



FINN IN THE HOUSE

Speeches August to December 2020



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C O N T E N T S

Standing and Sessional Orders	3	Environment and Planning Committee	20
Bulla toxic waste dump consultation.....	3	West Gate Tunnel.....	20
Sunbury green wedge.....	3	Police conduct.....	21
Public Health and Wellbeing Amendment (State of Emergency Extension and Other Matters) Bill 2020.....	4	Hotel viability in lockdown	21
Public Health and Wellbeing Amendment (State of Emergency Extension and Other Matters) Bill 2020.....	4	Worker Screening Bill 2020.....	21
Lockdown impact on small business	6	Rothwell housing development, Tarneit.....	23
West Gate Tunnel.....	6	Adjournment	23
COVID-19 (Gyms).....	6	COVID-19.....	23
Government performance.....	6	Toxic soil dump approval.....	24
Bulla Tip dust.....	7	COVID-19.....	24
COVID-19.....	7	Remembrance Day	24
COVID-19.....	7	Western suburbs tree planting.....	25
COVID-19.....	9	Local government elections.....	25
Altona North Landfill.....	9	Justice Legislation Amendment (Supporting Victims and Other Matters) Bill 2020.....	25
COVID-19 Omnibus (Emergency Measures) and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2020.....	10	West Gate Tunnel.....	26
COVID-19 Omnibus (Emergency Measures) and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2020.....	11	Responses	26
March For The Babies.....	11	China Trade.....	26
West Gate Tunnel contaminated soil	12	Sinclair's Road, Plumpton.....	27
Hope for COVID affected families.....	12	Green New Deal	27
Grand Final Friday	12	Bulla Bridge	29
Local government rates	12	COVID-19.....	29
Western suburbs medical community.....	13	Parental attendance at schools.....	29
West Gate Tunnel.....	13	COVID-19.....	29
Cardinal George Pell.....	13	West Gate Tunnel.....	30
West Gate Bridge Tragedy Commemoration	14	Energy Legislation Amendment (Licence Conditions) Bill 2020	30
Health Minister's lockdown explanation	14	Western suburbs tree planting.....	31
COVID-19.....	14	Secure Work Pilot Scheme	32
COVID-19.....	15	Return of school parent volunteers.....	33
COVID-19.....	16	Secure Work Pilot Scheme	33
Toxic soil dump health priorities	16	Commercial passenger vehicle industry.....	34
Ronald Alexander Best	17	West Gate Tunnel.....	35
Local government elections.....	17	Toxic soil dump public meeting invitation	35
Small business support.....	17	Ravenhall landfill	35
AFL Grand Final.....	17	Tarneit train station	36
Small business COVID re-opening	18	Hume City Council	36
Animal Shelters.....	18	COVID-19.....	36
Bulla tip EPA protection	20	Kealba landfill	38
		Felicitations	38
		Sunbury Road safety issues	38
		Appropriation (2020–2021) Bill 2020.....	38
		Autism education.....	39

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Standing and Sessional Orders

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — For months now I have been watching on a daily basis as the Premier has addressed the state, in varying degrees of horror and sadness at some of the news that he has delivered. What he has delivered to the people of Victoria this week is something that nobody in Australia has ever seen before. If somebody can right me on this, please do, but I am not aware that a curfew has ever been in place anywhere in Australia. Not even during the war was there a curfew. I am not exactly sure why the curfew is in place, but I would be very keen to ask the Premier, and certainly I would welcome the Minister for Health telling us at some stage as well.

But the fact of the matter is that we have not been able to ask. These monumental changes in our lives—every Victorian's life—have occurred, and none of us as members of Parliament up until today have had a chance to ask any questions at all. It horrifies me that one man and a few mates have the power—total power, absolute power—to do what is happening. Now, it may well be that what is happening is necessary; it may well be that what is happening is needed. But I do not think it should be up to one individual, with a few mates, to let that happen.

Now, we have seen the Premier close down the Parliament. We have seen him pretty much close down his own cabinet. You have got to ask: who is he listening to? If he is not listening to the people who are elected into this place to represent their constituents, to express what is in the best interests of their constituents, to tell the Premier, to tell the government what is needed and how they are feeling—how difficult it is for them, particularly during these dreadful times—you have got to ask: what is going on around here?

I am a great supporter of the Parliament. I have been a member of this Parliament now for close to 21 years, believe it or not, and I regard it every day as a high honour to represent the people of the western suburbs in this Parliament. Apart from the COVID disaster—and it is a disaster; I would certainly go along with that—we have other issues. In my electorate we have got the prospective dumping of carcinogenic toxic soil between Bulla and Sunbury or at Ravenhall. That is an

issue that needs addressing. We have a range of other issues. It concerns me enormously that under the cover of COVID we are seeing a government making decisions about a whole range of things and it is not open to parliamentary scrutiny.

That is why we need this house sitting today, we need it sitting tomorrow and we need it sitting Thursday. That is why we need the other place sitting today and tomorrow and Thursday. Anybody who thinks that they know it all is digging a hole for all of us. I fear that we have a Premier at the moment who is in exactly that category. When I see him on the television every day telling us, 'I am doing this; I have decided that'—I, I, I, I—I think to myself, 'We have got trouble here.' When the Parliament is dispensed with—and that is what has happened, certainly in the lower house—that is when we have real problems.

I will support this motion today, but I really cannot help but emphasise strongly the need to respect the Parliament, the need to respect our democracy and the need to respect that every Victorian has a right to have a say and has a right to be heard. That is just so important. For a Premier and a few mates to turf that to one side is a recipe for a total, a complete—you reckon it is bad now? That will be a real disaster.

Bulla toxic waste dump consultation

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — My constituency question is to the Minister for Planning, and I refer the minister to the recent decision to remove the rights of local residents in Bulla and Sunbury in the case of Hi-Quality seeking to dump poisonous, toxic soil in its Sunbury Road operation. The local communities are furious they are being shafted by a government that has no interest in the health of their families. They are genuinely fearful of what the dumping of carcinogenic PFAS material just 200 metres from a new housing development and up the road from established suburban housing will mean. Thousands of people live in fear as the Andrews government plays with their future, wondering if their children will be cancer victims in years

to come. Minister, this is a deplorable situation. Will you restore the rights of my constituents to have their say and be heard?

Sunbury green wedge

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I wish to raise an adjournment matter this afternoon for the attention of the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change. I have been a resident of or certainly involved in the local Sunbury and Bulla communities for many decades, and over the years I have seen that space of land between Bulla and Sunbury change significantly. It used to be a green wedge, we were told. It was a sacred place for the environment, if you listened to the greenies around the place, and nobody—nobody—could touch that. I think it was just prior to the 2002 election that I got into terrible trouble for suggesting that we might like to have 5-hectare blocks with homes and caveats on them that they be fully greened so that the green wedge—which in fact was a brown wedge back in those days—would actually be a green wedge. But the greenies were not at all happy about that.

What we have seen of recent times is truly horrifying. The Sunbury tip we are now calling out our way 'Mount D'Ambrosio', because it is a growing tip that has come from nowhere. It is now many, many metres high, and we understand that if the owners get their way it will be even higher. That is an appalling possibility, apart from the fact that I have to tell you it stinks to high heaven. As somebody who drives past it almost every day, it just is a revolting stench that often wafts its way into the Bulla township.

We have got that, and then of course down the way we have Hi-Quality, which has put in an application to dump toxic soil—carcinogenic toxic soil—from the West Gate Tunnel Project. So just 200 metres from a new residential housing development and just up the road from Goonawarra and another new housing development across the road from there, here we have people wanting to dump what is a very, very poisonous, a very, very carcinogenic, a very, very dangerous substance on Sunbury Road. Obviously that has dangers for everybody in Sunbury and also for the people in Bulla. So that piece of land or that area

Public Health and Wellbeing Amendment (State of Emergency Extension and Other Matters) Bill 2020

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — It has been a very big week, as they say, and it is with a deep sense of responsibility that I stand here this morning to speak against this bill, perhaps in the hope that we can amend it—but I fear, ultimately, to oppose this bill. That deep sense of responsibility is there because I know that there are millions upon millions of Victorians who are looking at this place today, indeed who are looking at us today, for relief—who are looking at us because they want their freedom back, they want their lives back, they want their jobs back and they want their families back. They do not wish to be held in total contempt by a government that wants to control their lives—every minute of their lives—on a daily basis.

Last night I had to console my own 14-year-old daughter as she cried on my shoulder because she had not seen her friends for months. That is happening in houses right across Victoria. What a pity. What a pity Daniel Andrews does not give a stuff. I want to pay tribute to the people of Victoria, because they have put up with a hell of a lot this year, an enormous amount this year, and it has been exceedingly difficult. Ms Patten over there is having a chortle about it, but it has been exceedingly difficult for huge numbers of people across this state, and the suffering that they have experienced has been quite phenomenal.

But then last Monday the Premier got up at his daily press conference, where he tells Victorians that it is our fault and that we should be ashamed of ourselves and that he is going to punish us again. He stopped hectoring us for just a moment to just casually drop that he is going to extend his total control over everybody for

that I spoke of between Sunbury and Bulla is no longer the beauty piece that the greenies would have liked it to have been some time ago. The decision is pending on a number of these developments, and I am asking the minister to defer any decision on environment-impacting developments around Sunbury and Bulla until after this state of disaster concludes.

COUNCIL | Introduction and first reading, 01 September 2020

Public Health and Wellbeing Amendment (State of Emergency Extension and Other Matters) Bill 2020

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — Members might remember just a couple of weeks ago the Premier of this state got up in front of the media of Victoria and told us that as far as he was concerned the opposition was irrelevant. Well, today he has extended that view—he is also saying to the crossbench that it is irrelevant. He is saying to the Parliament that it is irrelevant. We all know what he thinks of his own party, because he does not even listen to his own cabinet. We know, with his gang of eight, the vast majority of the cabinet has no say in what the Premier does. That is something that has amazed me this entire year, that members of the government would actually let the Premier treat them in such a dismissive and contemptuous way. But I tell you what, if members of the cabinet and members of the government are happy to let him do that to them, I am not happy to let him do that to this house or indeed to this Parliament.

To come in here today to speak on a bill that we have not even seen—normally there is a pile of bills on the statute books over there in the middle of the chamber. Today: zilch, zero, nothing. Where is the bill? If this is such an important bill, if this one is going to decide the future of the state, as the government tells us, where is the bill? We saw the final bill yesterday at 4 o'clock, and we were expected then to

go through it and to make appropriate amendments, to make appropriate changes if needs be, to consider it as it should be considered, because this is—and I will agree with the government on this—a very important bill. There are millions and millions of Victorians who are depending on this bill being defeated, so we are very, very keen to ensure that the government and the Premier approach this with appropriate seriousness, and that clearly is not happening. That, to my way of thinking, is just putrid.

I have been around here for a while, and I have never seen a bill debated before anybody has actually seen it. We are still waiting for the final draft to come back in and the government says, 'We'll debate it anyway. Doesn't matter what's in the bill, we'll debate it.' Who is showing contempt for the opposition? Who is saying the opposition is irrelevant? Who is saying the crossbench is irrelevant? The government is—very, very clearly—or should I say the leaders of the government. The Premier, the Minister for Health and the Leader of the Government in this house are showing total contempt not just for those with a different view but for all members of the Parliament, whatever their view may well be on this piece of legislation. I find it absolutely staggering.

We have seen here today just how seriously the health minister takes all this. She was sitting in her seat there a little while ago interjecting mightily—she was like an interjection machine—without her mask on. Now we know, we have been told, that that sort of thing is exceedingly dangerous. And she is the health minister; she should know that. She is the health minister. I mean, if somebody like me understands that and knows that, why would the health minister not—the minister responsible for fighting this pandemic, for fighting the Wuhan virus? Why would the minister not understand that? But there she was over there totally disregarding the rules of the Parliament, totally disregarding the advice of the chief health officer. I understand she regards everything he says as gospel, except of course masks in the chamber. We are seeing here today total contempt for the process, total contempt for the Parliament and indeed total contempt for the chief health officer's advice from the health minister herself.

another 12 months. Well, all hell broke loose—across Victoria, all hell broke loose. And I would hazard a guess that in every electorate office of every member of this Parliament in Victoria the phones went into meltdown. The emails that I have received I have never seen a response like in my years in this Parliament. So I congratulate the people who felt compelled, some for the first time in their lives, to contact members of Parliament to express their views—and more, to express their anger and their dismay. We had people on the phone in tears, hysterical, expressing their fears as to what was about to happen. One of my electorate officers used to be a social worker. She said, ‘I feel like I’m back at the coalface’—and surely she was.

