourne. This bill returns elections to Brimbank, and all I ask and pray is that, once again, the people of Brimbank get a fair go.

COUNCIL | Members Statements 1 September 2011

Carbon tax: economic impact

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — Those who read the local newspapers throughout Melbourne's west will be acutely aware that I have not exactly been silent on the subject of Labor's carbon tax. In fact I have been very loud about the dangers that this big new tax on everything poses to businesses, jobs and families in the western suburbs, so much so that Prime Minister Gillard, who said there would be no carbon tax, was forced to admonish me by describing yours truly as 'Tony Abbott's puppet'. I was of course devastated by such a verbal mauling.

What really distresses me is the refusal of local Labor luminaries to stand up for their communities against the approaching economic and social disaster that is the carbon tax.

I recently wrote to the mayors of all municipalities in the west, asking them to join me in a new organisation called West Against Carbon Tax, or WACT for short. I

knew most of them were Labor Party members but it did not stop me from hoping that they would put the interests of local residents ahead of their political allegiances. Sadly my hopes were dashed. Labor mayors put preferment, patronage and preselection way ahead of the working families they profess to care so much about at election time.

Labor has again shown it does not give a damn about the west of Melbourne or the people who live there. Labor's neglect of the western suburbs is legendary, but for its members to introduce a tax that will cause so much pain to so many is obscene. Once again Labor is taking the west of Melbourne for granted, just as it has done for generations. Labor has no shame.

COUNCIL | Questions without Notice 13 September 2011

Victorian Training Awards

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Higher Education and Skills, who is also the Minister responsible for the Teaching Profession. I ask the minister to explain to the house why he is wearing that magnificent jacket.

Hon. P. R. HALL (Minister for Higher Education and Skills) — Today I have the absolute honour and privilege of showcasing the extraordinary talents of a young man, Nathan Cahir, who is studying for an advanced diploma of fashion design and technology at Gordon TAFE. This particular occasion arises out of some tradition in history set by my predecessors, former ministers for tertiary education and training, the Honourable Jacinta Allan, the member for Bendigo East in the Assembly, and Bronwyn Pike, the member for Melbourne in the Assembly.

The custom of previous years has been that ministers attending the Victorian Training Awards have been dressed in designs by young fashion design students. I was challenged to participate in this tradition by my colleague Mr O'Brien. I was challenged to frock up for the event, and I was saved by Nathan, who volunteered to design a suit for me to wear on the occasion. The creation I wear today is an example of some of the extraordinary talents displayed by young people studying in training

institutes around the state.

So it was that on Friday, 2 September, I was joined by colleagues from both this chamber and the other chamber at the Victorian Training Awards, which is now an annual event showcasing the extraordinary talents of young people in Victoria. It was a great night, and we saw a wide collection of winners from right across the state. As I said, this particular jacket was designed by Nathan, and it would be wrong of me not to show the lining. The lining is also designed by Nathan; it represents the facade of Gordon TAFE.

It was a great night. Nathan is a humble young fellow who was not there on the night; he did not wish to be there and have accolades heaped upon him, which I am sure would have happened. I thank him publicly for making the night for me. On top of that there were some other excellent winners on the night.

The Victorian Vocational Student of the Year Award was won by Lisette Mill from South West Institute of TAFE; the Victorian Trainee of the Year Award went to Amanda Divola from Bendigo TAFE; the Victorian Koori Student of the Year Award went to Stephanie Dalton from GippsTAFE in Morwell; the Victorian School-based Apprentice of the Year Award was won by Jessica Pendlebury from GOTAFE and Assumption College, Kilmore; and the Victorian Apprentice of the Year Award went to Colin Wilson from Holmesglen.

The Victorian Teacher/Trainer of the Year Award went to Scott Robinson from Victoria University; the Victorian VET Client Service/Support Excellence Award was won by the team from the skills recognition centre at the Gordon, Geelong; and the Victorian VET in Schools Excellence Award was won by Carrum Downs Secondary College.

The Victorian Employer Award for Apprentice Development was won by Mercedes Benz of Melbourne; the Victorian Small Employer of the Year Award was won by Bell's Transport of Bendigo; the Victorian Employer of the Year Award went to the GEO Group Australia Pty Ltd of Fulham, which runs the correctional facility there; the Victorian Industry Collaboration Award was won by SPC Ardmona and the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union food division; the Victorian Small Training Provider of the Year Award was won by Flexible Training Solutions in Bulleen; and the Victorian Large Training Provider of the Year Award was awarded to South West Institute

of TAFE.

I was pleased that my colleagues Mr Elasmarr, Mr O'Brien and others in this chamber and the Assembly were able to join me on the night. It was a great night, and I know that I have the support of all members of this chamber in recognising the outstanding young talents of people involved in training in Victoria.

**COUNCIL | Adjournment
13 September 2011**

Israel: Melbourne protests

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I raise a matter for the attention of the Attorney-General. It concerns the boycott, divestment and sanctions campaign against the state of Israel. We have seen on the streets of Melbourne protests directed at Max Brenner stores — violent and disturbing protests by union members, Palestinians, Greens and assorted other leftie nutbags attacking Israel — —

Ms Hartland — On a point of order, President, the Greens did not attend those rallies, and I ask the member to withdraw the phrase 'leftie ratbags'.

The PRESIDENT — Order! I think he said 'nutbags' actually. At any rate I do not consider that to be parliamentary language.

I ask the member to withdraw the word 'ratbags', 'nutbags' or whatever it was — and obviously the Greens have dissociated themselves from those protests.

Mr FINN — Good luck to them. I withdraw, President, and hope that freedom of speech reigns forever in this country.

The protesters say this is about an attack on Israel, another country, but is it really? Are these people protesting against Israel, or are they indulging in good old-fashioned anti-Semitism? Is this political protest or religious bigotry? Many participants in the protests have long histories of antagonism towards Judaism and contempt for Jews generally. I am a great believer in freedom of speech, as I mentioned just a moment ago, but it is intolerable that these protests are occurring in our country and in particular in our city. We know what a lot of these no-hopers are really on about when they take to the streets.

This sort of anti-Semitism would have been quite at home in Germany in the 1930s. I find it absolutely

astonishing that it is happening here in Melbourne in 2011.

The reason I raise this matter tonight is because there may well have been a number of quite blatant breaches of the Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001. I am not a great fan of that particular act, but at this point in time it is still the law. If a law such as the Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001 exists, then we should use it to protect those who are under attack from people who take to the streets in the way we have seen over recent months.

I ask the Attorney-General to investigate if a breach has occurred and to take the appropriate action. If such a breach has occurred, I ask that he identify those who are involved and that he bring charges against them.

**COUNCIL
14 September 2011**

Production of Documents

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — It gives me a great deal of pleasure to rise to speak in what I think it would be safe to say has been and continues to be a wide-ranging and very lively debate. Mr Leane has to take a good deal of credit for that because his contribution was up to his usual standard, and he can take that whichever way he likes. Certainly lively is one description I would use.

Before mentioning what Mr Leane had said, I have to make mention of Ms Pennicuik's comment about those of us who might not necessarily go with the idea of man-made global warming and indeed that the federal Liberal Party is whipping up fears. There is no group of people in this country or on the face of this earth that has whipped up fears as much as the Greens. Whether it is in Australia, in Europe or in the Americas, it is the Greens that live on fear. Without the fear the Greens do not exist. Fear is their oxygen. Fear is to them what carbon dioxide is to trees. That is the bottom line. I have raised it in this house before, and I have not yet been able to work out why the extreme left, whether it is in Australia or wherever it may be, always has to have something to be scared of.

You will remember, Acting President, that some years ago Ronald Reagan was going to blow up the world; that is what the left told us. They were terrified.

I was 16 or 17 years of age, and I woke up every morning with this image of a mushroom cloud over Sunbury. The extreme left was running around saying, 'Ronald Reagan is going to blow up the world. He is going to destroy the world.' What did he do? He ended the Cold War. He brought on a period of peace in the world the likes of which we have not seen in the last century. It is extraordinary that we are now seeing history repeat itself with global warming.

It is not global warming anymore. We heard about global warming some years ago, but then somebody worked out that there had not actually been any global warming for about a decade. We cannot call it global warming anymore, so we will call it climate change. What is climate change? Climate change can be anything you want it to be. If it is cold, if it is hot, if it does not rain, if it does rain or if it is windy, that is climate change. Climate change is anything you want it to be. We heard from Ms Pennicuik and Mr Barber earlier.

I say to Ms Pennicuik that when she gets up and lectures the Liberal Party and conservatives about causing fear she might like to go into the room of mirrors and have a good hard look at herself and her colleagues, because that is what they live on.

Getting back to Mr Leane's contribution a little bit earlier, it was fascinating to hear a man who has his political genesis in the Electrical Trades Union getting up here and promoting something which is going to put his fellow members out of jobs. I assume Mr Leane is still a member of the ETU?

Mr Leane — Yes.

Mr FINN — He indicates that he is. I am fascinated that he gets up here and advocates a tax which will put his fellow members out of work. Mr Leane would be far better served if he listened to his comrade in arms, Dean Mighell.

I am not sure whether Dean Mighell is the president or the secretary of the ETU; he could be both. He has quite openly come out and pretty much supported what the government has said in these figures from this particular model. He said that he cannot support the carbon tax because it will put his members out of work. Here is a bloke, Dean Mighell, who actually cares about his members. Mr Leane shakes his head. I know Mr Leane and Dean Mighell go back a long way. I know Mr Leane may not even have been elected to

this chamber if it were not for the support of Dean Mighell some years ago. But things may have changed since then. Far be it for me to judge what is happening on that score.

With regard to the current ETU leadership, at least Dean Mighell has shown the concern that he should for his members. Would it not be wonderful if other trade union officials showed the same concern for their members that Dean Mighell has, instead of putting their own personal political ambitions ahead of what is good for their members — and I am talking of Paul Howes and a couple of others here. They are saying to their members, 'You are not important. What is important is me getting a seat in Canberra.' Unfortunately that is something we have come to expect from trade union officials in this country. They tell us that they care about their members and that they are going to fight for their members, and then the minute they get there it is out with the credit card. I gather they go to all sorts of places; I am told a trade union credit card can take you anywhere.

At least there is one trade union official in this country who supports and backs up his members by opposing the carbon tax. He is opposing it on basically the same foundation as we do here in Victoria. We have a shared concern about the impact that this carbon tax will have on ordinary Victorians — families, battlers and people who are struggling to pay their bills and keep their homes and families together.

That is not something that worries the ALP, and it is certainly not something that worries the Greens, as they have made very clear time and again.

Mr Leane told us that he looks at the smokestacks — I am not sure which smokestacks he looks at — and he sees smoke billowing out. I would have thought that somebody with his background would know that this so-called smoke that billows out is in fact steam. If Mr Leane is in any doubt, he should go to his office, fill his jug full of water, turn it on and wait. In a few minutes it will start to gurgle, the water will bubble up and the steam will come. That is what is coming out of the smokestacks. The steam that comes out of the smokestacks will cause exactly the same degree of damage as it will in his office — none. What is he getting carried away about? Is the federal Gillard government putting a big new tax on everything to stop steam? There is no logic to the arguments of those

opposite.

Hon. M. J. Guy — No wonder Puffing Billy is in trouble.

Mr FINN — Mr Guy makes an extremely good point.

Mr Barber interjected.

Mr FINN — It is a fair point. As Mr Barber points out, Puffing Billy will cop a carbon tax. If Puffing Billy is not in trouble now, this time next year watch out.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr FINN — We will have to run up, and I think Tony Abbott raced Puffing Billy and beat it a couple of years ago.

Mr Leane — In his Speedos?

Mr FINN — I do not think so, Mr Leane. It is interesting. As I said, Mr Leane has had a good number of interesting things to say this afternoon.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr FINN — My word he has. I do not know whether he had a credit card when he was with the union, but he has had a number of interesting things to say. The most interesting, the most illuminating — —

Mr Leane — On a point of order, Acting President, there was reference to a union credit card and I am not too sure what else towards myself. I would like to put on record that I never had a union credit card. I will not call for a withdrawal; it is just a point of clarification.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr O'Brien) — Order! There is no point of order. I call on Mr Finn to continue.

Mr FINN — I would not suggest that Mr Leane had one; I just inquired, that is all. I have an inquiring mind; it is something that has dogged me all my life. The most illuminating point that Mr Leane made in his contribution was that we would all pay this tax — all. What have we been hearing from Canberra? What have we been hearing in the millions and millions and millions of dollars worth of advertising from the Prime Minister and the federal government? They have been saying, 'Only a small number of big polluters will be paying this tax.' Mr Leane has let the cat out of the bag in this chamber today. He has told us all exactly what will be going on under this carbon tax. He has told us, 'We are all going to be paying this carbon tax.'

Mr Leane — That is not what I said.

Mr FINN — 'We are all going to be paying this carbon tax.'

Mr Leane interjected.

Mr FINN — No, Mr Leane, do not feel guilty. It is not something that

comes as any surprise to us at all, because we have known from day one that this tax will filter through to every component of the Australian economy: to every family, to every individual, to every business, to every employer — to everybody. This tax will hit every Australian. Wherever they are, whoever they are, this tax will hit them. That is what this modelling is about. That is what this debate is about. It is about finding out the degree to which this carbon tax will rip the guts out of Australia. That is what it is about.

Mr Leane interjected.

Mr FINN — I do not know why Mr Leane, or indeed Mr Barber for that matter, would get so excited about it.

Putting that aside, I refer to the — I suppose there is only one word to use to describe it — ‘lie’ that was told just before the federal election last year. Unfortunately I cannot do that flat, nasally voice, but members will remember the comment, ‘There will be no carbon tax under the government that I lead.’ That was Prime Minister Julia Gillard in August, I think about three or four days before the federal election last year.

I do not think there is any doubt in anybody’s mind that if she had come out and said, ‘There will be a carbon tax under the government that I lead,’ there would not have been a government for her to lead because she would have gotten done like a dinner. As it turns out, she did not even get any sort of mandate from the people at the subsequent election. In fact the Liberal-Nationals coalition outpolled the ALP in that election, and it was only the shonky deals done with a couple of shonks in Canberra, a couple of Independent chysters, that kept her in the job. That is extraordinarily important.

But what I think is even more important is that — and this is where this modelling comes in, and I am really glad this motion has come up today because it is important that we focus on the modelling — we focus on how we find out the impact of the carbon tax. Because clearly that initial lie from Canberra from our Prime Minister has not been the last one. There have been many since, and they are continuing to this very day.