Now, I have to say to you, Acting President, I am not a COVID denier, as they say. My wife is a nurse and works in a hospital that has two floors of people suffering from the Wuhan virus, so I am perfectly aware that it is a problem. It is a threat. But I am also aware that the government has handled this very, very badly. I am acutely aware, as indeed are most Victorians, that this government has stuffed this up left, right and centre.

What this bill is about is trust. What Daniel Andrews is saying to this Parliament and to the people of Victoria is, ‘Trust me, and I’ll give you a call back in March.’ I do not think people are going to fall for that. Maybe people in here will fall for that, but the people of Victoria are certainly not going to fall for that. Because they know—and there are some members in this house who know—that Daniel Andrews cannot be trusted. They know that. That is I think indisputable in many people’s minds.

Now, we have to go back to the point where the trust broke down between the Premier and the people. You might remember early this year, when we had the first outbreaks, I think the Premier had quite a bit of support in what he was doing. In fact we saw a situation where community transmission had been almost entirely eliminated. We thought we had the virus beaten; we thought that it was over, and we were pretty jubilant.

I recall saying on Sky News that it felt a bit like George Bush on the deck of the warship—that we had this thing beaten. Then of course something happened. Something happened in the quarantine hotels that the Premier and the government had organised. For reasons that are totally beyond anybody’s understanding, still, somebody in the government, some minister—and it must have been at a ministerial level; I know

that the government is trying to pass the blame on to a bureaucrat here, but this decision must have been at a ministerial level—they decided they did not want the ADF. They did not want the Australian Defence Force protecting our quarantine hotels. Instead they chose incompetent, unprepared and, as it turned out, randy security guards to guard people in the quarantine hotels.

As a result of that, the virus was let back into the community, and we have seen the bushfire that followed. We have seen the deaths that have followed. We have seen the new case levels that have followed. It is only a couple of weeks ago we had 700 new cases a day—600, 700 a day, quite extraordinary. That happened because this government failed to protect the community. This government failed to protect the people of this state. That is why we are in the situation that we are in today. That is why we are holding this debate today: because the Andrews government failed the people of Victoria.

Now, I know that we have an inquiry at the minute, but let us face facts: the terms of reference of that so-called judicial inquiry—it is not really a judicial inquiry, but that inquiry—were designed to protect ministers. The terms of reference of that inquiry were designed to cover up the truth. So I do not think that we are going to find out from the state inquiry what is going on, but I am certainly looking forward to the federal inquiry, when the ministers and the Premier, I am hoping, will be held to account and made to explain exactly the decision-making process that they were involved in.

This bill, as we discussed a little bit earlier, is a crucially important one for millions of Victorians. We saw it—the opposition saw it, the crossbench saw it—at 4 o’clock yesterday. We saw the final draft after this debate had actually begun. Now, I do not know how this government expects us to take it seriously when it treats the Parliament in the way that it has. It is only a couple of weeks ago the Premier said the opposition is irrelevant. The fact of the matter is today he has also told the crossbench that it is irrelevant. He has told the government—his own members, backbench and a good number of frontbenchers—that they are irrelevant. That is what we are dealing with in this state at the moment: a Premier who is so in love with himself, a Premier who is so enamoured of his own power, that he can tell anybody to go away in not so pleasant terms.

The contempt for the people is quite extraordinary, and we saw that

on Sunday when he got up and he announced, ‘We’re going to have a plan for you tomorrow. We’re going to have a plan, a comeback plan, for you tomorrow.’ Then he got up yesterday and he said, ‘Oh no, no, no, that plan that I was going to have for you today, no, in fact it’ll be next Sunday.’ Now, if the Premier was serious about a plan—and let us face facts, there is no plan—wouldn’t he have announced it before the vote on this bill today? Wouldn’t he have told Victorians, wouldn’t he have told this Parliament, exactly what he had in mind before we voted upon this bill today? Of course he would have, but the fact of the matter is he has no plan. He is No Plan Dan, and he has no idea apart from the fact he wants to shut Victorians down. He wants to keep families locked up. He wants to keep mothers from daughters. He wants to keep sons from fathers. Father’s Day is coming up on Sunday. Millions of Victorians cannot see their dad. Thanks, Dan. What a great job he is doing!

It is just extraordinary when we consider that this government is asking us to trust them when yesterday it was announced that we had 41 deaths overnight. Now, when I heard that figure I was stunned—41 dead. It was horrific. It was only later in the day that we discovered that 33 of the 41 who had died had passed away last month. Now, what is this government trying to pull? What sort of figures are as rubbery as the ones that the government is trying to shove down our throats on a daily basis?

We heard just recently from the chief health officer, Professor Sutton—a sex symbol in his own right, I understand, now—that anyone who has COVID-19 and dies is automatically counted as a victim of the Wuhan virus. It does not matter if the virus killed them or not; they are counted anyway. It does not matter about the comorbidity that they may have carried. It may have been cancer that killed them. It may have been a heart attack that killed them. It may have been a whole range of things that killed them, but as far as the government and the chief health officer are concerned it was in fact the virus that killed them, and they will be counted in the daily totals.

So what we are seeing here is a government that is putting out figures that are inflating death rates, inflating community anxiety. We are seeing a government that is not being honest with the people. We are seeing a Premier who refuses to be honest with the people, and that is what Victorians crave more than anything else. They just want this Premier to be honest with them. They want him to show

some responsibility. They want him to stand up, and they want him to say, 'I stuffed this up. I made a mess. Yes, I made a mistake. I'm sorry'. Now, if I live to be 300, I do not think I am going to hear those words from the Premier ever. I am not sure he has ever said sorry to anyone ever, and that is a major concern.

So far he has blamed families, he has blamed the multicultural communities and, this week, he has blamed blokes having barbecues. He will blame anyone, but he himself refuses to accept the responsibility that is so clearly his. At the same time that he refuses to accept that responsibility, at the same time he is pointing fingers everywhere—'It's your fault, your fault, your fault, your fault'—he is asking us to trust him. He is asking us to believe him when he says he will not use the power in the future that he has used so badly up until this point. He has closed down the Parliament, and he wants that to continue. He wants to give the lower house another six months off. Well, wouldn't that be great? Wouldn't any Premier like to have a situation where they are not under any parliamentary oversight for another six months?

This government is putrid. It holds the community in contempt—a community which is suffering, a community which is in real pain and a community which holds this government in equal contempt.

**COUNCIL | Constituency questions
01 September 2020**

Lockdown impact on small business

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — My constituency question is to the Minister for Small Business. Thousands of small business operators across Melbourne's west are in crisis. A visit to any strip shopping centre or mall will show the telltale signs of empty shops and 'For lease' signs everywhere. Small businesses have been crushed by the Andrews government's lockdowns. Many of those that have not already closed are hanging on by the skin of their teeth. This is severely impacting not just the bottom line of businesses but the mental health and family life of operators now up against the wall. Minister, when can my constituents in small business expect some support from the Andrews government, and what will it be?

**COUNCIL | Adjournment
01 September 2020**

West Gate Tunnel COVID-19 (Gyms)

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I wish to raise a matter this morning for the attention of the Minister for Planning. I cannot begin to tell the house and indeed the minister of the shock and the anger that has engulfed both Sunbury and Bulla today at news of the EPA's decision to endorse Hi-Quality's application to store toxic soil at its Sunbury Road property. I am absolutely stunned myself. This property that we are talking of, this particular facility, is just a couple of hundred metres away from a new housing development. It is just up the road from yet another new housing development. It is just up the road from Goonawarra. And of course it is on Sunbury Road, which is an extremely busy road, and that road—if this goes ahead—is about to be clogged with an avalanche of very big, very loud and quite often very dangerous trucks carrying the toxic soil from the West Gate Tunnel Project to Sunbury Road, dumping it there and then of course returning. So we are going to see a couple of thousand trucks a day on Sunbury Road, which is just going to be absolutely horrific.

But the worst thing of all is of course the soil is carcinogenic. This soil is capable of causing cancer, and it just staggers me to think that a new housing estate, where young couples will be buying homes, starting their families, is just down the road from this facility where they are going to be storing cancer-causing PFAS material.

Mr Ondarchie interjected.

Mr FINN: It is not outrageous, Mr Ondarchie; it is bloody disgraceful that we would even think about it, that we would even consider it. It is just the most appalling thing that I have seen of recent years. I have raised this with the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change. I have raised it with the Minister for Health. I have raised it with the Premier, of course, and previously with the Minister for Planning. And if anybody can suggest anybody else that I can raise it with, please let me know. Because what I am asking the minister tonight to do is to knock this thing on the head, reject this application and ensure that people in Sunbury and Bulla are protected from the sort of threat that this material will bring them if allowed.

**COUNCIL | Petitions
15 September 2020**

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) —
Legislative Council Electronic
Petition:

The Petition of certain citizens of the State of Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Council that gyms are an essential service for mental health, physical health and wellbeing.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Council call on the Government to create and implement a COVID-19 Safe Plan for Victorians to attend gyms in a safe and secure manner.

By Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan)
(10 539 signatures).

**COUNCIL | Members statements
15 September 2020**

Government performance

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I remember in the years 1991 and 1992 in the lead-up to my first election to this Parliament there was real anger toward the government of the day. I remember the 150 000 who marched on this building calling for the resignation of the then Premier, Joan Kirner. The anger then was very real, but it pales into insignificance when compared to the anger of the community towards the Andrews government today. I have been shocked by some of the language used by everyday Victorians to describe the Premier. I have even had to take the unprecedented move of deleting from my public Facebook page comments describing, sometimes in graphic detail, what everyday Victorians would like to do to the Premier.

In most places around the world, governments have had a choice between mass deaths or economic Armageddon. Victorians are ropeable because Daniel Andrews has given them both. They are angry about the hotel quarantine debacle that led to the second wave. They are angry about the Andrews government's contact-tracing regime that is so out of date and inadequate indeed that the Mikakos health department is still using fax machines. This is not the 1980s. Angry Victorians have welcomed Michael O'Brien's call for a royal commission

into the Andrews debacle, but what they really want is the Premier's political head on a plate. After his comprehensive failure this year, they well deserve it.

**COUNCIL | Constituency questions
15 September 2020**

Bulla Tip dust

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — My constituency question is to the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change. I have previously raised in this house with the minister the emerging environmental disaster in Sunbury Road between Bulla and Sunbury. I will not go near the prospective dumping of highly carcinogenic toxic soil at Hi-Quality today because I am aware that it is currently before Minister Wynne. My concern this afternoon is the Bulla tip up the road from there. Spring is in the air and often we see days that are warm and windy. Such a day we experienced last week, and the dust created by the ever-growing mountain of crap at the Bulla tip had to be seen to be believed. The dust was quite extraordinary, something straight out of Lawrence of Arabia. I could actually barely see through it. And with summer just around the corner it is a real worry for us all. Given the sorts of dangers this possibly toxic dust may pose, what will the minister do to protect local residents and passing motorists?

**COUNCIL | Adjournment
15 September 2020**

COVID-19

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I wish to raise a matter this evening for the attention of the Premier. I have received correspondence recently from the Altona Sports Club, which is a great community and family club down on the foreshore at Altona. I have been there on a number of occasions. In fact it is near the dog beach at Altona, and I am sure there will be a number of members who are aware of that. It is one of the favourite spots for my family, and particularly our dog, Bobby dog, on a hot summer's day.

The club celebrates its 60th birthday this year, but unfortunately its 4000 members do not have a great deal to sing about. The club at this point in time is suffering, and it is suffering big-time. When clubs opened some time ago with just 20 per room, the club ran at a considerable loss. Under similar circumstances in the future, I am told

that it would not be possible for the club to reopen. The club would in fact remain closed if they were forced to operate under those circumstances.

The general manager of the Altona Sports Club, Gavin Comport, is a good bloke actually and he does a good job down there. I should also say that they do a lot of great charity work. I recall one concert they had down there for autism awareness. It was a gem, and a great deal of money was raised for a local family that was having some difficulty with a child with autism at the time. Gavin Comport, the general manager, says:

The Altona Sports Club understands our COVID-safe obligations and has a comprehensive COVID-safe plan in place. We are committed to opening with a safe environment that allows our staff to be re-employed and our local suppliers to get the economic boost they need. We are committed to opening.

Now, that is great news for the local community and great news for the club members, obviously, but they need some assurance from the government that they will be able to open under the right circumstances. What I am asking the Premier to do is to be aware of a comprehensive industry plan that has been put to him and to act upon that, because there are clubs—Altona Sports Club is one of them, obviously—right across Melbourne who are suffering in this way. I ask the Premier to take on board this plan that has been put forward and to allow these clubs to open in a safe and COVID-protected environment for the benefit of the community and of their staff.