It is important that we find out, and it is important that Premier Barry O’Farrell in New South Wales finds out, that Premier Anna Bligh in Queensland finds out and that Campbell Newman, the incoming Premier of Queensland, finds out. It is important that right around

Australia we find out exactly what the impact of this carbon tax will be. That is what this sort of modelling is all about. It is a pretty reasonable sort of proposition. It is extraordinarily important that we know as a government and as a community.

It is extremely important that we know as a government and as a community what impact this tax will have on, for example, hospitals. As we know, certainly in my situation in the western suburbs, hospitals are up against the wall. They are scraping around for every dollar they can get. They are begging for money. Just a couple of weeks ago I visited the Footscray hospital and was appalled at the physical condition of the hospital.

I had to salute the doctors and nurses there, who are obviously very caring and committed people to work in the conditions they are forced to put up with. How is that hospital — which is already up against it, already in a physical condition which I would describe as disgraceful — possibly going to put up with the added costs of a carbon tax? There is no talk about compensation from Canberra for hospitals; no, not on your nelly. How is the Western Hospital in Footscray going to cope with the carbon tax? Clearly it is going to have to cut staff, it is going to have to cut services, and any maintenance that is going on will be cut as well.

Mr Barber interjected.

Mr FINN — When will we hear? That is what I want to know, Mr Barber: when will we hear about it? Because the Prime Minister will not tell us. The Prime Minister will not tell us, and nor will the Greens leader, Senator Brown.

Senator Brown has been very quiet. Bob Brown is an interesting character because some days he is everywhere and other days you just cannot find him anywhere. He just disappears — into the ether he goes — and it is impossible to get any comment out of him at all. It is only the mention of two magic words that will bring him out again: Lee Rhiannon. Mention Lee Rhiannon and out he scurries to hold a press conference, because he is a bit toey about the prospect that he might be about to lose his job. Lee Rhiannon has got that idea too; she would like to be leader of the Greens, and I understand that is on the cards. How entertaining that will be when it happens — God help Australia.

As I have said, hospitals are going to be severely affected.

Mr Barber — How much?

Mr FINN — Extraordinarily severely affected by this carbon tax.

Then of course there are the schools. We all have schools in our regions, and I am sure we all have hospitals for that matter. Every time I go to a school, without exception, they ask me for money, usually sizeable amounts. And now the new government has arrived and we have a new sense of priorities in this state I am sure I will be able to deliver that money to a good number of them to provide the sorts of services our children need and deserve. They do need that money.

How will they put up with a brand-new tax on everything that will achieve nothing? How will they cope with the added financial pressures of this carbon tax? There is no word from Julia Gillard on that, there is no word from Canberra on that. There is no compensation for schools. There is no compensation for those schools that are struggling now. I know that right throughout the western suburbs there are a number of schools that are in dire need.

It is interesting. I talked firstly about the hospitals and now about the schools in the western suburbs that have been struggling. Yet this is what the Labor Party describes as ‘Labor heartland.’ This is the part of Melbourne that the Labor Party likes to think is its own. It did not look after its own very well for 11 years, did it?

Mr Ondarchie interjected.

Mr FINN — When you talk about Labor in the western suburbs you cannot help but be confronted with the word ‘neglect’ in big capital letters.

You have to wonder how these schools, which are already struggling — they are up against it — are going to cope with a carbon tax.

If you go to various municipal councils and speak to any mayor or CEO — or administrator in the case of Brimbank City Council — they will tell you that they are hard up for cash. I do not know what it is about councils, but no matter how high the rates are or how little they spend, they always seem to be hard up for cash. How are these councils going to get by when the carbon tax hits, whether they be small rural councils which are struggling to look after their ratepayers and get by as it is, or big city councils with hundreds of staff — thousands in certain instances — which spend money on this, that and everything else? It will be like a financial tsunami for councils. I have spoken to mayors — and I am

talking about Labor mayors — who have told me quite frankly that they do not know how they will get by once the carbon tax takes effect. That is something they are extraordinarily unhappy about.

What we are talking about are the effects of a big new tax on everything that will achieve absolutely nothing. I heard somebody say before by way of interjection — it might have been Mr Ondarchie, although he does not interject all that often because interjections are disorderly, and he would not be involved in such — —

Mr Ramsay interjected.

Mr FINN — Unruly behaviour, indeed, Mr Ramsay — —

Mr Viney interjected.

Mr FINN — Far be it from me to suggest that you, Mr Viney, might from time to time indulge in that practice!

I think it was Mr Ondarchie who suggested to me that taxes do not change behaviour, but in this instance I think they will. If the Gillard-Brown government has set out to change people's behaviour, I think it will achieve that. For starters, thousands of people will not have to get up and go to work in the morning because they will be out of a job. More than anything else this tax will hit jobs. It will hit employment. It will hit small business for sure, but it will also hit those big industrial companies, in particular those in the south-eastern suburbs and — the ones I am particularly concerned about — the western suburbs that employ thousands of people. They are the ones who will pack up and leave. They do not need to be in Australia. They could be in India or China — and incidentally there is no carbon tax over there — so they will just pack up and leave. This will be devastating on jobs.

As I have mentioned in the house before, I have spoken to CEOs of businesses in the western suburbs who have told me that they are preparing to do just that — —

Mr Barber — Name one!

Mr FINN — I will not name anybody, Mr Barber — I will not have your Greens mates harassing them out the front of their businesses. When I speak to my constituents in confidence, that is exactly what it is — it is absolutely in confidence.

Mr Barber interjected.

Mr FINN — You might think it is highly amusing, Mr Barber, but when those companies close down or shift offshore, when thousands and thousands of people lose their

jobs and cannot pay their mortgages, so they lose their homes and their families break up, will you still be laughing? You will know that it is your party's responsibility. You will know that you, the Greens, are responsible. It is the Greens who will be responsible because this is a devastating tax on jobs, and it is all part of the modelling that has been put together for us.

I can understand the Greens supporting this tax. Let us be generous towards the Greens — they are just a little bit out there, a little bit off with the fairies and not on the same planet as the rest of us. They are nuts — not all of them, but quite often — so it is not surprising that they would support a tax of this nature, which will hit education, health, business and councils.

In particular it will hit jobs, family life and all those other things that the Greens do not really care about. I am not sure what the Greens do care about, but they certainly do not care about people. That is fair enough; that is their prerogative. People vote for them on the basis that they live in or around North Fitzroy. On election day they get up, put their T-shirts and thongs on and go down to the polling booth on a Saturday morning. If they want to do that, that is their democratic right — good on them.

Having said that I can understand the Greens doing that, I cannot understand why the Australian Labor Party is doing this to the working families that it said it cares so much about. Do members remember the 2007 election campaign? Kevin Rudd, then Prime Minister and now the federal Minister for Foreign Affairs, and Julia Gillard, now Prime Minister, were constantly talking about working families. Fair dinkum, if I heard it once more I was going to put my foot through the television! Every minute of the day we heard them talking about how much they cared about working families. Everywhere they went, from one end of Australia to the other, it was working families this and working families that.

They said that working families were the basis of Australia. They said they were going to look after working families and that they loved working families. What went wrong? They do not love working families any more — and guess what? — working families do not love them back.

If anybody has seen the polls lately, they would know that bunnions are more popular than Julia Gillard. I could run off a number of diseases that are more popular than her, but

I will not because it could get a bit depressing, and that is not something I want to do.

The Labor Party was supposedly founded by the trade unions to look after the workers, because the ALP is the political wing of the trade union movement in this country. When you look and see just how far down the tube trade unions have gone, that perhaps explains where the Labor Party is. It explains why the ALP has deserted working families and the working people of this country.

It explains a great deal.

We have heard a great deal of debate, not just today — —

Mr Viney — Yes, too much.

Mr FINN — I can assure Mr Viney that I have much more to say. We have heard a great deal about the carbon tax in this debate over the last six months, not just today, and what impact it will have on people, families, businesses and jobs. I have spent some time today outlining some of those impacts, but there is one very interesting component of this debate that seems to have been forgotten, and I do not know why because it is a very important component. What impact will this tax have on climate change? What impact will this tax have on temperature? What impact will this tax have on what was formally known as global warming? They are fascinating questions.

Mr Ramsay — We won't be alive.

Mr FINN — Mr Ramsay is absolutely spot-on: we will not be alive.

Mr Ondarchie interjected.

Mr FINN — Indeed, Mr Ondarchie, the artist formerly known as global warming. What benefit will this bring? I was never a brilliant mathematician at school, but over the years I have come to master a practical form of mathematics to get by.

Mr Ondarchie — Elementary.

Mr FINN — Elementary is a very good word. Let me think about this.

We understand and we know that Australia is responsible for about 1 per cent of the world's emissions. Some people say it is 0.5 per cent, some say it is 1.5 per cent, so, as everybody knows that I am a middle-of-the-road person, I will go to the middle of the road on this occasion and say that Australia is responsible for 1 per cent of the world's emissions. Fair enough. You would have to agree that 1 per cent does not appear to be all that much. If 1 per cent of the world's emissions stopped tomorrow, it would not mean a thing; it would

have no impact on anything. But what impact will this carbon tax, the modelling of which we are discussing today, have on that 1 per cent of the world's emissions?

Mr Ondarchie interjected.

Mr FINN — You are absolutely right. This tax aims to stop 5 per cent of Australia's emissions, and I am afraid, Mr Ondarchie, that this is where my mathematics fails me: what is 5 per cent of 1 per cent?

Off the top of my head, precious little: it will have absolutely no impact at all. I was somewhere one night and I turned the television on.

Mrs Peulich interjected.

Mr FINN — No, I did not have a credit card! I turned the television on. From memory I was in Brisbane after speaking at a conference — for some reason they like me a lot up there.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr FINN — It is God's own country. I turned on my television and, for reasons that are absolutely beyond me, I turned to the Foxtel channel which gave me one of the news channels — and there was a forum on climate change, from Geelong. It was compered by Rob Gell, who no doubt was well paid to do so by the Australian taxpayer, as is everything in this case it would seem. On the panel of that forum was a chap called Professor Tim Flannery. Members will recall that Professor Tim Flannery is the man who told us it would never rain again. That was before the floods. He is the man who has absolutely no reputation left, but who, again for reasons that totally escape me, is on about \$180 000 a year, again funded by the Australian taxpayer, to advise the federal government on climate change.

What did Professor Flannery say when asked the same question that the Prime Minister refuses to answer? The question was: what is the impact, and when will we start to see a lowering of temperatures with this carbon tax? Do you know what Professor Flannery said?

When I heard his answer I had to sit down, because he said, 'If we stop' — we are not talking about 5 per cent of 1 per cent — 'all emissions in the world today, now, we will start to see a change in temperatures in about 1000 years.'

Mrs Peulich — May see.

Mr FINN — That is right, Mrs Peulich: we may see a change in about 1000 years. I have absolutely no idea how he would know that. This is what the federal government has built its case on. This is the bloke who

advises the Prime Minister on climate change. This is why we are risking our economy, our jobs and our families, because we might see a change in the climate in 1000 years. Actually, 5 per cent of 1 per cent — it would probably be about 50 000 years, if you follow Professor Flannery's take on things. It is just staggering. It is nonsensical in the extreme.

It absolutely staggers me that we would have a government which is pandering to people who are clearly making a lot of money out of this. Make no mistake, there are a lot of people making a lot of money out of climate change; it is a sizeable industry. One of those chaps is a bloke called Al Gore, who has never looked more hale and hearty. In fact he has almost doubled in size since he started talking about climate change.

It was interesting to hear Mr Leane talking about the sea levels rising because of climate change. The sea levels are rising so much that Al Gore bought a mansion on Miami Beach. That is how much he worried about rising sea levels. Kevin Rudd has just bought a beach house. He does not seem to be all that concerned about rising sea levels. Who else has bought property right on the beach? Greg Combet, the federal Minister for Climate Change and Energy Efficiency. Can you believe it? Do as we say, not as we do — that is Labor policy.

Labor members will lecture us about climate change, and they will lecture us about emissions and tell us that the sea levels are rising, and then they will go and buy mansions by the sea, right on the beach. It is staggering.

The Australian people deserve every bit of information on this subject that we can possibly get. It is a great pity that the data that is hoarded in Canberra by the current federal government is just that: it has been locked away and kept from the Australian people. As Australians, as taxpayers, as people who are paying for these surveys and the data to be collected, we deserve to know what is going on.

If Mr Barber wants to move a motion and if Mr Leane and Mr Viney want to support it, I suggest they get on the dog and bone and ring Canberra and ask the Prime Minister to release the many vaults of information she has, the surveys and data, on the impact of a carbon tax.

While they are at it they might like to ask her why she advised Kevin Rudd against a carbon tax last year

and why she is so keen about having one this year. Why has there been the big turnaround? Last year it was a no-no, but that might have been in the process of knifing him, of course, so that might be out of the equation.

Mrs Peulich — Bob is hanging around.

Mr FINN — Bob, yes.

Mr Ondarchie — He is coming back, though.

Mr FINN — He might be coming back, which I am sure gives a great deal of joy to every member of the Labor Party! Simon has the numbers, from what I am hearing. The Australian people have already made up their minds on this.

They do not want a carbon tax. They are looking at what is happening in Canberra, the 18 bills that are being put up for debate this week, the closing down of the Parliament and the — I was going to say the prostitution — debasing of the democratic process by this federal government.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr FINN — No, the word 'prostitution' is a little close to home for at least one member. The Australian people are seeing what is happening in Canberra this week, and they are absolutely sickened by it. They have already made up their minds; they do not want a carbon tax, and the anger in the electorate is absolutely palpable. We have all heard the expression 'the electorate is sitting on their verandas with baseball bats.' I reckon the next time they might have canons with which they will blow away the federal government. I have never seen people as angry as they are at the moment over the carbon tax that is being debated in the federal Parliament, probably as we speak.

This motion seeks information, but it does not go anywhere near far enough and is probably directed to the wrong place, because, as I said before, if members really want to know what is going on, there is a lot of information in Canberra that we would all love to see. That is being kept well hidden, well out of sight, by the Prime Minister and her deputy, Senator Brown, as they push ahead with this extraordinarily unpopular tax on everything, which will achieve absolutely nothing except a major recession in this country. This is a debate that will continue and should continue. I sincerely hope that as this week continues, the voice of every Australian is heard in the national capital.