**COUNCIL | Production of documents
16 September 2020**

COVID-19

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — It has been a fascinating day, hasn't it? We have heard some extraordinary arguments today. We heard a debate this morning on a motion by Mr Limbrick to send our kids back to school. Ms Terpstra got up and was talking about the School of the Air, and I am not exactly sure what the point was on that, but apparently it was some argument for keeping our kids home from school. But that was something that baffled me a little bit—and still does.

Then we had Mr Melhem in this particular debate, who tells me—or tells the house, indeed—that the curfew is important because it keeps your kids at home. Now, that is hardly an argument to keep millions and millions and millions of people locked

up at home—because you do not know where your kids are otherwise. Look, if Mr Melhem has those problems, I sympathise with him, and I understand that he would be frustrated by that, but that is not an argument to lock down the entire metropolitan area—just so you know where your kids are. That is just quite a ludicrous position to take.

Then we had Mr Leane. Mr Leane, as we know, is a very entertaining speaker at times, and he introduces aspects of debate that perhaps, let us say, might not otherwise be introduced. He spoke about it not being about Mr Andrews's leadership—about the Premier's leadership. But I remember about a week and a half ago—it might have been last week—there was a rumour that shot through Melbourne, shot through Victoria and then shot through Australia that Tim Pallas was about to challenge—

Mr Davis: Uncle Fester.

Mr FINN: Uncle Fester and Lurch were at it, and Uncle Fester was going to challenge Daniel Andrews. Now, this rumour was jumped upon by millions of people around Victoria who were so excited at the prospect. They obviously do not know who Uncle Fester is or they would not have been so excited.

Ms Stitt: On a point of order, Acting President, I believe that—consistent with your previous ruling—Mr Finn is straying off the very narrow nature of this motion, and I would ask you to bring him back to the substance. Thank you.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Bourman): I will actually uphold the point of order. Mr Finn, if you could at least, as I said to Mr Leane, keep it where we can all see it.

Mr FINN: Yes. I was just very briefly making reference to arguments that Mr Leane had made. But I just make the observation in passing that anybody who was excited at the prospect that Tim Pallas was about to be Premier obviously does not know Tim Pallas. But anyway, I move on.

The situation with this curfew is one that I have said in this house before confuses me quite considerably. Now, despite what Mr Leane has told us today, I have not heard the Premier of this state satisfactorily explain why we have to be at home between 9—8 as it was, now 9—and 5 in the morning. He has not explained that at all, and now we can understand why. We can understand why he has not fully explained it—because he cannot. That is the bottom line. We have now discovered that this was not at the request or at the suggestion of the chief health officer. It was not at the suggestion or the request of the Chief Commissioner of Police. And you have

got to ask the question: whose idea was this? Now, the Premier says, 'Oh, I don't know.' That is his basic response to everything these days, 'I don't know.'

Do any of these meetings that the government has have minutes? Do they actually have minutes that record what people say and what they do? Do they actually have minutes that record who voted for what and what decisions were made and who made them? It seems to me that a government that hides behind 'I don't know' is either entirely incompetent or entirely dishonest. I think this government has probably got a fair bit of both, but we as Victorians deserve a hell of a lot better than that.

Now, I am very, very concerned about the public reaction particularly to the police. As members of this house would be aware, I have been a very strong supporter of the Victoria Police force for a very, very long time. Going back 20 years I first expressed my very deep concern about the actions of the then chief commissioner, Christine Nixon, who began the politicisation of Victoria Police. Since then, we have had Simon Overland and we have had Graham Ashton, and they have continued that process. I am hoping that Chief Commissioner Patton will reverse that, but I am not holding my breath, it has to be said.

But the attitude of so many Victorians now—as I have gone around my electorate and spoken to people I have detected a change in attitude of the general public towards the police. A lot of people now see the police as the enemy. They now see the police as being the enforcers for Daniel Andrews. That, to my way of thinking, is a tragedy. It is a tragedy. People out at night are racing home, possibly breaking the speed limit, in order to get home before 8 o'clock, as it was, or 9 o'clock now. You see a police car, and normally you would say, 'Oh, it's a police car. Good on you.' Now fear grips the heart; the heart is in the throat: 'Are they going to pull me over? And if they do pull me over, what are they going to do to me?' I mean, we have seen a number of incidents over the last couple of weeks where police have apparently overstepped the mark. Now, we all know that in every barrel there is the odd bad apple, but it seems to me, particularly after the comments by Assistant Commissioner Luke Cornelius, there is a general attitude now in certain sections of the police force that they can get away with anything, and it concerns me enormously that this curfew gives that attitude even stronger grounds to grow in the community. That concerns me enormously. Anything

which undermines public confidence in Victoria Police, as far as I am concerned, is a bad thing, and it should go. This curfew is one such thing. This curfew is actually undermining public confidence in Victoria Police, and I think that is a particular tragedy.

Premier Andrews, as we know, is on a power kick of some significance. I do not think there is any doubt about that. I do not think there is anybody who would argue against that. He is on a major power kick, and he has adopted the attitude—and I am not sure who said it years ago—'never let a crisis go to waste.' He is certainly not allowing that to happen. He is jumping in, and I do not know whether he is fulfilling his childhood dreams or what it is, but he is cracking down on human rights. Now, I never thought I would be talking about this in the Victorian Parliament about my fellow Victorians, but we are having our human rights trod upon by a Premier who clearly does not care about the impact of his actions. As long as he gets his way, as long as we do as we are told like good little boys and girls, then he is happy. Now, this is a classic example—this curfew thing is a classic example, because as I said before, this was not at the request of the chief health officer or a suggestion of the chief health officer. This was not a request or a suggestion by the Chief Commissioner of Police. This clearly came from the Premier himself or those close to him. Where are the grounds for this curfew to continue? I do not see them. I did not see them when it was first implemented; I do not see them now.

As I said earlier, the Premier has from time to time made some vague passing reference to the need for this curfew, but the fact of the matter is there is no need for the curfew. This curfew will not and does not do anything to fight the Wuhan virus; it does nothing. So why is it there? If the Premier wants to overstep the mark in terms of treading on our rights, he is certainly doing it the right way. But I cannot for the life of me see how anybody can possibly argue that this curfew is about fighting a virus, because it is not. The fact that I can go shopping at a quarter to 9 but I cannot go shopping at a quarter past 9—what impact does that have on who gets a virus? What impact does that have? I can go for a drive at a quarter to 9 but I cannot go for a drive at a quarter past 9. What impact does that have on this virus? The fact of the matter is this curfew has no impact on the virus at all.

This is about something altogether different—something that is clearly in the Premier's mind but something that he is yet to fully explain to the

people of Victoria. My suggestion very, very strongly is that if you are going to lock people up in their homes for 8 hours a day, you had better explain why. You must, Premier, explain why you are doing it. You cannot lock people up and just leave them hanging saying, 'You think about it. Work it out yourself.' No. Let us face it, this is the first curfew in Australian history. We did not even have a curfew during the war. This is the first curfew in Australian history, and if you are going to implement this, if you are going to lock people up, you have got to tell them why—and he has not done that. And the reason, as I said before, that he has not done that is—well, there is no reason.

It is quite extraordinary that we are debating this motion here today. I certainly commend Mr Davis very strongly for bringing this motion before the house. I was walking through the city last night. I was actually out looking for something to eat—in Melbourne! Can you believe it? I was looking for something to eat, and there was not much around because the shops were closed, the restaurants were closed and so many shops had 'For lease' signs in the windows. I had my eye on the watch, because I knew that come 9 o'clock the boys in black might be out to escort me to the back of the paddy wagon if I did not do the right thing. There I was, in a hurry, looking for food in the centre of Melbourne, the culinary capital of Australia up until recent times, and I could not find anything. I ended up going to KFC, can you believe it, which is a pretty sad state of affairs.

We have a very, very strange government which is doing some very, very strange things to the people of this state, particularly at the moment to the people of Melbourne. It seems to have some sort of bent toward the people of Melbourne who are suffering under its jackboots. Mr Leane talked about boots before. Well, we are talking about the jackboots of this government. There is no respect for the people of this state, and particularly there is no respect for the people of Melbourne, from this government. It is not good enough. We should not have to tolerate that. We deserve better. Victorians deserve better, and I hope to God the government will snap out of this mindset that they have. One would hope that there would be somebody over on the other side of the house, somebody in the other chamber—the other place—who would have the common sense, the cool logic to say to the Premier, 'You're taking this in the wrong direction. For God's sake, will you calm down.' You would hope that common sense would prevail.

Altona North Landfill

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — My adjournment this evening is for the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change. Pollution is not a new issue for the people of Brooklyn and Altona North. Air quality is a real issue, particularly being so close to the West Gate Freeway. It has been a major issue for a very long time. But this is something else tonight in this particular area that I wish to raise with the minister. Now, I want to make it very, very clear I do not wish to cause any further difficulties for anyone in small business, particularly at this time—the government is doing quite enough of that, and I do not wish to add to that—but there is an issue that is causing enormous distress to local residents, and it revolves around a rock-crushing machine at the Altona North landfill site. This machine has been working quite consistently now for about 15 years, I am told, and there have been numerous attempts to either remove it or at least just quieten it down but without success, and that is unfortunate to say the very least. When it is operating and when the wind is blowing the right way—or the wrong way, should I say—the noise and the dust are absolutely horrendous for local residents. It does make locals' lives an absolute misery. They cannot open the windows, they cannot put their clothes on the line, they cannot sleep in certain instances.

They need help. The people of Altona North need your help. Now, as I said, they have attempted, the locals, on a number of occasions to have this matter rectified. I am sure that we can come to a satisfactory resolution that will make both the residents and the operator of the Altona North landfill site happy. I am absolutely sure of that, and I am asking the minister to do that. I am asking the minister to personally intervene—to sit down with the operator and with the local residents to see if we can come up with an appropriate resolution to this matter, something that will be to the satisfaction of both parties. It is something that clearly needs urgent attention. This has been going on for far too long. It needs to be fixed, and I am asking the minister to do everything in her power in order to fix it now.

Now, as members know, and I have said this quite openly, I am an optimist. A Liberal in the western suburbs learns to be an optimist, but the fact of the matter is I am not optimistic that this government has the first idea what it is doing. It is appalling what it has done to Victoria, to Melbourne, and I hope it changes very, very quickly.

COUNCIL | Motions 16 September 2020

COVID-19

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I move:

That this house:

(1) notes the very significant impact of the government's enhanced and broadbrush stage 4 lockdown on businesses, especially small businesses, across many sectors; and

(2) calls on the government to meet with relevant peak bodies and other representatives of individual business sectors to work through the early evidence-based lifting of complete closures, sector by sector, where appropriate COVID-19 management plans are in place and it is safe to do so.

I think it has to be noted and should be noted by this house and indeed by Victoria that there is a group of victims of the Wuhan virus that have not been given the respect or the acknowledgement that they deserve, and those victims are members of the small business community. I have never seen and I hope never to see again the small business community in this state smashed in the way that it has been over recent months. It is tragic, and I must give some credit here to my electorate officer Marie, who has been taking phone call after phone call after phone call from small business operators who are desperate. Some of them are near suicidal, some of them are hysterical, many of them are in tears because they can see everything that they have ever worked for, everything that they have ever wanted—they can see all of that—disappearing before their very eyes. They are losing their businesses, they are losing their homes in many cases, they are losing their families. This is a tragic situation, and it is all so avoidable. If the Premier had done this the right way, we would not have this situation where small business would be up against the wall in the way that it is.

Now, as I said earlier, I went through the city last night, I went for a walk through the city last night, and I was

staggered and deeply saddened by what has happened to the CBD. I am used to Melbourne being a vibrant and a very exciting place, particularly at night. We have certainly changed—well, we have changed—from the days back in the 1980s. You would hope back then that the meeting finished before 10.00 pm so you could get a quick beer before the pubs closed, but these days—well, up until very recently—you did not have to worry about that, because Melbourne was pretty much a 24-hour town. Not anymore, and as a result of that we are seeing shops and businesses being left to die, basically. A lot of small business operators are just throwing their hands in the air and walking away. They are just walking away. The Premier says, 'Have \$3000! Now, what is \$3000 going to do for any small business, I ask you? Nothing. It will do nothing.'

Now, I have been in years gone by a small business operator myself, a sole trader, and let me tell you it is tough. It is really tough. It is tough to start and it is tough to keep going. And I know back in those days when we had cheques how much I used to look forward to those cheques arriving, because those cheques would be used to feed my family. Those cheques would be used to put food on the table at home, to put clothes on the backs of my kids. There are thousands and thousands of small business operators in this state right now who know that that cheque or that transfer that they desperately need is not coming. They know that financially they are stuffed. And they know that it is the Andrews government that has done this to them.

I think it is just an absolute tragedy that small business operators have felt the wrath of this government in this way. I want to express my solidarity, my sympathy, my empathy with each and every one of them, and I want them to know that we are with them, that we and the Liberal and the National parties are with those small business operators right throughout Victoria.

Ms Crozier: They've been left high and dry.

Mr FINN: They have been, as Ms Crozier says, absolutely left high and dry.

COVID-19 Omnibus (Emergency Measures) and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2020

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan)
— Well, what an extraordinary piece of legislation we have before this house today—not as extraordinary as it was last week, but extraordinary nonetheless. It was Machiavelli who was originally credited with saying, ‘Never let a good crisis go to waste,’ and how appropriate it is. It could well be Daniel Andrews that came up with that saying, because what the Premier of this state has done now for most of 2020 is use this virus, the Wuhan virus, as something to advance his agenda—something to advance his political goals.

I have to say that I, along with the overwhelming majority of Victorians, have had a gutful. We have had enough. In fact we have had more than enough. This legislation in its original form was possibly the ultimate power grab. Here was a government that was telling people that they could be arrested and locked up not for what they had done but for what they might do in the future. This is the thinking that this government has. Irrespective of the fact they were forced into a backdown, this is the thinking that the Andrews government brings to this Parliament: they will lock you up for what you might do in the future. We are all clairvoyants now, presumably. What an extraordinary proposition. What an appalling proposition.

It just goes to show just how much the Premier has totally lost the plot. It just goes to show how out of touch this Premier is with average Victorians. Indeed it goes to show how out of touch Daniel Andrews is with his backbench, because his backbench did not want it, let me tell you. They were furious. And most of his cabinet did not want it either, but of course they were not consulted. They were not consulted because Daniel Andrews has the gang of eight; he has got the politburo that makes all the decisions for him. And it is a pity—it

is a great pity—that from this house’s perspective there is not one member of this house in the politburo, not one member of this house in the gang of eight. It is a pretty sad reflection on members of the government, members of the ministry in particular, who are in this house—very, very sad indeed.

But of course the legislation has not changed much at all. There is talk about authorised officers being able to perform the duties, I suppose, reserved normally for police officers. Now, who are these authorised officers? What training might these authorised officers have had? It does not matter. The Premier says it does not matter, because this suits his way of thinking. You have got to realise where this bloke is coming from. Daniel Andrews is a hardline, really dedicated, committed leftie. In years gone by some might have even called him a communist, but he is undoubtedly as hard left as they come. And this is his mindset: ‘You do what I say or I will crush you.’ That is what he is saying to Victorians, and we have seen that with the curfew.

Now, remember the curfew. We could not go out after 8 o’clock to start with. Then we could not go out after 9 o’clock. Then somebody took it to court. Out went the curfew. And we found out then that there was no medical advice that justified the curfew and there was no advice from police that justified the curfew; this was something that Mr Andrews had come up with all by himself. This is a part of a thought process of somebody who wants to control people, who wants to keep people in their place. This is the mindset of a Premier who is totally out of control, and it is just tragic that the people of Victoria have had to be subjected for almost the entirety of this year to this man who—well, you would have to say—is quite mad at times.

Of course we then have the 5-kilometre rule. We all know about the 5-kilometre rule: you cannot go beyond 5 kilometres from your home unless you have a really, really good reason, and if you do not have a really good reason, the police will stop you and they will take you away and they will fine you vast sums of money. This 5-kilometre rule is another piece of nonsense from a very nonsensical government. It has got to go.

As a part of that process what I would like to do at this point in time is to circulate the amendments that the opposition will put forward in committee.

Opposition amendments circulated by Mr FINN pursuant to standing orders.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Bourman): Mr Finn, they have been put on the table, so you can continue.

Mr FINN: Excellent. That is just marvellous news. I am delighted to hear that, because these are particularly good amendments, and one in particular, 16A, which removes the 5-kilometre rule. Now, this is something that should not be up to the opposition to do. This should have been done by the government. In fact this should never have been introduced by the government. This, as I say, is just another indication of how much the Premier of this state wants to control the people of this state. We have had people come in here talking about civil liberties. We have had people talking about how they are libertarians and all this sort of thing. And then some of them have voted to allow this to happen—quite extraordinary. I know I am using that word a lot, but it really is, this legislation, and this whole process has been quite extraordinary from the first day. So we in the opposition are urging the house to support amendment 16A, which inserts new section 200AA, and also amendment 16B, which inserts new section 200AB.

Ms Bath interjected.

Mr FINN: Well, indeed, Ms Bath, as you quite rightly point out. I urge the house to take a favourable view of these amendments, in particular the removal of the 5-kilometre rule, because this, I think, will be wildly popular throughout the length and breadth of Melbourne. I do not know anybody who has got a good word to say about this. I was talking to a friend of mine last night who has a new baby. She has no family within 5 kilometres of her home, and her words to me were, ‘This is driving me insane.’ She has got a new baby at home. She cannot have anybody come to see her. She cannot have friends and she cannot have relatives and family come to see her to give her a hand because of this 5-kilometre rule. Now, what the hell is going on in this state when new mums cannot be helped because of a government regulation? What is going on in this state? What insanity is going on in this state? So I urge the house when the opportunity arises to support the amendments, in particular 16A, because that is a very important one.

Now, I suppose this bill begs the question: do we trust the Premier? Now, I reckon if the pubs were open and we were able to participate in the pub test we could walk into any pub in Melbourne, any pub in Victoria, and say, ‘Do you trust the Premier?’ And the answer would be an overwhelming, ‘Not on your nelly.’ No way known do

COVID-19 Omnibus (Emergency Measures) and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2020

*Contributions during the
Committee stage of the Bill*

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — Minister, I have only one question. I think you will probably want to answer this. I am hopeful that you will be wanting to answer this as much as I want you to answer it. I have been asked on a number of occasions to ask this question in this debate. This has been widely reported in a number of places, and I would just like to ask the question: is there anything in this bill which limits the liability of the Premier or ministers that are in the politburo or the gang of eight, or whatever you want to call them, for culpability under the industrial manslaughter laws?

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I listened to what the minister had to say. Obviously she has advice. I ask her to table that advice.

March For The Babies

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — Last Saturday was the 12th anniversary of a truly tragic day in Victorian history, when this Parliament removed all legal protection for babies before birth. To commemorate this dark, dark day in our state's history the 11th annual March for the Babies was held in Melbourne. Now, like everything else in Melbourne this year, the March for the Babies 2020 was indeed very different. This year an online event carried the message way beyond the borders of Victoria and indeed, as I

Victorians trust the Premier. I have had emails that would curl your hair with some of the language that has been used about the Premier by Victorians. On my own Facebook page I have had to remove comments from people who have in very colourful terms described what they would like to do to the Premier, and I have taken it upon myself to remove those because I do not want to be promoting violence. But that is the sort of thing that is going on. People are really, really angry. I have never seen Victorians as angry as they are now. I am old enough to remember what it was like in the lead-up to the 1992 election, and that was pretty bad. But now I reckon it is 10 times as bad. I was going down to get some lunch today, and a bloke stopped me in the street and said, 'Do you know where Dan Andrews is?'. He said, 'I want to see him', and I thought to myself, well, I am not sure whether I should point that out. But I said, 'He's up there', and off he wandered. People are walking the streets looking for the Premier now. It is quite an amazing situation that we have in this state.

Do we trust the Premier with the powers that he wants in this legislation? Not in a million years would you trust the Premier to do anything. And we have seen him at the Coate inquiry. You know, we have seen him playing with the truth. We have seen him manipulating the truth. We have seen him tell out-and-out lies. We have seen him have no regard for the truth at all in regard to the Coate inquiry or indeed quite often in these interminable press conferences that he has. It was quite extraordinary: last week the ALP put an ad out—or tweet, I think it was—and said, 'Congratulations—100 press conferences'. That is 100 days of misery for Victorians, 100 days of death for Victorians and 100 days of destruction for Victorians. That is what that was, but the ALP thought it was worth celebrating anyway. It just goes to show, as I say, how out of touch they are—totally and absolutely out of touch with reality.

The fact of the matter is that this government and this Premier are traumatising Victorians. They are traumatising old people, many of whom have been sitting in their homes for the last seven or eight months without seeing another living or breathing soul. They are traumatising little kids—and all they want to do is go and see their friends. Now, up until yesterday they could not do that. There is still a section of the school community who cannot, including two of my daughters who are still at home. Now, they have not seen their friends for months and months and

months. They have been traumatised by a government that just does not care. And as I said before, for the rest of us, we do not seem to matter. The rest of the community just does not seem to matter, as long as Daniel Andrews can flex his muscle and show what a big he-man he is, how strong he is and how he can tell people what to do and how to live their lives. That seems to be his ultimate.

As Ms Crozier says, his party is not happy with him at all, as I mentioned earlier. It is very, very true indeed. We have a situation where members of his own party are openly speaking to the media about how they want him to go. Labor members of Parliament are openly speaking to the media now about how they want a new leader. They are talking about the need. They want him gone by Christmas. I reckon they would want him gone by about dinnertime if they could. They would have him out the door now if possible. I am told that the meetings around the corridors of this building today have been, I think, instructive to say the very least, because you have had little groups here and little groups there—and they are not talking about whether Richmond is going to beat Port Adelaide on Friday night, I have got a feeling. They are very much talking about whether Daniel Andrews will survive, and I do not think he will and I do not think he should. He does not deserve to survive the job because as Premier he has been an unmitigated disaster. Indeed he is an unmitigated disaster, and I just hope, whether it be the Coate inquiry or whether it be Peta Credlin, that somebody gets to the truth.

A member interjected.

Mr FINN: Well, Peta will—I have got no doubt about that. But I just hope that somebody gets to the truth of this whole thing very, very soon because, as I said earlier, the people of Victoria have had a gutful. They have had a gutful, and they are saying, 'Daniel Andrews, you have already got too much power. We do not want you to have any more, and we will'—I will—'oppose this bill'.

understand it, way beyond the borders of even Australia. Feedback was strong from those disgusted by the Victorian abortion law that allows babies to be killed right up to the moment they would otherwise be born alive. The March for the Babies will be back in its usual format next year. Thousands will again march on this building, calling on the Parliament to provide protection for children before birth and support for their mothers. The current law is a matter of grave shame to many Victorians, and I assure the house those of us involved in this march will never go away until all babies have full legal protection. Babies and mothers in this state are important. They deserve far, far more than the appalling, despicable abortion law that we have in this state.

COUNCIL | Petitions
13 October 2020

West Gate Tunnel contaminated soil

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) —
Legislative Council Electronic
Petition:

The Petition of certain citizens of the State of Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Council the community concerns for the proposal to transport and store contaminated soil from the West Gate Tunnel Project at the Hi-Quality Victoria Pty Ltd. facility located at 570 Sunbury Road, Bulla.

Some 1.5 million square metres of spoil will be generated from the West Gate Tunnel Project, with the West Gate Tunnel Authority admitting that it is contaminated with per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) and asbestos at varying levels.

Transportation is through the town of Bulla and over the historic bluestone bridge built in 1869. The HiQuality Eco-Hub tip is located across the road from the Villawood Properties residential land and is 1.5 kilometres from developed areas of Sunbury, home to 40,000 residents and another 19,000 dwellings which have been approved. The facility borders Emu Creek, which feeds the Maribyrnong River system. It is also home to the growling grass frog endangered species.

Hi-Quality Victoria Pty Ltd. have a history of failing to uphold the requirements under agreements with the Environment Protection Agency. The state-wide risks of potential cross contamination with

the nearby Veolia organic waste facility that services horticulture and viticulture industries across Victoria and a large network of farmers producing our everyday food, is too great of a risk and there could be unknown and unacceptable community health impacts for generations to come.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Council reject all proposals made by Transurban, Hi-Quality Victoria Pty Ltd., or any other organisation, to dispose of contaminated soil at the Hi-Quality Ecohub tip in the interest of the nearby large residential growth area, to stop the current and planned excessive truck movements before lives are taken on a road that was planned and built for traffic conditions that existed 140 years ago and to call on the Minister for Planning, the Hon Richard Wynne MP, to refuse any changes to the Hume Planning Scheme or the current operators' permit conditions.

By Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan)
(3511 signatures).

COUNCIL | Constituency questions
13 October 2020

Hope for COVID affected families

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan)
— My constituency question is to the Premier. A constituent has written to me in the following way:

I am writing out of sheer desperation.