Whitten Oval: sports hall

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan)
— Last Friday I had the honour of attending the opening of the Western Bulldogs community sports hall at Whitten Oval along with a good number of dignitaries from across the western suburbs. This is no ordinary hall — it is huge. You could easily build an Airbus A380 and still have room for a game of basketball in the hall. It is also much more than just a sports facility — it completes the dream of then Western Bulldogs CEO Campbell Rose to make Whitten Oval a sporting and community icon of Melbourne's west. Campbell has now moved on to greener pastures, but I was delighted that he was there to see the culmination of his vision. I congratulate him on his wonderful personal achievement.

The hall provides children in the west with sports facilities that previously could only be accessed by travelling across town. It is another plus for the western suburbs of Melbourne and a sign that the people of the west will no longer tolerate being treated as second-class citizens. Everybody knows I am a Tiger, but I believe that what is good for the Western Bulldogs is good for the western suburbs — and this development is great for both.

It should be noted that the new Whitten Oval is an everlasting legacy of the Howard federal government, and I thank former Prime Minister Howard for his interest in and commitment to this project. I congratulate David Smorgon not only on this facility but also on his marriage just last Sunday; Simon Garlick, the current CEO; the Bulldogs board; and all associated with this exciting new beacon in the west. This development is wonderful for Melbourne's west, and it is good for football.

Point Cook: traffic management

*Raised with the Minister for Roads
on 31 May 2011*

REPLY:

Planning for traffic management in the Point Cook area was considered in the Laverton/ Point Cook: Road and Transport Network Study completed by VicRoads in 2004. The study identified that this would be through the construction and promotion of the Palmers Road corridor, with future consideration to be given to a major upgrade to Point Cook Road south of Dunnings Road. The first elements of this strategy, comprising construction of the Palmers Road Extension and the upgrade and signalisation of the intersection of Point Cook and Dunnings Roads, were completed in 2008. The upgraded intersection layout allows for the future duplication of Point Cook and Dunnings Roads.

As the next stage of this strategy, a \$24 million state government-funded project will extend the Palmers Road overpass beyond the Princes Freeway across the Werribee rail line to Sayers Road at Laverton North. This direct road link between Point Cook and Williams Landing will provide improved north-south access and is expected to further ease congestion on Point Cook Road. Major works will start in 2011 and be completed in late 2012.

Also consistent with the strategy, a \$1.5 million package of road safety improvements on Point Cook Road between Seabrook Boulevard and Homestead Run has been funded under the safer roads infrastructure program.

The works include pavement widening to allow for a new centre median, exclusive right-turn lanes and bicycle lanes; line marking and signage improvements; the removal of roadside hazards and an upgrade to existing safety barriers; and street lighting improvements. VicRoads is undertaking these improvement works in consultation with the City of Hobsons Bay, which is also contributing to the project. Construction is expected to commence in October 2011.

VicRoads, in consultation with the Hobsons Bay Council, is investigating

other options to reduce congestion on Point Cook Road and improve access to the road network, as well as options to improve road safety.

Altona: beach renourishment

*Raised with the Minister for
Environment and Climate Change on
8 February 2011*

REPLY:

I thank Mr Finn for his invitation to meet with him as well as Mr Ewan and interested local residents to examine the condition of Altona Beach. I met with Mr Finn on 21 April 2011 and again on 17 May 2011.

Carbon tax: schools

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan)
— I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Education. As the minister and the house would be aware, I have a close working relationship with the schools in Western Metropolitan Region. I certainly look forward to visiting as many as I possibly can. In fact next week I am off to see my old friends at Westmeadows Primary School. I go back with them to a previous stint in this Parliament, and I am looking forward to that visit.

I think it is safe to say that the schools in Melbourne's western suburbs are staffed by some of the most dedicated teachers around. They are totally committed to their students. The ones I speak to and see in action are totally committed to getting the best education possible for the children they teach.

The school councils of these schools have been working hard to keep their facilities up to scratch and to provide the best physical environment possible for their children. Let us face it: not all of the parents on the school councils are rich. In fact many of them come from working-class backgrounds and are battlers. They sacrifice a great deal in order to keep their schools up to scratch. The principals of most, if not all, of the schools in the west hold things together beautifully. I have always

said that if you have a great principal, you have a great school. That is almost a truism, and we have some great principals in the western suburbs.

As I said, I visit schools frequently. I love doing it; there is a sense of excitement about the future when you see those children being educated. But a lot of the schools in the west are not flush with funds; in fact many are struggling and have their backs against the wall.

Principals and school council presidents tell me frequently, and have been telling me for most of this year, that they are very concerned about the impact of the carbon tax on their schools. They are very concerned about how much more they will have to pay for electricity, gas, maintenance and in fact just about everything, as they see the carbon tax impacting on every service that they have to provide to keep their school running. They are very concerned.

I ask the Minister for Education to instigate an inquiry to investigate the full impact of the carbon tax on schools. I think it is something we should be preparing for now as we know the carbon tax will be coming in the middle of next year, and we probably have a few months to get ready for that. I ask the minister to instigate such an inquiry and to let those principals and school council presidents know exactly what they are in for in the middle of next year.

**COUNCIL | Second Reading
11 October 2011**

Drugs, Poisons And Controlled Substances Amendment (Prohibition Of Display And Sale Of Cannabis Water Pipes) Bill 2011

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — It gives me a great deal of pleasure to rise in support of this bill this evening. It is entirely appropriate that this legislation be passed in what is the beginning — for this sitting week anyway — of Mental Health Week, because as we know, there has been

an explosion in recent years in major mental health problems and that is a direct result of extended use of cannabis and other drugs.

I recall some years ago being at the opening of a drug centre in the north-west of Melbourne — more the north than the west it has to be said — and I asked the director of that particular service what the problem was with mental health, why we were facing this huge explosion in numbers, why so many people were suffering mental health problems when in years gone by we had not had those sorts of numbers, and he was very quick and to the point. He said, 'Drugs'.

He said, 'Cannabis in particular is the problem, but other drugs as well.' He said, 'As long as we have people using cannabis, they will fry their brains.'

It is getting worse all the time, as was explained earlier. The strength of cannabis in this day and age is greater than it was in years gone by, and this stuff just absolutely destroys people's brains. I recall my own experience with somebody who had used marijuana over a long period of time, perhaps 40 years. He was a former employer of mine from when I worked in radio. He was a fine and outstanding argument against any legalisation of cannabis. I saw for myself what extended use of cannabis had done to him. It had turned him paranoid. It had fried his brain. I think he was schizophrenic as well. There were a number of problems that he faced and they were clearly the result of his use of cannabis over many decades.

This legislation is about sending a message not just to young people but to every person in Victoria that cannabis is a very dangerous drug. That is something that I think some people do not actually realise. You still hear people occasionally ring up talkback radio programs and say, 'I've been on cannabis for the last 20 years and it's never hurt me.' They barely know what day it is. They do not recognise that because the cannabis has in fact fried their brains. There are any number of people out there who will tell you that cannabis is a harmless drug. They will tell you that it is not a problem, that you can smoke it as much as you like every day, morning, noon and night, and it will have no impact on you. Of course that is total nonsense.

While we have laws that ban cannabis in this state, it is quite extraordinary that I can walk out that door, walk down the steps of

this building here in Spring Street, walk down Bourke Street and less than 2 minutes away find a shop which has an extensive array of bongs and similar smoking implements for cannabis use. We have those in markets, we have those in a number of places right around the suburbs and throughout country Victoria. That has to stop. You cannot send a message that this stuff is dangerous and then have these things not only on display but also on sale. That is just a nonsense. That is what this bill is about. This bill is as much as anything else about sending a message that this stuff is dangerous. Cannabis is dangerous. It is not good for you. It will cause you grievous harm. It will fry your brain. I believe that that is a message that is well worth getting through.

In the extraordinarily brief time that I have to speak on this bill — I would have loved to take up the points that Mr Jennings made in his contribution but unfortunately his contribution went a lot longer than I thought it would so I have run out of time, which is very disappointing — I would like to commend Mr Peter Kavanagh, a former member of this house, who put forward a similar initiative last year that unfortunately was defeated. The Labor-Greens coalition at that time that had the numbers, because they are soft on drugs — we have to face facts: between them they are soft on drugs — defeated that particular private members bill. I regretted that then and I regret that now, but I am very pleased that we have this legislation before the house tonight because I believe this is important.

It is very important for young people in particular to get that message. As Mr Ondarchie said, this legislation really is about protecting our children.

So much of what I do in the course of my public life is about defending children, and on that basis I am very happy to support this legislation tonight, because this government will have no truck with illegal drug use. This government will not go down the path, as advocated by the Greens, of injecting rooms and cannabis trials and the sorts of things that have been advocated in this house tonight. Labor is reluctantly supporting this bill. Although Labor members say they are not opposing it, they are very reluctant. The Greens are opposing the bill, and that is purely because both parties are soft on drugs. That is another message that the people of Victoria should be getting tonight. There are two messages. One is that

cannabis is dangerous; the other is that Labor and the Greens are soft on drugs.

COUNCIL | Questions without Notice
11 October 2011

Housing: homelessness action plan

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — My question without notice is to the Minister for Housing, who is also the Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development, and I ask: can the minister inform the house of details of the recently announced Victorian homelessness action plan?

Hon. W. A. LOVELL (Minister for Housing) — I thank the member for his question and his ongoing interest in the welfare of Victorians who are unfortunately caught in the homelessness sector. Last week I was proud to release the Victorian government's \$76.7 million Victorian homelessness action plan, which focuses on innovation and prevention to tackle the growing and extremely complex issue of homelessness.

This plan has been based on consultation with the homelessness sector and other experts in the field. It involves \$25 million for innovation action projects, which will focus on the different needs of families, children, victims of domestic violence, young people and the elderly. These projects will fund outcomes for the homeless in terms of getting them into stable housing, reconnecting them with their families and communities where possible, with education and training where appropriate and with health services where needed.

I am also establishing a ministerial advisory council to advise government on the necessary system reform we need. I am pleased to announce that the council will be chaired by former Victorian Senator, Dr Kay Patterson, a former federal Minister for Health and Ageing and Minister for Family and Community Services. She has a longstanding interest in solving the problem of homelessness in Australia.

The plan also includes our \$34.7 million election commitment to establish three new youth foyers and five work and learning centres on public housing estates. It further includes \$14 million for other services, including rental brokerage

and intensive case management.

The plan takes an approach that is superior to that of the former Labor government, which delivered its homelessness strategy just prior to the election. Unlike the prescriptive, one-size-fits-all approach of the former government, our investment of \$25 million in eight innovation action projects will focus on funding service providers that can demonstrate integration of service delivery across a minimum of two service sectors.

The plan will focus on partnerships to deliver specialist services to homeless Victorians.

The important difference is that we want homelessness service providers to implement projects which will actually provide the supports which will move people out of homelessness rather than the government funding the sector according to the number of times a homeless person moves through a provider's service.

The Victorian Council of Social Service has welcomed the government's action plan, particularly the opportunities for innovation funded under the plan as well as the focus on joining up approaches across different areas of service delivery. The Council to Homeless Persons also applauded the plan, saying:

... this new and important focus on innovative service delivery models will target the right support, in the right housing, to the right people, at the right time.

The Community Housing Federation of Victoria also welcomed the new strategy, emphasising its support of the collaborative manner of delivering services.

The action plan has broad support from the sector, which is in stark contrast to the response to the strategy the former government released in September last year, after 11 years in government. The sector's disappointment with the former government's strategy showed just how out of touch the former Minister for Housing and current member for Richmond in the Assembly, Richard Wynne, was with the sector and more importantly how out of touch he was with the needs of homeless Victorians.

The government looks forward to working with the homeless service sector to implement the action plan, which, unlike the Labor approach, will address the root causes of homelessness and actually make a difference to the lives of Victoria's most vulnerable residents.

COUNCIL
12 October 2011

Planning: Amendment VC82

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I rise today to oppose Mr Tee's motion.

I have to say that until this morning I had been under the impression that the Labor Party in this state actually cared about the environment. That was so until I walked into this chamber today and saw what was awaiting me and every member of this chamber — Legislative Council notice paper 38 dated Wednesday, 12 October 2011, listing questions on notice 5304 through 8136. We have a tome which would have to be almost 2 inches thick.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Ramsay) — Order! I gave a ruling on Mr Leane's contribution being relevant to the motion at hand. I also fail to see what part of Mr Finn's contribution up to this stage has relevance to the motion Mr Tee brought to this chamber. For consistency, I ask Mr Finn to refer his contribution back to the motion.

Mr FINN — Acting President, if you and the Deputy Clerk would listen to what I am saying, you would note that in fact I had — —

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Ramsay) — Order! I hope Mr Finn is not reflecting on the Chair.

Mr FINN — No, not at all; I am trying to be helpful. I am trying to explain what I am doing. You do not want me to be helpful; is that what you are saying?

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Ramsay) — Order! It would be helpful if Mr Finn would continue his contribution by being relevant to the motion.

Mr FINN — Deputy President, in the first line of my address on this motion I referred to the environment. This an environmental issue. If I cannot speak about what I need to speak about, I fail to — —

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Ramsay) — Order! For the record, I am not the Deputy President; I am an Acting President. I ask Mr Finn again to refer his contribution back to the motion at hand.

Mr FINN — Yes, Acting President, whatever you say.

I will certainly bow to your superior

knowledge and experience in that regard.

Mr Barber interjected.

Mr FINN — I did bow. This debate began, and I struggled to stay awake during Mr Tee's contribution earlier today. To say it was passionless would be somewhat an understatement. To say he did not have his heart in it would be a further considerable understatement. I think the view of most members of the house who heard Mr Tee's contribution would be that he was going through the motions, and that is fine; we can cope with that. But then Mr Barber got up and spoke extensively on this motion. He in fact did not just speak on this motion, he spoke on a wide-ranging number of matters related and unrelated to this motion.

Acting President, it was a pity that you were not in the chair at that particular time.

You might have been able to curtail him as you were able to curtail me, because Mr Barber went on for about an hour and a half on a whole range of matters. I would have thought a precedent would have been set for members following Mr Barber in contributing to this debate.

I have to say the thing that really struck me while I was listening to Mr Barber was the thought that if verbal diarrhoea could be harnessed as a power source, Mr Barber would light up the entire eastern seaboard of Australia. There is one great thing about the Greens — that is, they practise what they preach; they provide their own renewable energy. If bulldust were electricity, Bob Brown would power Tasmania on his own. The Green caucus here in this house of the Victorian Parliament would look after the rest of Australia. If Senator Lee Rhiannon were able to be harnessed in the way that I speak of, all of Europe's energy needs would be solved for the next century.

I never thought a discussion on wind energy would produce such rampant nonsense as we heard from Mr Barber early today. As I said, he spoke on a whole range of matters that travelled far and wide, some related to the motion, some not related to the motion, and that is perhaps a particularly important point to consider.