It is impossible to run my Newport business because of the restrictions. I can't visit clients and I have no work to invoice for. My mortgage repayments have commenced again and I don't know how long I can pay them. I am a single mum of three—both my adult sons have lost their jobs. They are despondent and anxious spending their days staring at screens.

My 13 year old daughter is deeply depressed. She spends her days in her bedroom and has developed a fear of leaving the house. She is missing connection so much that she has taken to self-harm. I am spending more money on psychology than groceries.

What the hell do I do Bernie? I am beyond the tipping point, I have no family here to rely on.

Premier, when will you give my constituent some hope?

COUNCIL | Questions without notice
13 October 2020

Grand Final Friday

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan)
— My question is to the Minister for Small Business. Minister, regarding the grand final parade public holiday, now scheduled for Friday, 23 October, the day before the grand final is played in Brisbane, former small business minister Dalidakis—God, how could we ever forget him?—said this public holiday was about:

... being able to spend quality time with our loved ones, our friends and our family ...

...

It is to allow family, friends and loved ones to have more time together. It is to allow small business owners ... that are either mum-and-dad operators or sole traders, to know that they can take time off and spend it with their loved ones ...

And of course other Labor spruikers such as former member Khalil Eideh said the public holiday:

... will deliver important benefits across the state. It will boost regional tourism and give Victorians more quality time to spend with their families and friends.

Minister, given the Andrews government's tough restrictions, what exactly are you expecting Victorians to do on this grand final public holiday?

Supplementary question

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan)
— It was a very good try, Minister. You almost got there. Could I ask the minister a supplementary question: if this public holiday is so important to business and tourism, why would you not move the day to a time that will have less restrictions and provide opportunities for regional businesses?

COUNCIL | Questions without notice
14 October 2020

Local government rates

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan)
— My question without notice is to the Minister for Local Government. The minister may be aware that the Greens political party policy calls for, and I quote, 'remuneration for councillors that reflects the diverse

demands on their time' and, I quote again, 'revocation of rate capping so that ... council can decide the level of services and the level of rates.' Minister, if these policies were implemented, there would be a surge in payments to councillors and a surge in the rates bill to ratepayers. Are you at all concerned that Greens political party councillors elected in the coming council elections will use discretion available at local council level to engineer pay rises for themselves?

Supplementary question

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I hear what the minister says, and I share his concern that ratepayers and indeed taxpayers money is spent in an appropriate way. Given that, I ask: given that Greens political party councillors are bound by Greens political party policy, is the minister concerned that Greens will help themselves to the ratepayers chequebook?

COUNCIL | Constituency questions 14 October 2020

Western suburbs medical community

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — My constituency question is to the Minister for Health, and it is as a result of an email that I received from a constituent, who writes:

Please help us. Please protect us.
Please save us.

I am an emergency registered nurse. I've done my absolute very best to make a change. I've been working absolutely beyond my physical, emotional, and psychological capabilities to fight the evil. It used to be a matter of us, Victorian healthcare workers, to regain our right to do our work by adhering to our professional values, standards, and pledges. But now, it became a matter of life and death.

No matter what Daniel Andrews and his masters are trying to achieve, it's unachievable. No matter what state they are trying to create, there won't be any functional healthcare system in it. It will all come to people being treated with garlic, herbs, and rituals. That type of healthcare system would kill everyone, the general public and the creators of such meaningless dystopia.

There are no ways around it. This is a dead end.

Minister, what hope can you offer to the medical community in the western suburbs?

COUNCIL | Motions 14 October 2020

West Gate Tunnel

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — Sadly I have to speak all too briefly this afternoon because there are a number of others who wish to have their say, but it was fascinating to listen to Mr Melhem, because Mr Melhem is alleged to represent the western suburbs. Here he was telling people that the western suburbs should be dumped upon from a very great height by a government that loathes the western suburbs. The Labor Party like to say, 'The west is our own'. And how do they treat their own? Mr Melhem spoke about a whole range of things, but the thing he did not speak about was the impact that this toxic soil will have on local people at Ravenhall, at Caroline Springs, at Taylors Hill, at Deer Park, at Bulla and at Sunbury. None of those people were mentioned. None of those people were thought about by Mr Melhem in this situation at all, and it is appalling. It is despicable that they would dump this stuff in highly residential areas. I find it quite extraordinary.

You look at what has happened at Ravenhall over the years—the stinking hole in the ground that has been there for so long that it does not matter. The government is very keen to keep that there, and now they want to make it worse by dumping PFAS-ridden toxic soil—poisonous toxic soil—at Ravenhall, across the road from residents, across the road from large suburbs that will be impacted severely by this toxic soil. Of course the other possibility is Sunbury—Sunbury or Bulla, one or the other; it is about the middle—and you have got a new housing development about 200 metres down the road from this proposed toxic soil dump. You have got Goonawarra, you have got schools, you have got a whole range of things. You have got thousands of people within cooee of this place. One thing that has never ceased to amaze me—and I have lived in that area for a long time—is that it does get very, very windy there, very, very windy indeed, and of course in this wind things are picked up and blown. So here we will have PFAS-ridden soil dust blowing all over Bulla, all over Sunbury, and the impact that that will have on local people will be disgraceful.

What I have to ask Mr Melhem, and what I have to ask the government is: do they care? Do they care if the kids in Sunbury or in Bulla or in Caroline Springs or Taylors Hill or Deer Park end up getting cancer? If we get a cancer cluster because of this PFAS soil, what happens then? Do we get an apology from the government like they normally give: 'I am sorry', says the Premier? He will be well gone by then of course; he will be well gone probably by Christmas. Somebody will get up and apologise. It will be a bit late then.

I wish I had more time, but I just want to put on the record that I totally, absolutely completely, 100 per cent oppose the dumping of toxic soil at Bulla and Sunbury and at Ravenhall. That is not on—and I know that Mrs McArthur wants to talk about Bacchus Marsh. But certainly from my perspective in my electorate I am vehemently opposed to the dumping of toxic soil, and I am sick to death of the west of Melbourne being regarded as the dumping ground of Victoria. Enough. This government stinks as badly as that tip at Ravenhall.

COUNCIL | Adjournment 14 October 2020

Cardinal George Pell

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — My matter this evening is for the attention of the Attorney-General. One thing that I am absolutely convinced of in this life is that the integrity of our justice system is absolutely crucial to the survival of us as a civilised society. If the community has no faith in its justice system, if it has no faith in its policing system, then we are indeed in a great deal of trouble.

I have previously expressed my grave concerns about the occurrences leading up to the charging and prosecution and the conviction of Cardinal George Pell. A lot of people around the world are looking at the Victorian justice system as it is with dismay as to how this grave injustice has been allowed to occur. What has happened over the last week or two just adds to that. We have had allegations from overseas that over \$1 million was siphoned off to Victoria, to Melbourne, to pay off people to ensure that Cardinal Pell was convicted. Now, I obviously do not know if there is any truth to those allegations, but the fact that those allegations have been made and the fact that they have been made at a very, very high level in media

COVID-19

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I wish to raise a matter this evening for the attention of the Premier. I have been contacted today by a constituent, Brig Wright, who owns a cafe in a small shopping centre in Sunbury. Now, she is at the end of her tether. She desperately needs to open up and indeed had decided that she would open up just to keep going. That is how bad it is. She needed to operate her cafe just so she could survive and keep the operation going. So she approached the shopping centre and said that this was what she wanted to do, and they said, 'Well, you'll have to get some documentation showing us that that is legal'. Of course she is not able to do that, because in fact at the current time it is not, which is another story and pretty weird in itself. It was quite extraordinary that almost at the same time as the shopping centre management said, 'You can't open because it's not legal and you can't prove that it's legal', they hit her with the rent for her cafe that they would not allow her to open.

So here we have a situation where a hardworking businesswoman is desperate for her cafe to reopen so that she can pay her bills. She is not allowed to reopen by the government or by the shopping centre management, but at the same time the shopping centre management have hit her with a dirty great bill—another one. And as you can imagine, rent is a fairly substantial part of any annual bill hike.

I am feeling sorry for Ms Wright. I am feeling desperately sorry for her and deeply concerned as to what she will do. Of course she is not alone; there are many, many—probably thousands—of people across this state, and particularly in the metropolitan area, who are going through very, very similar things and who are having very similar problems to what Ms Wright is experiencing. But what I would like the Premier to do is to provide for me a response to Ms Wright. I would like him to tell me what I should say to her to explain why he is putting her out of business, to explain to her why she cannot operate her cafe and to explain to her why she cannot get a fair go.

terms casts an even greater pall over our justice system.

We know that \$1 million was siphoned off. Now, if indeed that million dollars was paid to people to ensure that Cardinal Pell was convicted, we need to know where the money went. We need to know who took the money. We need to know the role of those who were bribed in this particular situation. I think it is the gravest crisis—injustice—in this state that we have possibly ever seen, and it is absolutely crucial that the government does something to ensure that our justice system is not just clean but is seen to be clean. It is so important.

Putting aside Cardinal Pell, putting aside the details of the case itself, our justice system in Victoria is on trial itself, and that is something that must worry us all. So I am asking the Attorney-General, as a matter of urgency, to hold a full independent inquiry into the occurrences around the Pell case and to deliver a report to this Parliament.

COUNCIL | Condolences 15 October 2020

West Gate Bridge Tragedy Commemoration

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — The roar of the crash of the West Gate Bridge still echoes very much across the west of Melbourne. The shock waves of the bridge crashing into the mud below are still felt in the west today. Fifty years on from that tragic day we remember those men killed in the bridge collapse. You do not have to scratch very deeply in the western suburbs to find those still mourning the 35 who died that day.

We remember those men who died that day in the most tragic and dreadful circumstances—circumstances that I have trouble coming to grips with. It is something that I remember as a child, and that memory in itself will never leave me. We remember those men who died. We also remember today the families of those who died. We remember the 88 children who lost their fathers, and of course we remember the grandchildren who have no grandfather. We remember those workers who rode the bridge to the ground that day and survived, many injured—many still injured—and of course they have lived with the horror of that day for the past 50 years.

This tragedy impacted every Victorian. I remember when I was first elected to this Parliament back in 1992—it seems a long time ago and probably is—a long-serving staff member, Shirley in the dining room, used to tell me about what she saw that day: the sight of the then Premier, Sir Henry Bolte, in tears and inconsolable. He of course immediately called a royal commission. As has been mentioned by a number of people, many of the recommendations of that royal commission became law, and that is a very good thing for our society and indeed for all workers in our society.

My sympathy goes to all those personally impacted by this dreadful, dreadful event. The people of Melbourne's west are with you today. We are with you always, and may the West Gate Bridge be an everlasting memorial to those we lost on that day.

Motion agreed to.

COUNCIL | Constituency questions 15 October 2020

Health Minister's lockdown explanation

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I received an email last night that I would like to read to the house:

I rang Tim Pallas's office at 2.17pm ... to express my disgust in Dan Andrews and what he has done to Victoria ...

This, by the way, is to the Minister for Health:

... in the conversation I said

We need to open Victoria, how can we still be locked down when NSW has the same numbers ...

Tim Pallas's office said it is:

... because the Victorian Virus is not the same as NSW, I said is it not actually because DHS does not have contact tracing working and he said no its because of it being a different virus to other states and it's a lot more dangerous and spreads faster ...

Minister, will you provide details of this different strain of Wuhan virus, and is there a special blend for Melbourne's west?

COVID-19

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — Continuing on from my address—I think it was the last sitting week from recollection—I want to reflect on what has happened to this state and indeed what has happened particularly to small business in this state as a result of the lockdown, the stage 4 lockdown, that has so savagely afflicted—‘afflicted’ is a good word too—but it has affected so many right across the state, particularly in the metropolitan area. It has to be said that the city of Melbourne has been killed by Dan. It is as dead as one could possibly imagine, and I took a photo on Tuesday at 6 o’clock of Spring Street. I stood in the middle of Spring Street. There was not a vehicle to be seen anywhere. There were no cars, there were no trams, there was nothing, and for Melbourne to have that sort of situation in the middle of peak hour—because 6 o’clock is pretty much peak hour in Melbourne—for the place to be absolutely empty is a fair indication of the death of a great city.

Look, I do not hide from the fact that I love Melbourne. I have always loved Melbourne. It is the greatest city, or it was the greatest city in Australia. It has so much to offer, so much to offer, but not anymore. In the events of the last few months we have seen the destruction of our city, and that to my way of thinking is a tragedy. I find it deeply distressing that this has been allowed to happen, and it has been created by the Premier all by himself. After all he was the one who, without any medical advice or without any legal advice from Victoria Police or anybody else, decided that Melbourne needed a curfew and imposed one. That in itself was enough to kill the city, and the suburbs as well are pretty much stuffed. You go to any shopping centre and you will see the toll climbing, the toll of small businesses that have hit the wall. Go to any shopping centre and you will see any number of shops that are for lease. Any number of businesses that were once thriving have closed.

It is over for them, and I ask—it is not a challenge—I am asking every single member of this house, indeed I am asking every single member of this Parliament, including the Premier, to take a stroll down Bourke Street. Take a stroll down Bourke Street and count the number of empty shops. Count the number of businesses that have closed. Count the number

of properties that are for sale or for lease. It is devastating, absolutely devastating. I took a stroll down Bourke Street yesterday, and even down in the Bourke Street Mall, which is usually such a bustling centre for Melbourne, half the shops in the Bourke Street Mall have closed. Half the shops have closed, maybe more. As I said, it is devastating—it is absolutely devastating—and I cannot for the life of me understand how this has been allowed to happen.

Now, we know we have got the Wuhan virus, and that is a particularly difficult problem that we have had to deal with, and we know that the second wave came about as a direct result of the failure of the Andrews government to control it. The Andrews government allowed the virus out of hotel quarantine, and as a result we have been hit savagely by a second wave. We know that. But the Premier, not just being responsible for the 800 dead, has also killed our city. I am loath to say this, but I have to say it: I think it is going to be many, many, many years before Melbourne gets back to anything like what we knew and what we loved. It may well be that Melbourne will never get back to what we knew and loved. I cannot help but think: here I am today, excited about Richmond being in the preliminary final tonight, tomorrow Geelong are playing Brisbane in the preliminary final and we should be getting very, very excited about the grand final next week at the MCG, but we are not—we cannot—because of course the MCG will be empty. As a result of that, there are an enormous number of small businesses that will suffer and indeed are suffering. They have copped it in the neck because the grand final has gone to Brisbane for the first time ever. It is a great achievement by Daniel Andrews! Many years ago St Patrick chased the snakes out of Ireland; well, Daniel Andrews has chased footy out of Victoria. That is an extraordinary achievement. I never thought that I would see that. But here we are, a week before the grand final, and it is not being held in Melbourne, and as I said, numerous restaurants, pubs, taxidivers, Uber drivers—a whole range of businesses—are going to suffer as a result of that occurrence.

Speaking of restaurants, Melbourne prides itself, and has prided itself for a very long time, on being the culinary capital of Australia. It has been quite remarkable over the last couple of sitting weeks, when we have needed to go and get some tucker, to get some food, to walk down Little Bourke Street, where one would pop in and get some Peking duck—which is one of my favourites, I would have to say—

or maybe some lemon chicken, and there is nothing there. They have all closed. The question is: how many of them will reopen? I would suggest not many. Little Bourke Street, a centre of food, of culture—as quintessentially Melbourne as the MCG almost—is closed. It is destroyed. And that you have to put down to the Andrews government, because that is what they have done. They have closed the restaurants, and of course they have closed the pubs. Pub life in Melbourne is something to celebrate, or it used to be. Pub life in Melbourne was something that we all used to enjoy immensely—I know I did many, many times—but unfortunately we cannot do that anymore. We cannot pop in for a quiet one after work, we cannot go to a pub for dinner and we cannot go out to a pub with friends after dinner, because the pubs are not open. It is devastating. We hear people like Paul Dimattina, for example, begging Daniel Andrews to reopen the pubs because the concern is—and it is a very real concern, a very genuine concern—that if the pubs do not open soon, most of them are never going to reopen. That is a very justified fear.

I remember when I was a small business operator just how long I could last if I had no income, and I was a very small business operator. I recall many, many times sitting there waiting for a payment to arrive so that I could pay my bills, so that I could buy food. These small business operators, these hoteliers and restaurateurs, are in exactly the same situation, and many of them have not operated properly since March of this year. We are looking at nearly eight months of not a cent through the door. They have still got the outgoings. As I mentioned in the adjournment last night, we have these operators who still have to pay their rent, they still have outgoings, they still have electricity bills, they still have gas bills, they still have a whole range of other impositions that they have to meet, but there is no money coming through the door. How the hell is anybody supposed to survive in that situation? How is any business supposed to survive when all the outgoings stay the same but there is nothing incoming—nobody is actually giving you any money to operate your business?

These people do not want government handouts. They might be handy for a short period of time, but that is not what these small business operators want. What they want is to be able to operate their business. They want to do their job. They want to employ their staff. They want to serve the community. That is something that seems to be completely lost on the

Premier—totally lost on the Premier. His concern for small business is zero. He could not give an airborne rodent's rump about small business in this state, and that is the simple fact of the matter, because if he did, he would be doing something about the suffering, about the pain, about the destruction that so many small businesses are suffering in Victoria right now.

There are thousands and thousands and thousands of small businesses that if they have not hit the wall already are about to, and a lot more who are paddling like hell to try and stay afloat. There is no guarantee that any of them are actually going to survive. You would be surprised at some of the ones that have been around a long time. Out in my area, in Williamstown and Newport, we have seen some of the oldest pubs in Melbourne close permanently, and that is indeed very, very sad.

Another area that I would like to address is gymnasiums. There are hundreds of thousands, I would imagine, of people who used to go to the gym, many of them on a daily basis. I must admit that I am one of them, and I miss the gym enormously. I probably miss the gym more than anything else. I have spoken to a number of gymnasium operators who have assured me that they can open, and they can open safely. They can do it in a way that will protect their staff, and they can do it in a way that can protect, and indeed will protect, their clients. But they are just getting no joy at all. Let us face it, from what we understand, the people who run this government are very few and far between—it seems to be the Premier and a couple of mates, and that is about it, and it surprises me that he has got a couple of mates, to tell you the truth—but the Premier, who seems to be running the show, again has shown no interest in what should be a no-brainer: to reopen the gyms. Gymnasiums are a very important part of not just physical health but also mental health in this state.

It is beyond my understanding—totally beyond my understanding—why the Premier would not want to make people's ability to defend themselves from this virus stronger by making them fitter. If you are sitting around and visiting Dan Murphy's and knocking over a couple of bottles of shiraz every night, you are going to put yourself in a situation where you will be a candidate for this virus if it comes near you. If you are fit, if you are strong, if you are healthy, you are going to be able to fight this thing if you are faced with it, if you are subject to it, and indeed if you catch it, you are

going to be able to fight it off. It just makes absolute and total sense to me that the gyms should be open for that reason alone, so people can be fit and healthy and able to fight this thing off. We are told constantly we have got a major public health issue, a major public health threat—and, yes, it seems we do. But why wouldn't you allow an industry which is actually going to help people fight that public health threat to actually operate? Quite insane.

We have another area which is just beyond my comprehension as to why it has been closed down: dancing schools. Now, many of us in this house has been approached by their local dancing schools, I am sure.

Mr Davis: I heard you were a regular.

Mr FINN: Well, I am a regular at the gym, Mr Davis, but unfortunately I cannot be a regular anywhere much at the minute because nothing much is open. But many in this house I am sure have been approached by local dance schools who have begged to be allowed to reopen. It makes perfect sense for them to be allowed to reopen, because the majority—the overwhelming majority—of clientele are kids. Now, if kids can go to school, if kids can get the bus, why can't they go and do their dance classes? Why can't they? There is no reason.

As a result of that, these dance schools—many of them—are facing bankruptcy. Many of them are facing a situation that they never thought they would. Like so many other Victorian businesses, they have not been able to make a dollar for maybe seven or eight months, and that is hurting in a big way. Again, the Premier is saying he does not care about them. He has got his own determination to do something. He does not quite know what it is. It changes on a day-to-day basis, but he certainly does not care about the small business operators who are running the dancing schools.

Now, as I said earlier, there are empty shops and there are empty businesses and closed businesses all over this state and particularly in the metropolitan area. You go to shopping centres and see businesses, specialist shops and many other businesses, that are single operators, sole operators—people who are very proud people, I have to say, and very proud that they have been able to look after themselves and that they have been able to look after their families. I should say also that many are from the multicultural communities. Certainly out my way many of the small business operators are from the Indian communities or the Vietnamese communities or the Chinese communities. There is no shortage of people who have come

to this country, who have worked feverishly to build their business, and are now facing bankruptcy. They have been thrown out of their businesses, they have been thrown out of their shops, whatever those shops or businesses may be, and they are now facing a situation that is not of their making. And there is no sympathy in Spring Street for them. There is no sympathy for them in 1 Treasury Place. The Premier does not care.

This is rampant across the state and, as I said before, particularly the Melbourne metropolitan area. I live near Melbourne Airport, and when I go for my walk—

Business interrupted pursuant to sessional orders.

**COUNCIL | Questions without notice
16 October 2020**

COVID-19

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan)
— My question is to the Minister for Small Business. The Australian Hotels Association survey of its members has found Melbourne's small pubs are losing \$10 000 a week and bigger venues at least \$25 000 a week, with many carrying debts of about \$250 000. With many of Melbourne's favourite watering holes likely to be forced out of business before Christmas, what steps will you take as Minister for Small Business, including pubs, to insist that the Premier reopen the pubs this Sunday?

Supplementary question

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan)
— That being the case, Minister, I am sure you will be very, very pleased with my supplementary question. Minister, pubs still have to pay rates. They still have to pay power, building security, insurance, land tax, corporate tax and fixed overheads. The harsh lockdown is smashing small businesses, including pubs, and, Minister, you appear to be passive and silent. Will you demand the Premier reopen the industry, utilising safe digital tracing technology already operating in regional areas?

**COUNCIL | Constituency questions
16 October 2020**

Toxic soil dump health priorities

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan)
— My constituency question is to the Minister for Planning. The

minister currently has on his desk an application from Hi-Quality in Sunbury Road to allow the dumping of carcinogenic, toxic soil. The site is just a couple of hundred metres from a new housing estate and not far from the outer residential areas of Sunbury—and of course just up the hill from the township of Bulla. It is, in a nutshell, a totally inappropriate place to be dumping hundreds of thousands of tonnes of dangerous soil. Minister, when considering this application, will you put the health of thousands of people in Sunbury and Bulla as your first priority?

COUNCIL | Condolences
27 October 2020

Ronald Alexander Best

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I was deeply shocked and deeply saddened when I heard the news that Ron Best had left us. He was a very, very good man and a hell of a good bloke, and if somebody can say that about me when I go, well, I will be very, very pleased. Whether they will or not is another thing altogether.

Ron of course was a prodigious talent on the football field, as was recounted at his funeral last week. In his first game he kicked 14 goals, and perhaps at another time he would have been a top-flight AFL player but he decided to stay in Bendigo. He was a man without airs and graces, and he was very happy dominating the Bendigo league and becoming a legend in that part of the world. Of course he was also a successful businessman, particularly in the food area, and then became a member of this place where he spent 14 years. That is where I got to know him. When I was elected in 1992, for the first time, Ron was a member and a very, very hardworking local MP with something that is God given, and that is a thing called common sense. Somebody once said to me that common sense does not seem all that common these days, but with Ron it was, and for that we can be very grateful.

He was a man of great humour, a great laugh and also great humility. He had every reason, given what he had done in his life, to be on particularly good terms with himself, but he was not. I never at any stage ever found him to be like that at all, and it deeply saddens me to think that I will not see him again. It is really, really, really sad that we will not enjoy the fun, the joy and, as I said, that laugh—that laugh

that I will always remember. Dinner or drinks with Ron and Louise was always something to look forward to, and I remember them with great affection.

It is sad that we had a limited number at his funeral given the circumstances at this time, because the crowd otherwise would have been massive. The only thing that would have shaded the size of the crowd would have been the wake afterwards, which I would suggest also would have been massive and indeed may still be going today. I watched the funeral last week, as I said, and the tributes to Ron were emotional, they were strong and they gave a very, very clear and rounded description of his life. He was only 71, which is not old, and Louise Asher, as we know, retired from the Parliament less than two years ago. They were planning the rest of their lives together, and my heart goes out to Louise in a way that I cannot properly put into words. It is just dreadful for her in particular, and my sympathy and the sympathy of my family go to her and Ron's kids in particular.

As I said before, he was an extraordinary man, a man of many talents and a man who was not afraid to contribute. We will all be better for having known him, those of us who did. We get to the stage now where we do say farewell to Ron. We say, 'Ron, you will be missed' and, 'Ron, you will always be remembered'.