I have to say I quite like windmills. I grew up on a farm just outside Colac. I spent a fair bit of time down in Colac over the last week or so, and a fair bit of time on the farm that I grew up on. I am aware of how impressive windmills can be in

producing to a degree a water supply on the condition of course that there is wind. One thing I discovered very early in my life is that if there is no wind, a windmill does not work, and that is something that perhaps the backers of wind energy should take into consideration. That is something I learnt a long time ago, and therein lies the problem.

Wind farms are exceedingly ugly. Very few people would be able to hold their hand to their heart and say wind farms are attractive. Mr Barber is an exception; he is in love with wind farms, and that is a marvellous thing. Perhaps he should take a poll of some of the farmers who live near them and hear their complaints about these grotesque windmill farms that pop up from time to time along our coastlines in particular but in other areas as well.

Wind farms are not only ugly but also very noisy, and that is something that would obviously annoy those who live near them. I am not exactly sure how close one would have to live to a wind farm — maybe you, Acting President, will be able to illuminate me — to cop an earful of the noise that these windmills produce, but they certainly are noisy.

We have the double of their being ugly and noisy, and that is obviously not a very good thing. They are also unhealthy. There are a number of reports that have been written over the years that have shown that these things can radiate magnetic fields and so forth and produce an unhealthy environment for people who live around them, and that is clearly something that is totally unsatisfactory. Now we have the trifecta: they are ugly, they are noisy and they are unhealthy. We might as well go for the quadrella: they are unreliable as well.

I ask members of the house to use their memory — even Mr Barber — to remember back to the days when we used to have hot summers, before global warming took over and reduced the odd summer day to around 23 or 24 degrees.

I ask the house to think back to those long, hot days when there was not a breath of wind and recall that those days would sometimes continue for two or three weeks on end. I remember them very well. They seem a long time ago now. How are the wind farms going to work then? If there is no wind — —

Mr Barber interjected.

Mr FINN — Yes, that is right; you can go back, Mr Barber. I remember those days, those long hot summers

when we had day after day without as much as a breath of wind, very well indeed. How on God's earth are these windmills supposed to produce electricity if there is no wind? If you put all your eggs in one basket — and there seems to be a fair bit of enthusiasm for that idea today — then you will find yourself in a fair bit of strife.

I have to say, Acting President, I am grateful to Mr Barber, and so that there is no confusion on anybody's part I am referring specifically to what Mr Barber said in the course of this debate. I am grateful for the words he used, because they gave us all quite an insight into what I think has been described by many public commentators and even politicians as the 'new green religion'. It is a religion that worships the earth, and it regards people as really nothing but a nuisance.

I suppose we could have the First Church of the Holy Green, with Archbishop Barber, Pope Bob Brown and Father Tim Flannery — although he is a little short on holy water since it has not rained for so long, as he predicted. In this new green religion, which will have taken over the earth, we could have Saint Al of Miami Beach, a saint whose appetite for wealth would be matched only by his capacity for hypocrisy — a modern-day Buddha without the holiness.

This religion that Mr Barber gave us an insight into is built on a number of myths, and I ask the house to give some consideration to the basis of this new religion — this throwback to earlier times. I ask the house to think about what this religion gives us in this modern day and age. The first myth of this new green religion is that all we need is the sun, the sea and the wind. Yes, if you are going to the beach, then all you do need is the sun, the sea and the wind. There is no doubt about that; that is all you need, and that is great.

Mr Scheffer — That is all we have got.

Mr FINN — That might be all Mr Scheffer has got, but over on this side we have got a little bit more. We have got added value over here, let me assure Mr Scheffer. That is the view that the followers of the green religion have: that all we need to do is sit back, let nature work its magic and follow its course, and everything will be fine.

That would be fine and dandy if we wanted to live in the dark; that would be fine and dandy if we did not want to have air conditioning. That would be fine and dandy if we did not want

to have heating — and speaking of heating, this new religion commands us to warm ourselves by the fire, except that we cannot burn wood. This new religion tells us that if a tree falls down in the forest, we cannot pick it up and burn it.

Mr Ondarchie interjected.

Mr FINN — Maybe nobody else heard it, Mr Ondarchie, but you can be guaranteed that Mr Barber heard it. This new green religion tells us that we cannot go into the bush to pick up wood and branches that have fallen from trees. In fact under the previous government it was made illegal. Can you believe that? Then people wondered why there was so much fuel for the bushfires.

It was because we were not allowed to go in, pick it up and burn it at home, which we should have been doing.

This new green religion that Mr Barber gave us such an insight into is something of a mystery. I have been looking at it for quite some time and have wondered about a religion that delivers the sort of prime stupidity that tells you that if a piece of wood falls to the ground, you cannot pick it up and burn it to warm yourself. What sort of philosophy or new religion would tell us that? It is the new green religion that is worshipped by quite a number of those on the other side of the chamber, and I believe that is very sad indeed.

It is sad for us, but today is a great day for the new green religion. One of the biggest myths is on its way to becoming reality. Earlier today dozens of federal Labor MPs sold out their electorates and betrayed their constituents by voting for a carbon tax which they went to the last election saying they would not introduce.

We all remember Julia Gillard, who was a Prime Minister of sorts, saying just a few days before the election, on behalf of every Labor candidate in Australia and every Labor member of Parliament, 'There will be no carbon tax under the government I lead'. She has copped a fair bit — we have heard people refer to her as 'Juliar' and in a number of ways that are a bit more crass than that — but the reality is that it was not just Julia Gillard she was speaking for; she was speaking for the entire Australian Labor Party. She was speaking for every single member of the ALP who had their name on a ballot paper in August last year.

That makes today's vote by every Labor member of Parliament who voted for the carbon tax and for the 18 bills, which included financial

support for the wind farm industry

— —

Mr Leane interjected.

Mr FINN — Mr Leane, not for the first time, is trying to get me into strife. I am not straying in any way, shape or form from the motion, because the wind farm industry is a major part of the 18 bills that were passed today in the House of Representatives. That is part of the betrayal by Labor members of their constituents and their electorates. They told a monstrous porky last year and turned around this year and did exactly the opposite of what they had said.

It is sad that it looks like the myth that a carbon tax will somehow solve our environmental problems will become a reality, but I can understand how the followers of the one true faith of the green religion will be dancing in the streets, possibly without clothes on — I do not know; that is up to them. They will be very happy as a result of what has gone on today. As myths go, this carbon tax is a ripper. It is very hard to beat. This carbon tax is a great big tax on everything, but it will achieve nothing. These people have in their minds — Mr Barber, Mr Leane, the Prime Minister, the federal Treasurer and every member — —

Mr Leane interjected.

Mr FINN — Perhaps there is nothing in your mind, Mr Leane. I am not sure. I will give you the benefit of the doubt.

Every member of the federal Parliament who voted for those bills today has in their mind that the carbon tax will in some way be good for the environment, and that is a nonsense. We all know it is a nonsense. Anybody who looks at it in a dispassionate way — —

Mr Leane — On a point of order, Acting President, regarding relevance, this motion consists of one and a half lines about an amendment to the Victoria planning provisions. Mr Finn has discussed religion and federal issues and has called the Prime Minister names, and I ask you to bring him back to the issues pertaining to the one and a half lines on the notice paper.

Mr FINN — On the point of order, Acting President, I ask you to consider the issue of precedence. Earlier this day we heard Mr Barber speak for close to an hour and a half on this motion. In the course of his address to this house I do not think there was any issue he did not touch on.

Debate on this motion became very wide ranging and broadbased not as a

result of what is actually in the motion or anything Mr Tee has done but as a result of what Mr Barber did when he got up and spoke for nearly an hour and a half on everything known to man. The precedent is there, and I ask you to uphold it and allow me to give the address that is my right as a member of this house.

Mr P. Davis — Further on the point of order, Acting President, I make the point that on the face of it this debate appeared quite narrow, but it has become evident from the contributions made by all members during the course of today that it is a much wider debate than it may superficially appear. It relates to the context of the planning policy of the government, which fits within the framework of the broad climate change issue. Therefore members have been seriously digressing, inspired and led particularly by Mr Barber.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Ramsay) — Order! I do not uphold the point of order.

However, Mr Leane has made some pertinent points, and I agree that this is a very narrow motion that is now becoming a much larger discussion. I take on board the comments made by Mr Davis.

Mr FINN — Thank you, Acting President, for your ruling. I reiterate that this became a much wider debate some time ago, not as a result of what I have said but as a result of what Mr Barber said when he gave his oration earlier today and touched on a whole range of issues. Some were related to the motion and some were not, but at that time it did not seem to matter. Now it seems to matter, so it is a bit hard to follow.

One of the 18 bills that comprise the carbon tax package contains very generous support for the wind farm industry, and that makes the carbon tax directly relevant to the matter we are debating here today. This carbon tax is a tax on businesses, jobs, homes, transport, energy, schools, hospitals and local government. As I said before, it is a tax on everything, and a large part of the tax and the 18 bills that comprise this tax package is generous subsidies and support for the wind farm industry. Even if members opposite want to, they cannot remove wind farms from the carbon tax; they are intrinsically linked.

Another myth I have referred to in this green religion is that the extraordinary imposition of a tax that will put people out of work is

going to help the environment. I do not understand that at all. This is a tax which is going to cause hundreds of thousands of people, at the very least, to lose their jobs. Out in my part of the world it is going to hit the western suburbs particularly hard. I have already spoken to a number of businesses that are teetering on the edge, if not preparing to pack up and either head overseas or close up altogether. It is going to have a devastating impact on so many people.

It is impossible to believe that as a result of an 18-bill package — —

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT — Order! I understand that the motion has been debated to a point where it has broadened out. I am fully accepting of the rulings of Acting President Ramsay, but we need to be confident that contributions are relevant to the motion. Passing reference to broader issues is perfectly in order, but members are making contributions that are substantially on related matters rather than the substance of the motion. Whilst it has always been acceptable for lead speakers from the various parties to make broad-ranging contributions, it is important that subsequent speakers stay substantially on the motion before the Chair. They can make reference to issues raised previously, but that should only be a reference, not the substance of their contribution. I ask Mr Finn to return to the motion and keep his remarks on other matters as passing references or in specific response to contributions made by other members.

Mr FINN — As the Deputy President has just taken the Chair, he may have missed my comment earlier when I referred to the 18 bills that comprise the carbon tax package that was passed by the House of Representatives in Canberra today. In those bills there is very generous support for wind farms in this country. As I said a moment ago, if support for wind farms is part of the 18-bill package, then we cannot remove reference to and discussion of the carbon tax from any discussion on wind farms and this motion here today. I ask the Deputy President to take that connection into consideration, because this motion is not so much a planning motion as a motion about the environment. Up until this point all speakers have been given latitude to discuss the environmental impact, if indeed there is any, of wind farms and wind turbines. I find it difficult to believe that up until this point everybody

has been given the freedom to raise those issues and now the policy has changed. I throw that comment in for what it is worth.

It is extraordinarily important that this issue be taken into consideration with the carbon tax. There is no way to separate them. It is a part of the package, and to try to separate it would be quite ludicrous. We have a number of myths that surround this issue, the major myth being that wind farms and wind turbines are going to be able to provide us with the sort of energy that we will need for the future. That is clearly not the case at all. What we are looking at here is a situation where wind turbines and wind farms, which as I said are ugly, noisy and unhealthy, are going to put a lot of people out for very little benefit. They are a bit like the carbon tax itself. In this country we put out some 1 per cent of the world's emissions, and the carbon tax bill passed today aims to cut emissions by some 5 per cent. It does not matter how many wind farms you have and it does not matter whether you have a wind farm on every corner or every beachfront, because a carbon tax reducing 5 per cent of 1 per cent of emissions is not going to make any difference at all. The whole thing is quite ludicrous.

My support is with what is good for people. I do not believe that wind farms built willy-nilly all over the place are good for people, and after speaking to people in country areas they made that point very clearly. Mr Guy, the excellent Minister for Planning, has discussed this matter over an extended period with a wide range of people and has come to the view that it is important that this amendment be introduced, adopted and extended, and I support that. We all know Mr Guy as a very intelligent and compassionate man who works very hard and is very diligent. He is pretty much the opposite of his predecessor in so many ways. He has taken all of this on board, and he has come to the view that this amendment is good for Victoria. That is what members opposite must realise — that what we are on about over here is what is good for Victoria.

Mr Ondarchie interjected.

Mr FINN — No; I do not know.

Mr Ondarchie suggests that Mr Tee wants to build these things in green wedges. Mr Barber may well want to do that, because he certainly does not want to build anything else there. If they are so environmentally friendly, perhaps a green wedge or two full of windmills would not hurt anybody.

That may well be Mr Barber's attitude. Given some of the things I have outlined in my address this afternoon, that would not surprise me at all.

I commend the minister for looking after the people — for doing his job. He is doing his job, yet we have the shadow minister coming into this place and trying to knock him for that. Where is the common sense in that? I ask Mr Leane where the common sense is in that. Mr Tee is just playing games. He comes in here, and he is just playing games. Members have to take into consideration that these windmills — these wind turbines — affect real people in real families. These are matters that members must take into consideration.

I suggest that instead of playing games Mr Tee might like in future to take into consideration, as Mr Guy does, the very real impact these decisions have on real people. I do not know whether Mr Tee would like to live near one of these wind turbines.

I am putting money down that he will never have to think about that and that it is not something that will ever be on his radar. He is a long way from where these farms, for want of a better word, will be built, so it is not something he has to take into consideration. Mr Guy, however, does. As the minister, he has to take into consideration the concerns and worries felt by real people who have spent their money building their homes, building their livelihoods and raising their families. These issues are real, and they affect real people. Mr Guy has taken these into consideration and come to this decision, and I say, 'Good on him.' I say he has done an exceptionally good job.

I commend Mr Guy, and I ask members of the house to defeat this motion. I ask them to disregard the nonsense we heard earlier in the day, particularly from Mr Barber, who spouted his new green religion, as I said, when he was allowed to do so. I ask members to take into account the feelings and the futures of those people who would be adversely affected if this motion were carried.

I will leave it at that, but once again I urge the house to defeat Mr Tee's motion and to very strongly support a minister who is doing a great job for Victoria and who I have not the slightest doubt will continue to do a great job for Victoria for many, many years to come.

Coptic Christians: Egypt

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — Earlier this year I raised in this house my concerns about the treatment of the Coptic Christian minority in Egypt. Very tragically I must do so again. Religious persecution is rife in that sorry nation, with Christians openly being targeted. All too often we have seen Copts slaughtered in large numbers, and it continues on an increasingly large basis today.

As Australians we should take a stand in support of human rights in Egypt. We should support the Coptic Christians in their time of trial. More than that we should be opening our borders, as I suggested earlier this year, to accept those genuine refugees fleeing Egypt in fear for their lives. We certainly should not be sending home to Egypt anybody who may be facing death as a result.

Instead of grandstanding in various locations around the globe and seeking votes in his leadership quest, Australia's Minister for Foreign Affairs should immediately make representations to the Egyptian government asking it to protect its Coptic community and to stop the killing of Coptic community members. Egypt's Coptic Christians need our help; we should stand with them. They need us now; we should give them our wholehearted support and stand with them.

Industrial relations: Qantas

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — The matter I raise is for the attention of the Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations. I am deeply concerned about the union campaign against Qantas that seems to be coming to some sort of a crescendo at the moment. It is clear to anybody who has taken even a passing interest that Qantas is not as healthy as we would like it to be. I do not think there is any doubt about that at all, and I have to ask the question: are unions trying to permanently ground the national carrier?

The future of aviation already has an increasingly dark cloud over it as

a result of the carbon tax that will be introduced in the middle of next year, which will be less than helpful for aviation. I am extremely worried about the impact on the north-western suburbs of Melbourne of losing Qantas.

It would have a huge impact on the western side of Melbourne, but particularly north-west of Melbourne where, as the minister would be aware, 15 000 people are employed at Melbourne international airport at Tullamarine, many by Qantas. It is not just those who are employed at the airport, there are thousands more who are employed in auxiliary industries around the airport, supplying Qantas with a whole range of services.

I remember only too well what happened when Ansett hit the wall years ago. It might seem to us that it was some time ago now, but it is still very fresh in the memories of a good many of the ex-Ansett workers. They still feel the pain, and not just the financial pain but also the mental anguish from what happened and what they went through when Ansett went out of business. We do not want that to happen again.

I hope the unions have more brains than to subject their members to unemployment as a result of an ongoing campaign which seems — I say 'seems', but it is an extraordinary thing when a group of unions does this — to have set out to completely bring an airline into disrepute. At this stage there are many doubts as to whether any of us would fly Qantas, and no business can afford to continue down that path for very long.

We need action on this, and we need it now. We cannot have our national carrier, Qantas, out of business, with all the devastation that would cause. I ask the minister to intervene, if necessary with his ministerial colleagues from interstate, in an attempt to resolve this matter to ensure that Qantas stays in the air and those employees stay in jobs.

Israel: Melbourne protests

*Raised with the Attorney-General on
13 September 2011*

REPLY:

'Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions Group' (BDS) protesters have conducted protests at the premises of

the Max Brenner chain of chocolate shops at Melbourne Central and QV as part of a campaign to boycott businesses with Israeli ownership or which conduct business with the government of Israel.

I am advised that although Victoria Police consider that the BDS protesters did not breach the Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001 in the Max Brenner protests, numerous charges have been laid for breaches of the Summary Offences Act 1966 (trespass, besetting premises and hindering, resisting and assaulting police).

Victoria Police has advised the following details:

- on 20 May 2011, two arrests were made in relation to the protests, which resulted in one penalty notice for riotous behaviour and charges pending for assaulting police;

- on 1 July 2011, 19 people were arrested in connection with the protests, resulting in two penalty notices for riotous behaviour (for locking onto the Max Brenner store) and 17 protesters charged with offences under the Summary Offences Act 1966 including trespass, besetting premises, hindering police, resisting police and assaulting police;

- 16 of those 17 protesters were bailed with some being subject to the condition not to enter either Melbourne Central or QV, with that condition being amended later on appeal to not attending within 50 metres of either of the Max Brenner stores at Melbourne Central or QV; and

- on 20 July 2011, five demonstrators breached their conditions of bail by attending within 50 metres of both of the Max Brenner Chocolate Bar stores, and that five of those people had their bail revoked, were taken into custody and brought before a magistrate.

All five are now on the same bail conditions with sureties totalling \$28 000.

It would not be appropriate for me to comment further on matters that are the subject of legal proceedings.

Member for Altona: seniors information booklet

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan)
— I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Health. It concerns an information booklet that has been distributed throughout some sections of Western Metropolitan Region, particularly centred on Altona. Most of us would be aware of these sorts of directories that contain long lists of local organisations, health services, local government involvement, telephone numbers and addresses. They can be very helpful. Indeed I am sure most members, like me, have used them from time to time. It is much easier in most instances, particularly in times of emergency, to reach for a directory of this nature than it is, for example, to hit the internet or go the old-fashioned way of opening a phone book.

It is good that people go to the trouble of ensuring that community members are informed of what services are available to them when they need them.

My concern with this particular directory is that whilst it has a number of hospitals and community health centres listed with addresses and telephone numbers quite clearly shown, there is one hospital that is listed — the Royal Women's Hospital — as being located at 132 Grattan Street, Carlton. My understanding is that the Royal Women's Hospital has not been at Grattan Street in Carlton, nor has the telephone number of 9344 2000 been operational, for some time — it would have to be close to two years.

My very great concern is that any of the women in the area, particularly older women as this is a seniors information booklet, may in the course of needing medical attention believe — mistakenly as it seems in this case — that this is the place to go for some support and medical attention. The people who put these sorts of directories together need to make absolutely sure that the information they are putting out is right. Obviously there are many thousands of these booklets that have been distributed over a wide area.

It is not a cheap exercise by any stretch of the imagination, and it is even worse when one considers that this booklet was put out by the member for Altona in another place, Jill Hennessy.

I ask the Minister for Health to ensure that the women of the Altona electorate, particularly senior citizens, are protected from this sort of misinformation, however deliberate or otherwise it might be, and to ensure that they have access to the Royal Women's Hospital and other appropriate health services when and where they need them.

Occupy Melbourne protest

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan)
— I rise to congratulate those officers of Victoria Police who were involved in clearing Melbourne's City Square last Friday morning. Their efficiency was matched only by their restraint in the face of extreme provocation from a mob spoiling for a fight. We know the type who gathered as part of the so-called Occupy Melbourne demonstration. They are what is known as the 'usual suspects' — anarchists, socialists and other extreme left-wingers. These troublemakers led the charge, as they usually do, but this time our thin blue line did not crack. I, for one, was immensely proud of our boys and girls in blue.

Last Friday morning was more than just the removal of law-breakers. It was a message to Victorians that the Christine Nixon era of policing in this state is over.

No more will Victoria's finest stand back and watch as the rule of law disintegrates in the face of mob violence. No more will our police have to cower behind motor vehicles as professional political agitators run riot. No more will Melburnians going about their lawful business have to run in fear as thugs control the streets. Never again will we witness disgraceful scenes like those of just a few years ago in Collins Street, when our policemen and policewomen were violently assaulted and in effect shackled in defending themselves.

Victoria Police command is to be strongly commended for freeing the troops to do their job. They have done

their job well. I am sure in the years to come they will continue to do us all very proud.

Albion Football Club: defibrillators

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan)
— I also wish to raise a matter for the Minister for Sport and Recreation. I am aware that the minister knows we in the western suburbs love our football. It has to be said from about February to October every year we pretty much live on football. Even those who do not necessarily barrack for the Doggies get a look-in. There are many local leagues right throughout the western suburbs that provide us with an ample quantity of football to enjoy.

The matter I wish to raise tonight concerns the Albion Football Club in the western suburbs. I have received a letter from the head trainer, Allan Williams, who has requested around \$7000 to purchase two defibrillators for the club. It would be a very worthwhile purchase. We know how wonderful these machines can be.

I am sure many in the house would remember when the late media magnate, Kerry Packer — who was not late then but very much alive — had a heart attack and was revived by a defibrillator. From memory, at that point he was in a position to buy one of these wonderful devices for every ambulance in New South Wales.

I am not asking for anything that might come anywhere near that, but I am very keen to get the \$7000 that the Albion Football Club needs for two defibrillators to make not just the players and staff safer on game days and at training but also any spectators who might come along, perhaps have an ale or two during the course of the afternoon and find themselves in need of such a machine. I ask the minister to take that into consideration, to look upon the request favourably and to provide the \$7000 that the Albion Football Club needs. I know the Albion Football Club is a frontrunner in many ways in the western suburbs, and it is good to see Allan Williams, as head trainer, once again leading the pack, as it were.

One would hope the minister will come up with the \$7000 and will kick

that one right over the goal umpire's hat.

**COUNCIL | Questions without Notice
26 October 2011**

Housing: affordability

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — My question is directed to the Minister for Planning, and I ask: can the minister inform the house how the Baillieu government is acting to tackle Melbourne's housing supply shortages and combat housing unaffordability?

Hon. M. J. GUY (Minister for Planning) — I thank my colleague and good friend Mr Finn for that question about housing affordability. It should be noted that Mr Finn, Mr Elsbury and I were recently at a launch for the Allura development in Truganina South, which is in Western Metropolitan Region. The precinct structure plan is part of this government's plans to bring forward growth in our outer urban areas.

Honourable members interjecting.

Hon. M. J. GUY — It was one of those launches that did not actually have cucumber sandwiches. It was a good launch, but there were no cucumber sandwiches. Speaking of cucumber sandwiches, I was amazed to see how many members of the Socialist Left were at Government House today. Just in passing, President, I have learnt never get between a socialist and a cucumber sandwich!

The development which I launched is a fantastic boost for affordability in Melbourne's west, and I pay tribute to the good work done by the Wyndham City Council and of course Stockland for bringing forward this development in a precinct structure plan which I had approved at the start of the year. The development has 1100 lots, will bring forward around 3450 new residents and is part of the government's plan to bring 50 000 lots through the precinct structure plan process to tackle issues of affordability and demand and supply right at the root cause.

The precinct structure plan in the Truganina South area provides tens of millions of dollars for local road upgrades. As the two members for Western Metropolitan Region who joined me that day, Mr Finn and Mr Elsbury, would be aware, it is of great importance to people from the western suburbs and of course to

the mayor, John Menegazzo, who is doing as much as he can as the local mayor to ensure that we are bringing forward both land supply for people who want to move to Melbourne's fast-growing western suburbs and the infrastructure that is so necessary to make these developments work.

In the precinct structure plan that I approved, with the Allura development being a part of the Truganina South precinct structure plan, new schools are proposed, there are open space requirements and, as I said, tens of millions of dollars for road infrastructure, which is very important.

This development will provide 2500 jobs, at a time when Victoria's economy needs those jobs in Melbourne's outer west. It is important to have sustained job growth, and this government takes that job growth seriously. It will generate 800 continuing jobs in Melbourne's outer suburbs where there should be jobs, decentralised and located in places where people work and which are close to people's homes.

I pay tribute to Stockland and the work it has done; my colleagues, Mr Finn and Mr Elsbury, for their continuing focus on bringing affordability and infrastructure to Melbourne's western suburbs; the work of the Wyndham City Council; and of course my own department and the Growth Areas Authority for focusing on 50 000 lots to ensure that supply issues are dealt with, Melbourne's fast-growing population can be managed and managed well, we can make sure that population and housing affordability targets are reached and that young people and new communities have a place to live in what is Australia's greatest city.

**COUNCIL | Adjournment
26 October 2011**

City of Brimbank: elections

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Local Government. I am sure the minister would be aware, as would members of the house, of major concerns of many in the Brimbank area about what may happen in that municipality as a result of the return to elections in November next year.

I am sure I do not have to remind members of the house of the goings

on within Brimbank City Council in recent times. I do not have enough time to remind the house of any of those details. We have seen corruption, we have seen factional brawling between various groups in the Labor Party — that is, the Suleyman empire versus the Seitz group — we have seen bullets in letterboxes, we have seen death threats and we have seen various degrees of violence. There is very real concern, as I have pointed out —

Mr Barber interjected.

Mr FINN — Mr Barber should stick around. The Greens seem very concerned about this next election in Brimbank. I am not sure which Labor Party faction the Greens have jumped into bed with, and I will be interested to find out. Residents in Brimbank are concerned about what may happen as a result of what the Greens would refer to as a return to democracy. What democracy is in Brimbank is an interesting concept, to say the least!

What makes it even more interesting is an article written by Melissa Fyfe that was published in the Age of today's date which begins:

Police are investigating an alleged assault at a Labor Party branch meeting on Monday night involving the trouble-prone former member for Keilor, George Seitz.

That is the same George Seitz, a former member for Keilor in the Assembly, who is lining up to be the mayor of Brimbank after the council election next year. The story goes on:

The Keilor branch meeting descended into chaos as Mr Seitz and a Labor member allegedly tussled over the branch's official records. The member, Gail Cholosznecki, says she was assaulted by Mr Seitz, but the former MP insists he was the one left injured.

The alleged incident, which occurred at the offices of Mr Seitz's replacement, Natalie Hutchins, is being investigated by police, but detectives are yet to formally interview the former MP or Ms Cholosznecki, a staffer for the member for Macedon, Joanne Duncan.

I am glad to see that Ms Duncan, the member for Macedon in the Assembly, is doing something somewhere, because she is not doing it in Macedon.

I ask that the minister review these matters that are obviously of enormous concern to people who are worried about good governance in the Brimbank area. I ask her to take these latest revelations and developments, particularly if police charges result

from them, into consideration in any discussions she may have about whether Brimbank City Council should be excluded from the election process next year.

**COUNCIL | Adjournment
8 November 2011**

Road safety: government initiatives

*Raised with the Assistant Treasurer
on 16 June 2011*

REPLY:

I refer to the issue of government road safety initiatives and specifically your suggestion for a Transport Accident Commission (TAC) campaign to address the issue of speed limit confusion in the western suburbs.

The TAC addresses major road safety issues such as drink and drug driving, young driver issues and speeding.

The TAC's key public education focus for the coming year is reducing speed related trauma. Speed is now considered to be the major contributor to serious injury on Victorian roads.

While the TAC is aware that drivers may not always be fully conscious of speed limit postings, the variations in speed that may occur because of this over short distances has not been identified as a major contributor to serious injury figures.

VicRoads is currently undertaking a review of Victorian speed limits. The aim of this review is to make speed limits consistent and easier to comply with and I urge you to contact VicRoads regarding this issue.

The other option that may be possible would be to apply for a TAC community road safety grant to run a localised campaign to address the issues you have raised. The road safety grants program makes grants of up to \$20 000 available for community-based projects conducted by not-for-profit groups that can demonstrate a specific local road safety issue and create a project to address it.