COUNCIL | Questions without notice
27 October 2020

Local government elections

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — My question is to the Minister for Local Government. Minister, the last day on which ballots for local government elections could be postmarked was Friday, 23 October. Now, your colleague sitting at the table, Ms Pulford, is responsible for public holidays, and she will inform you that Friday just gone, the 23rd, was in fact the grand final parade public holiday, despite there being no Melbourne-based grand final and no parade, although it was a particularly sensational result. But postal delivery and collections of ballot papers appear to have been seriously interrupted in some municipalities, including Wyndham, where ballot papers may not have arrived by 22 October. I therefore ask: why did you as local government minister choose

to mandate a public holiday as the last day for ballots to be postmarked?

Supplementary question

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I thank the minister for his answer, and I just ask: Minister, can you assure the house that every ballot arriving from every registered voter within the time frame will be counted and that nobody was cut out of exercising their democratic rights?

Dr Cumming: Hear, hear, Mr Finn!

COUNCIL | Constituency questions
27 October 2020

Small business support

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — My constituency question is to the Minister for Small Business. Small businesses across Melbourne's west have been devastated by the Andrews government's extended lockdown. Whilst the partial lifting of the lockdown is welcome, many small business operators will be struggling to reopen after many months without any income at all. So many small businesses have now been consigned to history, forced out of business by Daniel Andrews and his government. Minister, it is not good enough for the government to walk away from these small businesses in the western suburbs which are struggling to reopen—struggling in fact to survive. Minister, what will you do to ensure these businesses are not lost to the scrap heap?

COUNCIL | Members statements
27 October 2020

AFL Grand Final

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — We could not go to the game on Saturday. Indeed we could not even go to visit a friend on Saturday. We could not go to a barbecue, we could not even have a beer with a friend on Saturday, but it was grand final day. The noise that emanated from the Finn family room on Saturday night as the mighty Tigers roared their way to their 13th premiership had to be heard to be believed.

It was such an exciting night. To see Dustin Martin win his third Norm Smith Medal—nobody has ever done that before, and I anticipate he will probably win a couple more before he is finished—to see Trent Cotchin

become a premiership captain for the third time, to see Damien Hardwick win his third premiership as coach of the Richmond Football Club was an exciting night for many. And I say 'night'—I hope it is the last night grand final because Saturday was one of the longest days I think I have ever spent. I was one of hundreds who actually took my family to the MCG, and people were just wandering around having barbecues and kicking footies. They did not have much else to do I assume because there was no footy on, so they just congregated outside the MCG. That seemed to be an appropriate way to do things.

I would just like to congratulate the club. To Peggy O'Neal, the president; Benny Gale, the CEO; Damien Hardwick, Trent Cotchin and all the team: well done, you are officially champions.

**COUNCIL | Adjournment
27 October 2020**

Small business COVID re- opening

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I wish to raise a matter this evening for the attention of the Premier, and it is in fact an email that I received from a constituent. He begins:

I hope you are well. Well done to your Tigers!

What a marvellous thing. He says:

I own a Playcentre in Hoppers Crossing ... It is a 1100sqm centre, with 7-8m high ceilings, which allow for great ventilation. We have a fully functioning cafe, but this cannot be opened without the Playcentre being operational for obvious reasons.

Using even an 8sqm rule, we could comfortably have 100 customers with social distancing measures in place.

That being said, Dan Andrews continues to keep us closed. He has not given any indication of when we can reopen. We have been closed since late March, with the exception of 2 weeks in late June.

Rent of 50% is payable, and outgoing, which still equals approx 9k a month. With a closure of 8 months, rent alone is 72k. The grants cover a very small fraction of this. I have dipped into personal superannuation today stay afloat. We must reopen, or be given a date to reopen urgently.

We have Covid safe plans in place.

We even close the centre every 2 hours to clean, and sanitise all high touchpoint areas. We have sanitation stands around the centre, social distance stickers, sneeze guards at service areas—yet Dan Andrews still deems us as being unsafe. Yet schools are safe with kids socialising. Outdoor playgrounds are safe, although no one is cleaning them regularly. Yet, we remain unsafe.

I am asking that commonsense prevails. If we could open under the same rules as restaurants and cafes, I could accept that, even though the size of our centre would allow for a lot higher patronage under a sqm rule.

Premier, this is totally beyond the realms of decency.

Ms Crozier: There is no common sense.

Mr FINN: Well, there is no common sense in any of this, but it is beyond the realms of decency. I mean, here are these people ready to do the right thing, fired up. They want to get out there and run their business. They want to follow your rules. They want to do all of this the right way. They want to do that, but you will not let them. Are you committed to destroying every small business in the state? I wonder. You have got to wonder on that indeed. What I am asking the Premier to do is to allow play centres, such as Geoff's in Hoppers Crossing, to open—with the social-distancing rules and so forth of course—and to allow what should be a thriving business to be just that.

**COUNCIL | Motions
28 October 2020**

Animal Shelters

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I too would like to commend Mr Meddick for bringing this motion to the house and would like to say a few words on it if I may. I have some considerable sympathy for Mr Meddick's position and indeed for this motion. I am a shameless sook when it comes to dogs in particular. I am told that you are either a cat person or a dog person, and if that is the case I am probably a dog person I would suggest, although our cat at home has been known to want—

Mr Melhem interjected.

Mr FINN: No, it is going very nicely, I can tell you—far too nicely at times. I have over the last decade I suppose become a very enthusiastic advocate—try saying that after a couple of drinks—of pet adoption. That comes from the day that I walked into Lort Smith in North Melbourne. I was there

with my daughter. I will never forget it as long as I live—it was a little over 10 years ago—and there was a dog. We had actually picked another dog from the website and we discovered that that dog had already been taken, a little white dog as I recall. We were walking around and all of a sudden there was a dog that just came at us. That dog was a very enthusiastic little dog and she, as it turned out, was also a very, very friendly little dog. I have got to say I fell in love with her almost on the spot. That dog ended up being Bobbidog, and for the benefit of Hansard that is B-O-B-B-I-D-O-G.

Bobbidog has become a major part of our family over the last 10 years. She is 12 now. She is getting on a little bit but she still has that enthusiasm, she still has that love. It does not matter what time I get home in the morning after Parliament or after work, she is there to greet me. Sometimes she is the only one there to greet me, it has to be said, but she is always there and she is always full of love. She is always full of what we need I think in a pet. Well, it is wrong to call her a pet. She is not a pet; she is a member of the family. The fact that my children often accuse me of loving Bobbidog more than I love them is probably just testament to the bond that I have with her. She is quite an extraordinary animal. I am not sure what I would do without her, to tell you the truth. I cannot believe that anybody gave her up to begin with, but I am so glad they did. I am so glad they did because she has given us, and me in particular, 10 years of total loyalty, of total love, and she is just a joy in my life.

Then of course there was another time. I went to the Lost Dogs Home, and this has possibly caused some confusion to Yoda—Y-O-D-A—our cat who we got from the Lost Dogs Home. The cat does get a bit confused from time to time. This could be the genesis of that confusion, picking the cat up from the Lost Dogs Home. But we did get our cat, who our youngest daughter is particularly fond of—other daughters are not so fond of, I have to say. Yoda has become also a very big part of our family.

I have to tell the story of how I picked Yoda out. I went to the fairly big enclosure where they have the kittens, and there was a little white kitten that came over to me at the wire. I put my finger through the wire and the little kitten licked me. I said to the woman who was showing me the animals, 'Can I pick this one up?', and she said, 'Most certainly'. So she picked Yoda up and handed him to me, and he immediately started purring. And I said, 'I will have this one please. Thank

you very much.' If I get an immediate purr out of anything, I am pretty happy, so it was a message to me that this was the cat for us.

I have to say that Lort Smith in particular with Bobbidog were particularly careful about where they sent her. They asked us a number of questions and it took a number of days before they actually agreed that we could have her. I was deliriously happy when they did and I am still deliriously happy now, so I give my thanks to whoever made that decision all those years ago to allow us to have Bobbidog in our family. I now have two daughters, two 14-year-olds, who are threatening this school holidays to become volunteers at the Lost Dogs Home. It concerns me enormously that after even just one day at the Lost Dogs Home our house will be full of kittens and puppies, because I am sure that is on the cards.

Having said all that, I have to say to Mr Meddick that nobody wants to see animals put down—nobody. It distresses me enormously when I think of that. Indeed it distresses me enormously when I think what would have happened if we had gone to Lort Smith 24 hours later, because Bobbidog was on her last chance. Yes, she did have a skin condition, which we are still treating to this very day, but she was on her last chance. If we, as I say, went a day later, it would have been a very different story, and that distresses me very, very much.

We have to come up with a better program to get these animals into loving homes. That is an absolutely crucial part of this. That will involve not just the animal services—Lort Smith, the Lost Dogs Home and the RSPCA, and I am sure there are a number of others. That will involve not just them but it will involve the support of government, it will involve an advertising blitz as it were to tell people that that is where you go. If you want a dog, if you want a cat, that is where you go. Whilst I respect the right of people who are breeders and want a particular breed, I would never do that because I have seen all these animals in enclosures both at Lort Smith and at the Lost Dogs Home and I could not leave them in deciding what sort of pet that I would take on board. That is so important. I think we have to—in fact I know we have to reinforce again and again and again to people that this is what should be done. This should be the first natural thought of everybody who wants a pet: you go to Lort Smith, you go to the Lost Dogs Home, you go to wherever there are all these dogs and cats that need you, and that is really very, very important.

The fact that many are put down is to my way of thinking horrendous and very, very sad indeed. Realistically at this point in time it is done very reluctantly by people. Let us face it: if you work somewhere like this, you have got to love animals. If you did not love animals, you would not work at the hostels and the animal protection organisations. So it is devastating for the staff as well as everybody else that these animals are put down, but unfortunately reality as it is at the moment takes over and you can only fit so many animals in at any one time. That is the simple reality. Nobody—and I have spoken to people in these animal shelters—wants to put an animal down unnecessarily. That is for sure.

My suggestion for Mr Meddick is to work together—to work with these organisations so that together you can come up with programs which are going to not just benefit the animals but will benefit the families who will receive these animals and who will care for these animals. My understanding is that not a lot of speaking goes on. That in itself is a problem. I have spoken to people who work in animal shelters of recent times. I have spoken to them, and they say, 'People need to speak to us. Nobody has spoken to us about this motion.' That, to my way of thinking, is very, very strange. I do not understand why you would not sit down and try to come up with a workable agreement whereby animals can benefit. For example, the Lost Dogs Home has a desexing van which travels around Victoria. It has not so much this year because of the COVID situation, but the Lost Dogs Home has a desexing van. They need another one. In fact they probably should have half a dozen. They already have desexed thousands of cats and they need to continue to do that at a greater level. If the government, Mr Meddick, wants to increase the level of desexing, that would be something that would be positive, that would be productive, that would be proactive and something that would be of great benefit to the community.

I will not speak for too much longer, because I know there are a number of people who wish to speak on this. I know there are a lot of people out there who want to help animals.

Dr Cumming: We do, don't we in the west?

Mr FINN: We do. Yes, my word, we do. There are a number of people who want to help animals, who are in rescue groups around the state, and their enthusiasm and their passion is to be admired. Whether they have

the skills and the ability to match that is another thing altogether. Because the last thing we want to do is to put animals into the hands of people who perhaps do not have the abilities and do not have the skills to match their enthusiasm. That is something that can only harm animals who are put in that position. I do not have any objection to properly approved and regulated rescue groups doing exactly what Mr Meddick has suggested and what this motion is calling for, but I think we have to be very careful that these groups are regulated, they are approved and the people involved do have the skill level necessary to protect and to nurture the animals that we are talking about.

The motion goes on to talk about the trap, neuter, return (TNR) program, which I have to say I find rather interesting. That is something that we need to look at. There are a number of feral cats—

Dr Cumming interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Melhem): Order! Dr Cumming! While Mr Finn is very loud and has got a nice voice, I am having problems understanding what he is saying.

Mr FINN: Yes, well, Dr Cumming is very loud too; we would have to agree with that. The TNR program Mr Meddick has referred to—I would be very keen to find out the possibilities of that, because the actual logistics of bringing that about I have some doubts about. But let us have a look at it and let us see what we can achieve.

We join the government in not opposing this motion. Let us look at the possibilities. Let us look at what can be done to assist cats and dogs in particular and let us ensure that we can go forward in a compassionate and caring way not just for cats and dogs and companion animals but also for those who care for them. Let us not brand those people who are in animal refuges or animal rescue areas. Let us not brand them as being cruel. Let us not brand them in ways that are totally unacceptable. Let us applaud them for the work that they do. Let us applaud them for the work that they want to do if given the resources, if given the support from government and from the community, and I certainly do that today.