**COUNCIL | Adjournment
8 November 2011**

Duncans Road, Werribee: traffic management

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I wish to raise a matter for the Minister for Roads. Yesterday it was my very pleasant duty to visit the Werribee Open Range Zoo for the opening of the new gorilla enclosure, which I have to tell the house is something that has to be seen to be believed. They have done us all very proud at the Werribee Open Range Zoo, and I suggest to members that when they get the opportunity they should travel down the highway and have a look at that zoo. There were a large number of people there, and the singing was led by students from Point Cook College, who did a wonderful job.

On the way to that zoo I passed the Victoria State Rose Garden, the National Equestrian Centre and Werribee Mansion, and I am not the only one to do that on a regular basis because there are literally thousands and thousands of people visiting the Werribee tourist precinct every week.

The number visiting the zoo since the Baillieu government introduced free entry for children on weekends, public holidays and school holidays has increased by 38 per cent. At the Werribee Park Mansion this weekend there will be a concert at which 15 000 people are expected, and that is a regular event. Last weekend polo was held in the grounds of the mansion, which also drew many thousands of people.

The bottom line is that the road infrastructure that we have leading into the Werribee tourism precinct is just not up to scratch. It was designed to carry trucks for farmers who were growing vegetables — and of course there are still a number of those farmers around that part of the world — but now we see thousands of people travelling to the Werribee tourism precinct on a very regular basis. The other part of the road infrastructure nearby that does not accommodate the demand for Werribee's tourism culture is the Duncans Road interchange, which I have spoken about in this house previously.

Those coming from Geelong have to go through Werribee, which is some distance out of their way, to get to the

tourism precinct. Given that this part of Werribee is a jewel in Victoria's crown, the road infrastructure is just not good enough. It really is something that has to be seen to be believed. I always get quite a thrill when I go there. It is a joy to visit that part of the world and to see so many people coming from various parts of not only Victoria but also Australia and overseas. Therefore I ask the minister to include this extraordinarily important road improvement program on his priority list for urgent works when it next comes up for consideration.

**COUNCIL | Questions without Notice
9 November 2011**

Teachers: proposed national day of action

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — My question without notice is to the Minister responsible for the Teaching Profession, and I ask: can the minister advise the house of the basis on which a memo was sent to government schools yesterday advising them on matters relating to a proposed national day of action on 15 November?

Hon. P. R. HALL (Minister responsible for the Teaching Profession) — I thank my colleague Mr Finn for his question. Yes, it is true that yesterday a memo was sent to all Victorian government schools on the matter that Mr Finn referred to, the proposed national day of action on 15 November. That memo was signed by John Allman, the acting deputy secretary of the Office for Government School Education.

While I consider this a management issue, and I would not normally comment on what is a very sensible management action, the fact that this memo has attracted some negative publicity in the Australian and the Age today warrants some clarification as to the intent of and the basis on which this memo was structured.

I quote for members of the chamber the exact content of the memo, which says:

It is timely to remind school staff that they must not use, directly or indirectly, the resources of the department or the school or the students of the school for any activity other than for official school

purposes ...

The memo goes on, but essentially that is the intent of and the main points made in the memo. That has been classified by some in articles in newspapers this morning as being the application of a gag on teachers and schools.

There is an inference that there is some political motivation for the issuing of such a memo.

Mr Finn asked me on what basis that memo was constructed. I answer his question very directly by pointing out to him and other members of the chamber that the basis of that memo is what is contained in ministerial order 199 of 2009, made at a time when members other than members of the current government were in government. I point this out purely because of the fact that there is no political motivation. Part (1) of 11.1.10 of that ministerial order says:

An employee must not use, directly or indirectly, the resources of the department, school or students of the school for any activity other than for official school purposes ...

Those words seem remarkably similar to those in the memo issued just yesterday by the department through Mr Allman.

I want to make it abundantly clear to members of this chamber and also to the press that there is no political motivation and there is no gagging of schools in respect of this matter. This is purely an application of a very sensible ministerial order set by one of my predecessors, a previous Minister for Education. The Baillieu government does not apply gags to schools. They are free to engage in activities so long as those activities are seen to be reasonable and are not inflicting any undue or improper influence on the students at those schools.

I trust this clarifies matters for members of the chamber and also for those who have written and commented on such articles in today's press.

**COUNCIL | Members Statements
9 November 2011**

Carbon tax: economic impact

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — Tuesday, 8 November 2011, will long be remembered as a very dark day in Australian parliamentary history. Yesterday the Parliament of Australia legislated a prime

ministerial lie. The carbon tax Julia Gillard promised solemnly we would never have under a government she leads is now heading to Yarralumla for royal assent. The Australian people have been betrayed, and all we see from the Labor-Greens coalition government in Canberra is backslapping and knowing smirks. In fact they should all hang their heads in shame. If you listen to those in Canberra, the working families we heard so much about just a few short years ago apparently no longer matter. The economic conservatism we heard about from knifed ex-Prime Minister Kevin Rudd is no more. Australia is doomed to the excesses of the world's biggest carbon tax, and it is interesting to note that China is introducing a carbon tax at \$1.28 per tonne. What a joke!

Never has any government attacked the welfare of the Australian people in such a way for pure political benefit. It is shameful, but it seems there is no shame in Canberra. The Australian people will suffer as a result of this insidious tax but maybe not as much as the Gillard-Brown government will whenever it has the gall to call an election and give in to the will of the people. The only bright spot will be the election of the Abbott government at that election, which will repeal the carbon tax. I join millions of Australians in saying, 'Bring it on.'

**COUNCIL | Petitions
9 November 2011**

Footscray City Primary School: curriculum

To the Legislative Council of Victoria:

The petition of certain citizens of the state of Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Council:

1. Footscray City Primary School (FCPS) is the only school in the western metropolitan region of Victoria that offers a dual curriculum, delivering a choice of mainstream and Steiner curricula.

2. We are shocked and disagree with the decision of the western metropolitan region of the department of education announced on 26 October 2011 (eight weeks prior to end of school term) by letter, to cease the Steiner stream upon completion of the 2011 school year.

3. This devastating decision has been made without community

consultation. The region's explanation for closing the Steiner stream is that efforts over the past 10 years to build a harmonious relationship between the Steiner stream and main stream have been unsuccessful. This reason is not aligned with our perception and experience of a tight-knit, enthusiastic and caring school community.

4. The 280 students currently enrolled at FCPS now have an uncertain future for their primary education.

5. This leaves all children at our school with uncertainty and anxiety.

6. This leaves all children and their parents who have enrolled at 2012 and already undertaken orientation with uncertainty and anxiety.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Council of Victoria:

1. Takes all necessary steps to ensure that FCPS continues as a dual-stream school in 2012 and beyond.

By Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) (557 signatures).

Laid on table.

**COUNCIL | Second Reading
10 November 2011**

Electricity Industry Amendment (Transitional Feed-In Tariff Scheme) Bill 2011

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — It is a very great pleasure to stand in this chamber this afternoon to support this bill, because it provides for a very real chance of relief on the issue of electricity prices. That is obviously a very good thing indeed. It is a great pity that the more extreme elements of the Labor Party and the Greens do not care about what happens to Victorian families. Members of this house might recall that a few years back a great deal of noise was generated about what was best for working families.

Remember the term 'working families'? The Labor Party lived, died, breathed and ate for working families. Now its members could not care less about working families. The Labor Party does not care that working

families will be sitting around their dinner table late at night wondering how on God's earth they are going to pay their electricity bills. The extreme left will put ideology first, second and third every time. The lefties are here today, coming into this chamber crowing all manner of nonsense about climate change and all the stuff that we have come to expect from them.

I note that they have not quoted Al Gore, the champion of climate change, the man who told us that we were going to be swallowed by the ocean and the man who, as a result of having made millions of dollars out of climate change, went and bought a beachside mansion on Miami Beach. How fair dinkum is he? I would suggest he is about as fair dinkum as the rest of them.

The only reason that we see all this enthusiasm for the carbon tax, carbon credits and all the other nonsensical things they talk about is that there is a buck in it for their mates. That is the bottom line. There are a lot of people making a lot of money out of this climate change industry. That is something that members opposite should explain.

Mr Leane interjected.

Mr FINN — Mr Leane gets very excited when I talk about these sorts of things. I do not know whether he has a guilty conscience. Perhaps he does. Perhaps he is concerned. After all, if we dig really deeply into the psyche of Mr Leane, we might find some concern for the working families that the Labor Party used to rabbit on about ad nauseam.

We might remember that during the debate on the carbon tax earlier this year Mr Leane's very good friend and colleague from the Electrical Trades Union, Dean Mighell, came out and opposed the carbon tax on the basis that it would put his members out of work.

Mr Leane interjected.

Mr FINN — Mr Leane might be saying that he is in Parliament now so it does not matter how many electricians lose their jobs because he will not be one of them. That may well be the attitude that he takes, but it is not good enough. I am here because I care about people and families. I care about people in the suburbs. I care about people who are struggling. I care about the battlers that the Labor Party once cared about.

At least the Greens are consistent. We know they do not like families.

They put it on the record that they do not like families. They particularly

do not like children. They see families and children as the enemy, because children and families are causing all the problems in the world. Every problem that we face as a planet is being created by children: that is the view of the Greens. They do not particularly care what happens to working families, they do not particularly care what happens to families in the suburbs and they do not particularly care about those families sitting around late at night wondering how they are going to pay their electricity bills. But this government does. This side of the chamber does care about those people, and this bill is about easing some of the pressures that they face.

In the federal Parliament earlier this week, after the passing of the carbon tax bill, we saw all the smirks and the backslapping from the Greens. Senator Brown and all his mates were gathered around giving high fives and carrying on.

But let me tell you, among all the euphoria there was one thing missing: the support of the Australian people. The Australian people made it very clear on every occasion leading up to the passing of this appalling tax in the federal Parliament on Tuesday that they do not want this tax. They did not want it, and they do not want it.

Let us face facts: Julia Gillard would not be Prime Minister of this country now if she had told the truth. If she had got up the day before the election last year and said, 'There will be a carbon tax under any government that I lead,' she would not have won the election. She was elected on a lie, and that lie was legislated on Tuesday. That is as a direct result of the Labor Party putting its own political needs ahead of the needs of average Australians. It is despicable that the Labor Party would put its own needs ahead of the needs of those who will find themselves under a great deal of pressure and in a lot of trouble as a result of this big new tax on everything that will achieve nothing. We see one of the chirpies from the left getting up there, and she might fall off her perch in a minute. We will find out.

Ms Pulford — Acting President, on a point of order, the member has spoken extensively about federal government matters and has not spoken about the bill that we are debating in the house, so I would urge you to bring him back to the matter at hand.

Mr FINN — On the point of order, Acting President, what I am speaking about is electricity prices, and that

is what this bill is about. The basis of this bill is electricity prices. If I cannot make reference to what is going to impact on electricity in debate on this bill, then I think we will take it all back, and I urge you to recall what Mr Barber had to say when he was addressing the house: he ranged far and wide on a range of issues. Once again I come back to that dreadful word 'precedent', but one has been set, strangely enough, by Mr Barber himself.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr O'Brien) — Order!

I have heard enough on the point of order. There is no point of order. In fact when a similar point of order was taken by Mr Ramsay against Mr Barber and I was in the chair I also expressed my view, as I do now in relation to the matters that Mr Finn has been talking about, that this bill does raise federal issues in the context of the debate. I urge Mr Finn to use the time available to him to return to the bill in the best way he can, but I do not uphold the point of order.

Mr FINN — Certainly, Acting President. I appreciate your consistency on this matter. I am deeply concerned about what is going to happen to this state and this country over the next few years as a result of electricity prices going through the roof. We have had in this state of Victoria a decided advantage over other states, and particularly over other nations, as a result of our ample and relatively cheap electricity supply.

Now with the carbon tax that advantage is gone, and we can thank our friends from the left — from the Labor Party and the Greens — for their efforts in making sure that we are behind the eight ball.

As a result of the actions of the federal government and its coalition colleagues, the Greens, we will suffer big time. We will see a lot of businesses looking at their electricity bills and saying they cannot afford either to stay in business or to stay in Australia, and they will shift offshore. Is it any wonder that the Indians and the Chinese in particular are rubbing their hands together with glee at what we here in Australia have just done. They can see the benefits: the jobs that will be lost in Australia and the jobs that will be pouring into China and India. They see the economic advantage they will now have as a result of what our friends from the left have done over these past couple of weeks. It is a disgrace.

But this bill does go some way toward helping families. I just want

to reiterate the point that this side of the chamber is about helping those families. We are talking about families. They remain the centre of what this state is all about. Families built this state, and families remain the centre and focal point of this state. This bill is about providing lower electricity prices and easing the pressure of families' electricity bills, and that has to be a very good thing. In conclusion, I urge those with a conscience in the Labor Party and the Greens — and let us face it, there may not be many in the Greens who are in that category — who have some concern somewhere within themselves for ordinary Australians to support this bill but also to stand up and reject all this nonsense that has led to the carbon tax.

Mr Barber interjected.

Mr FINN — Mr Barber should get up and publicly reject the nonsense that his party is built on: this global warming scam. It is a con. It is a scam. It is something that the average Australian has woken up to, and I tell you what: come the next election our friends opposite are going to wake up to it as well, because it will not be a very nice thing; they will not have a good election night. But the people of Australia and the people of Victoria deserve a better go. With this bill the government is determined to give the average Australian a fair go.

COUNCIL
23 November 2011

Production of Documents

Ms HARTLAND (Western Metropolitan) — I move:

That this house requires the Leader of the Government to table in the Legislative Council by 12 noon on Tuesday, 6 December 2011, a copy of the report by Grant Thornton on educating year prep to 12 students with an autism spectrum disorder in Western Metropolitan Region, commissioned by the department of education.

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I rise today not just to not oppose the motion but to support it, because if there is one thing we need more of in regards to autism, it is information.

Information is the one thing that we are lacking in buckets, and that lack of information should not be at all surprising.

Until eight and a half years ago I did not know much about autism either.

I knew that such a thing as autism existed; I knew it was something that I did not want to have anything to do with. But apart from that I was like everybody else: I did not know how bad this affliction could be. Then my son was diagnosed with autism. He is now 10 years of age. For about eight and a half years we have had knowledge of his position on the autism spectrum — if you want to put it in those terms. That is when the challenge started.

I have to say to members of the house that I still do not know as much as I would like to know about autism. I do not think anybody does, otherwise we would have gone a lot further towards a cure than we have. At the moment we do not even know what causes it.

We do not know what physical links inside the brain result in this particular affliction; we do not know very much at all. The only thing we know is that this is a silent affliction. It is extraordinarily difficult for parents, because there is no wheelchair and there is no sign to the outside world that these children have a problem. To all of the world they are the same as every other child running around. When they throw a tantrum in the supermarket and when their particular affliction comes out in ways that are not particularly joyous, I have to say the outside world is prone to make a very quick judgement.

The parents of these children have it pretty tough already. The last thing they need is the judgement of others. These kids are not just naughty boys or girls who need discipline; these are children who have a major problem that we must address. There are a lot of problems around. This autism problem is relatively new, but it is something that we must address.

On Wednesday, 26 October this year, on the ABC program *The World Today* the compere Eleanor Hall — I am not familiar with her or this particular program — pointed out that, according to her:

Figures just released in New South Wales show a dramatic increase in the number of children diagnosed with autism who are going through the public school system.

In the past eight years the number of students with autism quadrupled —

I repeat: quadrupled —
to more than 8000.

Brian Smyth King is the director of disability programs in the New South Wales Department of Education and Training. He said in this program that:

The numbers have increased quite dramatically. We've had just over 2000 students in 2003 through to over 8000 students this year.

Those figures do not surprise me, because anecdotally I am hearing a similar story in Melbourne and other parts of Victoria. There is no doubt that autism is on the rise.

Penny Beeston, who is the CEO of Autism Queensland and the director of the Australian Advisory Board on Autism Spectrum Disorders, made the following observation:

I think that the education systems across Australia were never designed to support the increased prevalence of children with autism in mainstream classrooms, and I do believe that it has caught probably all education systems unawares.

And there is a lot of catch-up required and part of that will be that all mainstream teachers, whether they are primary or secondary or even prep school teachers, need to be trained in how to support children with autism in their classrooms.

This should be a blanket targeting of all teachers who are going through teacher training as well as professional development of those teachers who are already in the system.

That is clearly one view, and it is one that I would not discount by any measure because, as with every child, one size does not fit all. It is important that parents and families are given some choice of education for their children with autism, because each child is different; each child has a different degree of autism. Some children can be pretty close to that dreadful word which I hate to use but will use anyway — that is, 'normal'. We can have some who are sitting in the corner rocking back and forth, banging their heads against the wall, and then we can have everything in between. It is not something we can make a blanket statement about; it is not something about which we can say 'Righto, this is what we are going to do with kids with autism'. There are various degrees, and that is why it is known as autism spectrum disorder, because its range is far and wide.

I feel very much for parents who have children with autism.

To have one child with autism is bad enough, but I know a number of parents who have more than one child with autism — some have three children with autism. I honestly do not know how they cope. I know how difficult it is for our family with our little bloke from time to time. I cannot begin to imagine how parents with

two or three children with autism manage. They are true heroes in my view.

For those who are not aware of how autism manifests itself, it is, I suppose, an attack on the social skills of the child. Children have no fear of anything. Our son was and still is from time to time what is known as a 'runner'. They are children who have to be kept inside and almost locked up in a confined space for fear that they will run onto the road in front of a car. They have no fear; they will just run. They do not care where they are running, they just want to run. I recall that a few short years ago one of our son's classmates was killed when hit by a train at the Strathmore railway station. He liked trains, and he went down to the station. He got in front of the train, and he did not make it.

As parents of children with autism, that is what we live with every day. We have to know where our child is every second of every day. Even when we think we have our homes almost fortified and even when we think they are safe in their own homes and cannot escape, these kids will find a way. You have to remember that these kids are pretty clever, they are pretty bright and they will find a way to get out.

I well recall one incident some years ago, and I still get chills when I think about it. Liam, our son, decided he would open the garage door. We have a roller door, and he decided he would use the button inside the house to open the door and go outside. But he also took his little sister, who at the time was an 18-month-old toddler. In our panic to get the little bloke back inside we did not realise that she was gone. She had wandered down to the main road. It was only an act of God that saved her. That is what parents of children with autism live with every day. That is something that is a part of life.

To take your child to the local bistro for dinner on a Friday night is a major achievement. If you get them to sit in the one place for long enough to eat their dinner, you feel like doing a lap of honour. Things that everybody else regards as pretty normal are a major challenge for families of kids with autism.

It is not just the parents who are affected, I have to say, because the siblings cop it as well. I am pleased to say there are a number of programs that support the siblings of children with autism. They are much needed by those siblings, I can assure you, because they cop it, and sometimes physically. They are sometimes on

the receiving end of that anger and frustration that manifests itself in physical violence.

Autism affects every member of the family. It is not just the immediate family either; it often affects grandparents, aunts and uncles.

It will affect, disrupt, threaten and even destroy families in a way that in itself is insidious and to the outside world totally mysterious. To those of us involved it sometimes is quite mysterious as well. It has that rock-in-the-pool effect — the rippling effect when you throw a stone in the water. That is what autism does to families.

It is therefore extremely important that we get as much information as we possibly can about children with this disorder, even the numbers of the children affected. I would have thought it was pretty basic. I am not sure why we do not have the numbers as yet — for example, we do not know how many children with autism there are in Western Metropolitan Region. We do not know how many kids have autism. I do not know why we do not know. I am hoping this motion might flush that out, because it seems that is a pretty basic level of knowledge that would help us enormously.

It is a truly great challenge for families, a truly great challenge for society and a truly great challenge for the education system, because we now have thousands of children with autism flooding the education system, and the education system is not prepared for them, not by a long shot. As I mentioned earlier this year in this house, I suppose that largely comes from those who head up the education department over the road in Treasury Place, because this is something new, and bureaucrats, generally speaking, do not like change. They do not know how to handle autism or what they need to do to handle this tsunami that is starting to hit us now. They just do not know what to do.

I have promoted and continued to promote the IDEA (Innovative Developments in the Education of Children with Autism) program, which has been trialled at Moomba Park Primary School in Fawkner. I think it is an excellent program. I believe that this program will be the answer, or a major part of the answer, for thousands and thousands of families throughout Australia.

I believe that given a chance the IDEA program will lead the world in turning around the lives of so many people who otherwise would disappear down the drain. I am

not just talking about children with autism; as I mentioned earlier, I am talking about the families as well.

I have absolute faith and confidence in the IDEA program. I very much hope — and I continue to lobby the minister on this — that the government will give this program the support that it deserves, not just at Moomba Park and throughout Western Metropolitan Region but right throughout Victoria. Once people see the success of the program and once parents vote with their feet, I have no doubt that we will see very great benefits very quickly and parents will want their children in this program. Once that happens, I have not the slightest doubt at all that it will take off in a fairly big way. The other added attraction is that it is cheaper than traditional autism-specific education.

In the meantime, as Ms Hartland more than alluded to, we have a history of difficulties with autism-specific education in the western suburbs, particularly in Western Metropolitan Region. For some years now we have had very little formal autism-specific education in Western Metropolitan Region. The Western Autistic School provides four years of education. In the north, the south and the east kids have been given 12 years of education. In the west they are given four. I think that is wrong, I think that is discriminatory and I think that stinks, so before the last election the Liberal-Nationals coalition gave a commitment that we would build a P-12 autism-specific school in the western suburbs. That is a commitment that we stand by and that we have already allocated funds to, and let me assure members that it is happening. I have received a personal guarantee from the minister that it is happening. We have said that will happen in our first term.

I am pushing very hard because I know the time difficulties and I know that we need this school as soon as possible. I know the urgency with which parents are viewing the building and the opening of this school. There are some who have gone about — in a hysterical manner, I have to say — causing great distress to a number of parents by saying, 'It is not going ahead'. Some of those are involved in autistic education in the west. That is very sad; it makes me angry but also very sad because it is not necessary. We had a demonstration out the front here a couple of weeks ago by people demanding that the school be built. There is no need for that to happen

because the school is being built, and I am very hopeful there will be an announcement on that very soon.

There needs to be a cultural change in the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development; there are no two ways about that. People in the department are behind the times; there is no question about that.

Some of them need a bomb under them — in the nicest possible way — and they need to be informed and to be aware of what is going on in the real world. They need to be aware of what this disorder does to children and their families. I hope that people in the department will take advantage of the opportunities — there is no shortage of opportunities — that are given to them to come up to speed on this issue, because it is a matter that is huge now but will become much bigger in a few short years ahead. I fear to think what sort of problems we will face in 10 years time if we do not act now.

Having said that, I support the motion moved by Ms Hartland, and I hope this information that is provided by the department will go some way to providing answers and much-needed support for families and children affected by autism in the western suburbs of Melbourne.

**COUNCIL | Adjournment
23 November 2011**

Albion Football Club: defibrillators

Raised with the Minister for Sport and Recreation on 25 October 2011

REPLY:

The Baillieu government provides \$3 million in funding each year to Ambulance Victoria's Pre-Ambulance Basic Life Support Strategy (PABLS). The program is focused on early recognition of an emergency and calling triple zero (000), early cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and early defibrillation.

I am advised that Ambulance Victoria has placed 88 automated external defibrillators (AEDs) in key public areas where large numbers of people gather such as airports, zoos, recreation centres and railway stations.

Ambulance Victoria also encourages all organisations to register their AEDs at www.registermyaed.com.au ensuring that,

in the event of a triple zero call in the vicinity, the Ambulance Victoria communications room can guide the caller to the nearest AED.

In addition, I understand that sports clubs may now apply for up to \$500 towards the purchase of an AED under the recently announced VicHealth 2012 Active Club Grants program.

The acquisition of an AED does not remove the need for improved medical emergency responses by sports clubs, including the delivery of first aid and CPR.

The issue of support for sports injury prevention and management, including emergency responses involving the use of AEDs and CPR by sports clubs, will be examined by the newly established sports injury prevention task force, which will hold its first meeting in November 2011.

**COUNCIL | Adjournment
23 November 2011**

Autism: program funding

Raised with the Minister for Education on 16 August 2011

REPLY:

I am informed as follows:

Moomba Park Primary School is one of six schools that are establishing Autism Inclusion Support Programs in 2011.

As part of this, the school has been provided with a range of targeted supports and funding including:

- A \$50 000 implementation grant (February 2011) to assist with the establishment of its inclusion support program in the school.

- A significant capital works building program based on plans developed by the school, due to be completed by 2012.

- Autism Spectrum Australia (ASPECT) is providing expert consultancy services to the school including school based staff development, Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) coordinator mentor support, specific learning and development courses and ASD resources.

- Monash University Graduate School of Education is providing support for a school based action research project as part of the overall evaluation of the Autism Inclusion Support Program.

- A targeted ASD scholarship for a

Moomba Park Primary School teacher to undertake graduate diploma studies at the Autism Teaching Institute is available for 2012.

All schools have full flexibility and the responsibility to determine the individual programs they use, taking into consideration the needs of their school community and their budget.

The department agreed to provide additional funding to meet budget pressures for 2011. Funding has been approved and the principal notified.

**COUNCIL | Adjournment
23 November 2011**

Libraries: Sunshine

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Local Government. Usually when I speak about the Brimbank City Council all sorts of images spring to mind. There is no shortage of shysters associated with the Brimbank City Council, and we have seen no end of trouble and difficulty associated with that particular council over a fair period of time — all associated, I might say, with the Australian Labor Party.

Today I do not wish to embark on an adventure down that particular track. Rather I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Local Government concerning the administrators of the Brimbank council — as we know, Brimbank council has no elected councillors — who are attempting to get some funding from the state government for the Sunshine library through the Living Libraries capital infrastructure program.

My understanding is that the council wishes to expand the library's floor space and increase public spaces for events, programs, learning, reading, study and public access to computers, as well as to better connect the library to Hampshire Road, Hampshire Square and other spaces. I am particularly familiar with this library because it is just across the lane from my office. I walk past it quite often and have even been known to go inside from time to time. It is a great resource for the community, and one has to remember that this is a community in the fullness of rejuvenation. This is a community which is once again returning to younger families. We have a number of migrant groups there as well. So the need for a library

service is very strong, stronger than it has been for a long time.

I fully endorse the attempts by the administrators of Brimbank council to get some funding from the minister through the Living Libraries capital infrastructure program, and I urge the minister to consider very favourably the request from the Brimbank administrators for this funding as it will be a major plus for a resource which is under great demand at the moment. I believe that with appropriate funding the resource will be under even greater demand, because it will be much bigger and much more productive in its own way. I ask the minister to take into consideration the pleas of the Brimbank administrators and to give the Sunshine library some money from this infrastructure program that will see it through for many years to come.

**COUNCIL | Members Statements
24 November 2011**

Royal Women's Hospital: clinical error

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I rise in the chamber this morning in shock and deep grief. Like most, I am sure, I was horrified to read the news report on the front page of the Herald Sun this morning about the mix-up at the Royal Women's Hospital which led to the death of twin baby boys during an abortion where the death of only one baby had been planned. I grieve not just for the healthy baby boy who was killed in what they are calling a terrible accident. I grieve not just for the sick brother who was killed the next day. I grieve not just for the twins' mother, who lost both her children. I also grieve for some in the medical profession who see killing as a treatment for a medical condition. I am not distressed because doctors killed the wrong baby, as many people might be. I am deeply distressed, though, that any baby died at all. It should not have happened, but it is happening in Victoria in 2011. For that my grief and distress knows no bounds. It is a tragedy for all involved.

**COUNCIL | Adjournment
24 November 2011**

Tourism: Werribee

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I wish to raise a matter for the Minister for Tourism and Major Events. I am sure everyone in this house is well aware that I am very fond of the Werribee tourism precinct. I am enthusiastic about its potential, just as I am enthusiastic about tourism generally, particularly as a potential employer in the Werribee area. We need jobs down there probably more than we need most other things, and tourism is something that can provide those jobs. As I have often said, tourism is money in the bank.

In this particular instance we have real potential with the Werribee tourism precinct. As I have mentioned before, we have the Werribee Open Range Zoo, with the recently opened gorilla exhibit, which is extraordinarily impressive. We have the Victoria State Rose Garden, Werribee Park National Equestrian Centre, Werribee Mansion and Werribee Park Golf Club, and very shortly we will have the considerable marina that is being built just around the corner and down the road at Werribee South.

That precinct and the entire Werribee South area are going to be a significant tourism drawcard. Of course that is going to present some difficulties, because at the moment the infrastructure is not there. The precinct is not capable of dealing with the sorts of crowds we are expecting, but I hasten to add that this also presents some huge opportunities for the Werribee area and for tourism in Victoria, because I believe this is something people will travel a long way to see.

Hon. M. P. Pakula — So long as you are not there!

Mr FINN — There are so many different things you can see in such a small area. I do not know whether Mr Pakula has ever been to Werribee, but I would be happy to show him some of the things we have there. It is a very long way from Black Rock, but I would be happy to take him down there and show him the gorillas, if indeed he would like me to do that.

I believe we have the opportunity to show the rest of Victoria, the rest of Australia and indeed much of the world that this section of Victoria

is really worth coming to see. I ask the minister to join me and visit Werribee to speak with tourism operators, the local Wyndham council and others who would be involved and are involved in this wonderful opportunity for Victoria. I ask her to join me at her earliest convenience so that she can see for herself exactly what I am talking about and the huge potential that we have in Werribee.

The PRESIDENT — Order!

Can Mr Finn assure me that he has raised the zoo before? On the last occasion, am I correct in thinking it was in regard to roads in that area, so this is a different item?

Mr FINN — Yes, on that occasion it was a mention of the monkeys.

**COUNCIL | Second Reading
6 December 2011**

Criminal Procedure Amendment (Double Jeopardy And Other Matters) Bill 2011

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I rise this evening to support this bill and to make the observation that justice is a very basic concept to civilisation as we know it.

When justice is undermined by a lack of public confidence, we find ourselves in trouble as a civilisation. Here in 2011 in Melbourne, Victoria, we find ourselves very much in that situation, because I think the vast majority of Victorians look at our legal system and do not have the degree of confidence in it that they should.

Over 11 years they saw the system deteriorate to the point where that public confidence of which I spoke was shot to pieces. The Attorney-General in the former government, Mr Hulls, the member for Niddrie in the other place, was more interested in social engineering, more interested in stacking the judicial benches and more interested in appointing hacks to head the police force than he was to applying justice in this state. That is why we have to turn this around. I can only say thank God for Robert Clark, because the current Attorney-General is somebody who we can

have confidence in; we can have confidence that he will strive for true justice in this state.

Almost every day we see on our televisions and in our newspapers people getting away with a variety of crimes, and we are sometimes seeing people who have committed heinous crimes getting away with just a slap on the wrist. Is it any wonder that the average Victorian is looking at our legal system and asking, 'What is going on there'? I use the term 'legal system' advisedly. I have said this before: what we have in this state now is not a justice system. As far as the average Victorian is concerned, what we have in this state is a legal system. If you ask anybody on the street in Melbourne, Geelong, Ballarat, Bendigo or down in Gippsland what they believe the legal system is about, they will tell you. They will tell you it is about lawyers making money. They will tell you that it is about something that is so far removed from their daily lives that they take no interest in it at all, and indeed they go to very great lengths in order to avoid it. I think that is a very sad reflection on a system that everybody should take extreme pride in.

This bill we are discussing tonight is something that will put public confidence back into our judicial system, because, let us face it, the guilty should be found guilty. If somebody has committed a crime, they should be found guilty. If they have got off on what amounts to a technicality and have gone out and patted their lawyers on the back, their lawyer has patted them on the back and they have gone off to the pub together, that might be a wonderful thing for the lawyer and for the person who has committed the crime, but it is no good for justice, it is no good for the people of Victoria, and this bill will give us all the opportunity to ensure that justice is done. The chap who regards himself as being extremely lucky that he has got off on a technicality, if further evidence is presented, will again find himself in the dock, we will see a guilty verdict and hopefully some degree of punitive measure taken against that individual in a way that we would expect a justice system to perform.

The community should be protected.

I think there are a lot of people in our society at the moment who believe the legal system is not doing its job of protecting them and that it is not doing its job of protecting their families. This bill is a giant step toward ensuring that that public confidence

is put back and that we see real justice injected back into the legal system in Victoria.

**COUNCIL | Questions without Notice
6 December 2011**

Melbourne Airport: John Holland Aviation Services

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — My question without notice is directed to the Minister responsible for the Aviation Industry, and I ask: can the minister inform the house of any new opportunities for the Victorian aviation maintenance, repair and overhaul sector?

Hon. G. K. RICH-PHILLIPS (Minister responsible for the Aviation Industry) — I thank Mr Finn for his question and for his interest in a matter that goes to the heart of his electorate — Melbourne Airport and the operations at Melbourne Airport.

Mr Finn asked about developments in the maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO) section of the aviation industry.

Maintenance repair and overhaul is an important part of the Victorian aviation industry, and Victoria enjoys around 40 per cent of total MRO operations in Australia. MRO operations relate to the heavy maintenance undertaken on airline aircraft in Australia.

Here in Victoria we are very fortunate to have companies such as Qantas Engineering, Lufthansa Technik LTQ, and also John Holland Aviation Services, which is the only independent MRO operating in Australia providing heavy maintenance. John Holland currently provides line maintenance and mid-level maintenance for aircraft at Melbourne Airport operating out at the old Ansett maintenance facility on the southern apron at Melbourne Airport.

I am pleased to inform the house that last month Boeing commercial aircraft in the United States decided to designate John Holland at Melbourne Airport as a provider of the new GoldCare service.

GoldCare is a new turnkey product that Boeing is offering with respect to its new 787 aircraft and the new 737 next-generation aircraft. Basically this product will allow Boeing to offer

a direct maintenance product to its airline customers. Increasingly, these new aircraft require —

Hon. M. P. Pakula interjected.

The PRESIDENT — Order! Mr Pakula is sitting directly behind Hansard staff and is having a conversation across the chamber which is not relevant to the answer being given. He is making it very difficult for them.

Hon. G. K. RICH-PHILLIPS — Increasingly, MROs are required to offer original equipment manufacturer skills. It is significant that John Holland has now received a designation from Boeing to offer those skills with respect to the 787 and the next-gen 737.

As we move to composite aircraft, in the case of the 787, the ability to offer skills from the manufacturer specific to aircraft type will become important, so it is significant that John Holland at Melbourne Airport has received this GoldCare designation from Boeing.

Boeing sees enormous potential for increasing its aircraft fleet operating in the Asia-Pacific region. More than 150 of the 787s have been ordered for the Asia-Pacific. For John Holland at Melbourne Airport to have been designated as the only Asia-Pacific provider of GoldCare is very significant to its expansion plans. The Victorian government looks forward to working with John Holland to make the most of this opportunity. We expect that it will be a significant next-generation fleet in the Asia-Pacific. John Holland at Melbourne Airport is perfectly positioned to provide those services for the Asia-Pacific region. The government looks forward to working with it to realise the potential of this new designation from Boeing.

**COUNCIL | Adjournment
6 December 2011**

Gellibrand pile light: relocation

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Planning. It concerns recent media reports that have indicated that the National Trust intends to install the Gellibrand pile light outside the Melbourne Convention Centre. I have received correspondence from Mr Bill Jaboor, the chief executive officer of Hobsons Bay City Council, who has said to me:

On a number of previous occasions the council has registered a strong

interest in having the pile light placed at a suitable location in Williamstown. This would ensure that the light is in close proximity to its original location and in its appropriate historical context.

I have to say that it would make sense to me.

I do not understand why the National Trust would want to take the Gellibrand pile light, which should be at Point Gellibrand, and place it outside the Melbourne Convention Centre, which is some considerable way from where the pile light historically should be.

I am sure the house would be aware that Williamstown and history go hand in glove, particularly in things nautical. The Williamstown area prides itself on being in many cases a living history of the nautical and seafaring side of what has happened in our great city of Melbourne over such a long period of time.

I ask the minister to negotiate with the National Trust, perhaps through Heritage Victoria, an appropriate settlement of this matter. Given that heritage is extremely important to us all and that the Gellibrand pile light would be somewhat out of place, to say the very least, outside of Gellibrand, I ask the minister to attempt to talk some sense into the National Trust, via negotiations, to ensure that the Gellibrand pile light is returned to Williamstown. I believe that that is more than appropriate, I believe it is necessary and I believe it is something that we as a state government and indeed as a Parliament should all have a great interest in.

I ask the minister to take that appropriate action, to negotiate with the National Trust, through Heritage Victoria, and do what he must to ensure that the Gellibrand pile light is returned to where it belongs — Williamstown.

**COUNCIL | Questions without Notice
7 December 2011**

Children: English as an additional language

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development. I ask: can the minister advise the house of what the Baillieu government is doing to assist children

of new migrants and refugees in learning English while retaining and developing their existing language skills?

Hon. W. A. LOVELL (Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development) — I thank the member for his question and for his ongoing interest in migrant families in the western suburbs. As Mr Finn knows, I went to school in the western suburbs with many migrant children to whom English was a second language. The Baillieu government is currently pursuing an ambitious reform agenda for languages education. This is because we recognise that the ability to speak more than one language is an asset.

In the area of early childhood development I recently had the pleasure of launching the resource, Learning English as an Additional Language in the Early Years — Birth to Six Years with Mr Kotsiras, the Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship. There is no doubt about the benefits migrant children will gain learning English while maintaining and developing their first language. Learning English as an Additional Language in the Early Years resource provides educators with cues, phrases and techniques that help children develop language skills within everyday, play-based learning environments.

I thank the Kensington Community Children's Cooperative for hosting the launch of the resource. I also acknowledge the work of the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, FKA Children's Services and Dr Priscilla Clarke, OAM, in preparing the booklet. I also thank the staff, parents and children of the Boroondara Kindergarten in Richmond North for agreeing to be featured in the promotional material. I encourage all kindergartens and educators to make use of this free resource in their centres.

**COUNCIL | Members Statements
7 December 2011**

Climate Commission: chief commissioner

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — In this last sitting week of 2011 it is appropriate to consider exactly why so many Victorians are looking towards next year with fear and trepidation. If the world economic situation was not bad enough, the Gillard-Brown government in Canberra will inflict upon us all a carbon tax — a great big tax on everything that will achieve precisely nothing. And why is it doing this? One reason is the advice given by the Climate Commission chief commissioner, Tim Flannery. This is the same Tim Flannery who told us in 2005 that global warming would cause Sydney's dams to dry up within two years. Sydney's dam levels are currently at 75 per cent and rising. In 2007 Flannery told us that Brisbane dams would never be full again. They are currently at 100 per cent. And who can ever forget the Brisbane floods of earlier this year? In 2008 Flannery predicted that Adelaide's water supply would dry up by 2009. Adelaide's dams are currently 77 per cent full.

Flannery told us climate change would cause such dreadful droughts that desalination plants would be needed to keep us all alive. A string of Labor governments listened to him and, as a result, desal plants are scattered from Brisbane to Wonthaggi, partially completed and almost certainly useless for years to come. Is it any wonder Australians have no faith in their government to get it right when they learn that 180 000 taxpayer dollars a year are going to pay this muppet for a part-time job? They are fully entitled to ask if Tim Flannery, climate guru extraordinaire, is a fool or a shyster. Australians are entitled to think that they are all being taken for a giant ride — one that will hurt them, their families, their businesses, their state and their nation.

Vocational education and training: providers

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — My question is also to the Minister for Higher Education and Skills and Minister responsible for the Teaching Profession, and I ask: can the minister inform the house on the action he has taken against training providers offering financial incentives to students enrolling in state government-funded programs?

Mr Lenders interjected.

Hon. P. R. HALL (Minister for Higher Education and Skills) — I thank Mr Finn for his question. In respect of the interjection about answering questions, I thought it just went on the record that I provided a very good answer to the previous question, and the Leader of the Opposition has indicated that as well. I am happy to answer questions.

Mr Finn raises a very important issue reflecting on a question which I answered in this chamber two weeks ago when the house last sat. In that particular instance I informed the house of a training provider which was offering financial incentives to those who enrolled in training programs. Those incentives were either personal or went to the clubs or organisations of which those people may have been members or friends.

I can advise the house that my department is currently looking into the practices of a further five training organisations. Some of them involve providing financial incentive kickbacks to those who enrol; others have provided misleading information. But I can assure the house that each of those organisations has been thoroughly investigated by Skills Victoria. Where there has been a reason to also speak to the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority or the Australian Skills Quality Authority, investigations regarding the registration of those bodies are also taking place.

In some instances payments have been suspended, and in some instances full audits have been done on those organisations. As I said two weeks ago in this chamber, I am happy to pay for training in this state, and I am happy to pay for

record levels of training in this state — \$1.2 billion rising to \$1.3 billion next year — but I am not happy to see that money being returned by way of financial incentives to others. I am happy for the state to make those payments to contribute to sound training with worthwhile outcomes, but, as I said, not as donations to others. This is a matter which my department and I will continue to pursue. We will place a high priority on it and ensure that the record investments in training currently being made by the Baillieu government are pursued with good, positive public outcomes.

COUNCIL | Adjournment 8 December 2011

City of Wyndham: swimming pool funding

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Sport and Recreation. Very recently Mr Elsbury and I had a meeting with the outgoing mayor of Wyndham City Council and its CEO. At that meeting a number of issues were raised, but in particular the issue of the need for a new pool in Wyndham was raised, it has to be said with some vigour, by both the CEO and the mayor. The project they talked about includes a major upgrade to the council's leisure centre. Wyndham built Melbourne's first 50-metre indoor pool back in 1999, which was funded by the then Kennett government, and I think it is important to note that nothing was forthcoming from the Labor Party while it was in government for 11 years.

The council needs to undertake a \$27 million upgrade to meet the needs of its growing community for at least the next 10 years. It is important to point out that the last time I noted it Wyndham — I have not checked in the last hour or so — was the fastest growing municipality in Australia. It is a quite remarkable place, and it is quite remarkable to see the speed with which it is growing. Every time you turn around another subdivision has gone up.

The project responds to a recent acknowledgement by the Minister for Planning, Mr Guy, concerning the huge population growth that

the city is experiencing and the need to ensure a timely provision of much-needed infrastructure. Surely the biggest issue in the west at the moment is keeping up with the growth and the infrastructure that is needed.

The project will also ensure that the sports minister's objective is delivered for Wyndham and regional residents, which is to ensure that more people are more active, more often. I think that is a good slogan to live by. I am sure we will all be doing our exercise over the summer months, and if this pool were to be built, it would make it much easier for the people of Wyndham to get out, be healthy and fit and enjoy the great outdoors. I ask the minister to provide the necessary funding to build this pool. It would be an enormous boost for the people of Wyndham, who need such a facility. The old one is quite good, but it is getting a little past its prime —

Mr Elsbury interjected.

Mr FINN — As Mr Elsbury points out, it is a long way past it.

Mr Lenders interjected.

Mr FINN — Mr Lenders chimes in just at the time when I am talking about things being past their prime, and that is entirely appropriate for Mr Lenders. In asking for the minister's support on this one, I was just about to wish members and staff and their families all the very best for Christmas. I think this upgrade would be a marvellous Christmas present for the people of Wyndham.



FINN IN THE HOUSE

Speeches August 2011 - December 2011



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