If nothing else comes out of today, I hope that a dialogue will begin between the various stakeholders so that we can have a better result for all concerned. We in the opposition do not oppose this motion, and as I say, there are a number of very interesting concepts that Mr Meddick has raised. I am very keen to ensure that each and every one of them is examined,

and I am hoping that we can all go forward together to make life for our companion animals, our cats and our dogs, much better in the years ahead.

**COUNCIL | Constituency questions
28 October 2020**

Bulla tip EPA protection

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan)
— My constituency question is to the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change. An environmental disaster continues to develop on Sunbury Road between Bulla and Sunbury. This morning brought another fire at Bulla tip, and the local community has, quite frankly, had a gutful. It does not accept the minister's assurances that the Environment Protection Authority Victoria has the Bulla tip under control. Locals do not accept that the growing mountain at the tip is good for the environment. Locals do not accept regular fires at the tip are good for the environment and certainly do not accept these fires are good for them or their families. Minister, the EPA has failed local people, and they have no faith the EPA can or will do anything to protect them or their families. Minister, what are you going to do to protect my constituents in Sunbury and Bulla from whatever—and I mean whatever—is happening at Bulla tip?

**COUNCIL | Reference
28 October 2020**

Environment and Planning Committee

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan)
— I rise for the second time today to support a motion moved by a colleague on the crossbench, so it is quite a big day for me. I am quite pleased and very enthusiastic in fact to support the motion moved by Mr Hayes. I commend him for putting this forward, because I think it is a motion that covers a number of areas that do need to be looked at as a matter of urgency, because we are on the precipice here in Victoria at the minute. We are very, very proud of some of our suburbs. We are very, very proud of the planning that has gone into the City of Melbourne over such a long period of time. You just have

to go to Melbourne and compare it to Sydney to see where the planning was. When you go to the CBD of Melbourne, it is very, very well-planned—wide streets, trees, the whole thing. It is just a beautiful place, whereas in Sydney you have got, well, goat tracks going in various different directions at any given time. I think that that just emphasises the importance of planning with regard to how we live our lives and how we want to have those things around us.

I have always been of the view that a backyard is a very, very important thing. I have always had a backyard, apart from when I was living in flats for a little while. But as Mr Barton points out, it is quite hard for many to even get a house, much less a backyard. And when you look at the prices now—they are coming down a little bit, I am told—they are pretty horrendous. As somebody who has one daughter in her 20s and another couple coming up at the rear of the field it concerns me as to what is going to happen to them as they wish to go out and perhaps start their own families and maybe even get married, you never know. Stranger things have happened. It does concern me rather that these barriers will be something that will be a huge problem for them. These are issues that we do have to look at.

I think the environmental issues, the green wedge issues, are huge issues. I will give you an example that is going on at the moment out between Sunbury and Bulla. There is a green wedge out there, and right on the edge of the green wedge they are proposing to dump carcinogenic toxic soil. Now, I would have thought if you were going to dump carcinogenic toxic soil somewhere, you would not dump it next to a green wedge, nor would you dump it next to tributaries which flow straight into the Maribyrnong River. It is quite ludicrous in my view and I cannot work out what the hell is going on there, to tell you the truth. I am going to be speaking about it in a minute in fact during statements on reports, papers and petitions, but I just thought I would mention it now because I think the planning controls in this regard are just totally confusing. In one area you cannot build a house, but across the road you can dump thousands of tonnes of carcinogenic toxic soil. If you can tell me the logic there, please do, because I cannot see it. I just cannot see it. It is very, very odd. The matter at the moment is before the planning minister, and I am very hopeful that he will do the right thing by the people of Sunbury and Bulla and knock this whole deal on the head.

Having said that, I know there are a number of speakers who wish to have their say so I will leave it there, but I do commend Mr Hayes and I look forward to the committee examining the issues that this motion raises and, more importantly, I look forward to the committee finding solutions.

**COUNCIL | Petition
28 October 2020**

West Gate Tunnel

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan)
— I rise to speak on the petition that I presented last sitting week opposing the dumping of toxic soil in Sunbury Road between Sunbury and Bulla at the Hi-Quality premises. My very, very great concern about this proposal is very clear, and I have made it very clear on a number of occasions. It involves the health of thousands and thousands of people. Sunbury is about to explode in terms of its population. Sunbury is about to probably double in size over the next decade or so. It seems to me that it is ludicrous that in an area where young families are moving in and where young couples are moving in to start their lives together, to build their homes and to start their families, up the road you would have a toxic waste or toxic soil dump. It is just extraordinary. I mean, this stuff is carcinogenic. For those who do not understand what that means: it causes cancer. It is dangerous. This stuff should not be near people. But the government is proposing that it be dumped just 200 metres from a new residential estate—just up the road from the Goonawarra estate, just around the corner—

Members interjecting.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Bourman): Order! Down the back there—could we keep it a bit quiet. It is rare that I have trouble hearing Mr Finn, but I am struggling a bit.

Mr FINN: I looked over there and I saw who was there, and I can understand why you were having trouble hearing me. What I am saying is that it is a real concern when this sort of material is being dumped near residential housing, and it is something that concerns me enormously for future generations. It might not come up in this generation, but it will most surely come up in the next. The prospect of kids with cancer in Sunbury and Bulla leaves me just appalled—just horrified at the prospect.

Of course this new proposal that we are discussing will also involve up to 1000 new trucks. Now, I do not know if

it will be every day or every week—I am hearing different figures—but certainly it will be a significant number of new trucks, and we have already got more than enough trucks on Sunbury Road. I am not sure how many members are aware of the Bulla bridge, but that bridge is about 150 years old. It was not designed and it was not built to carry B-doubles and all of these sorts of huge trucks laden with soil. It just was not meant for that. Of course the Bulla bypass is a long way away from what we are hearing—again, on the desk of the Minister for Planning; there cannot be a whole lot of room there at the minute. I am just horrified at the prospect of what will happen if this plan goes ahead.

One question that I am constantly being asked by people in Sunbury is: ‘Where’s Josh Bull in all of this?’ And I have to say, ‘I don’t know.’ Here he is, the member for Sunbury, who got re-elected with a massive majority at the last election, and he has disappeared. We have hardly seen him since. Here we have a major threat to his constituents—to tens of thousands of his constituents—a major health threat to future generations, and Josh Bull is nowhere to be found. He is nowhere to be found. I challenge Josh Bull, and indeed I challenge members in this chamber—all members in this chamber from the west—to join together to fight this thing. I have done it before. I did not get anywhere. I will give it another try. Let us come together. Let us fight this thing together. Let us stop this thing together. Because it is not good for the people of Sunbury, it is not good for the people of Bulla and it is not good for the people of the west that we be regarded as the dumping ground of Victoria. Those days are gone, I hope. They should be gone anyway. What we need to do is we need a united front across all parties and across Independents to come together to fight this thing. Whether we will be able to find Josh Bull in time to do that or not, I do not know. We can only hope. I am an eternal optimist, and maybe we just will. But we do need to come together, we do need to fight this thing and we do need to win. This dumping ground of toxic soil has to be stopped, it must be stopped and I think it will be stopped.

**COUNCIL | Adjournment
28 October 2020**

Police conduct

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I wish to raise a matter this evening for the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. Reignite Democracy Australia is an organisation that has been particularly active lately in campaigning against the lockdown and some of the more severe aspects of the lockdown that have been forced on us by Premier Andrews. It also has a bus which carries messages, and I am sure many of you will have seen that bus. It carries messages which are, well, perhaps not all that complimentary towards the Premier. And I have to say, it is rather catchy.

Mr Ondarchie: The omnibus!

Mr FINN: It is not their omnibus, Mr Ondarchie, but it is a pretty impressive bus nonetheless. Now, this bus is owned and operated by a constituent of mine in Diggers Rest, and he tells me that this bus has been subject to some extraordinary—I think what you could only describe as and call—

Dr Cumming: A microscopic word.

Mr FINN: No, no, no, no. What you would call it is harassment by police. It involves constantly being pulled over, the driver being drug tested and being tested for alcohol, and it even got a canary at one stage. This has been a constant feature of this campaign bus, which is what it is, now for quite some time. It would seem, from what I am told, that there are grounds for the belief that this is a systematic campaign of harassment against this particular campaign. This concerns me enormously.

I have always been a very, very strong supporter of Victoria Police. As members of this house will know, I have been very vocal in supporting the thin blue line here in Victoria, and I have the greatest admiration for those men and women who every day put themselves on the line to protect us. What concerns me enormously is the politicisation of the police force here in Victoria that has been going on now for 20 years. I think what we have seen this year is a sure sign that it has pretty much peaked—hopefully it has peaked. Hopefully it will not get any worse. What I am asking the minister to do is give me a guarantee that this bus to which I refer has not been targeted by police for political purposes. A very simple guarantee from the minister would be appreciated.

**COUNCIL | Constituency questions
29 October 2020**

Hotel viability in lockdown

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — My constituency question is to the Premier. Hotels have always held a very special place in the life of Melbourne’s west. It is tragic to see the impact the Premier’s lockdown has had on some of the most historic pubs in Victoria, many in the western suburbs. The hotels that have not opened cannot make any money under the current restrictions and have opted to stay shut. The longer this partial lockdown continues, the greater the chance more hotels will never again open their doors. Premier, it is abundantly clear that far more than the chief health officer’s advice decides what is restricted and what is not. Will the Premier take into consideration the financial viability of western suburban pubs in his decision-making process?

**COUNCIL | Second reading
29 October 2020**

Worker Screening Bill 2020

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — It gives me some considerable pleasure to rise to speak on the Worker Screening Bill 2020. As members would be aware, I have quite a deep interest and I suppose a deep personal interest in disability services and in particular the rights of people with a disability. I think it first of all has to be said that the overwhelming majority of disability workers are outstanding human beings. They are extraordinary human beings. What they do every day is awe inspiring. It is awesome, it is amazing and it is almost beyond words what they do. I cannot congratulate them and thank them enough for the work that they do. However, there is a small group in the community who would take advantage of such a position to do some pretty dreadful and drastic things to people with disabilities, whether they be intellectual disabilities or physical disabilities or indeed both. These are the people that we must protect against. We must ensure that people with disabilities, who are amongst the most vulnerable people in our society, are protected at all times.

That is what the Worker Screening Bill 2020 is all about, and I am very pleased to say that this is something that all members of the house can agree on. We have come to a common view that the welfare and the protection of people with disabilities is something that should be paramount, as indeed it should. Indeed if this were not something that we could agree on, I think we would all have a lot of problems, to tell you the truth. I think there would be something very, very strange going on. So it is great that this bill is before the house. I might not use the word 'great' very often when referring to legislation from the government, or indeed anything to do with the government for that matter, but I will on this occasion, and I am very pleased to support this legislation today.

The national disability insurance scheme, I have to say, I was very sceptical of. I looked at the proposal for the NDIS around about seven or eight years ago and I thought, 'How on God's earth can this possibly work?'. It was a huge welfare program that was going to cost many billions of dollars, all centred in Canberra. I thought to myself, 'This has got disaster written all over it', and unfortunately there were times when I thought I was right. Some of the NDIS horror stories that I have heard over recent years have been pretty horrific, I have got to say, and the impact on families has been horrendous. But it has to be said that any program of this size—and let us face it, in Australian history there have not been too many; this is one out of the box—there are going to be problems. There will be hiccups, and hiccups in a program that affects so many people are going to create human problems because that is who you impact. The NDIS is about looking after people, so if there is a problem it is going to impact people, and it will impact those people with disabilities and also their families. That is a simple fact of life.

The reason I am speaking today is that I want to tell you my story—our story—of the NDIS. I cannot speak too highly of it. As I am sure many members of the house would be aware, we have a son with autism—pretty severe autism. He is now 19 years of age, and my wife and I had taken it upon ourselves to look after him pretty much on our own up until probably the last 18 months or so. This was not easy, I have to tell you. This was one of the hardest struggles certainly of my life, and I am sure of my wife's life as well. God, it was hard. It was really, really hard. We got to the point where at one stage we did not quite know what we were going

to do next. Fortunately, just in time, the NDIS came along and saved us, and I do mean saved us. What they have done is quite remarkable. Our 19-year-old son has three carers, and I would just like today to put on record my appreciation and my gratitude to Nick, to Bec and to Wil, who over the course of four days every week look after Liam. They are just amazing people. They are just sensational, and the impact that they have had on him and the impact that they have had on us is just extraordinary. I just wish that everybody who was in our position or a similar position to ours could have the benefit of such quality people as Nick, Bec and Wil, because, as I say, they really have had such a huge impact on our lives. I cannot quite put into words the gratitude that I have for them. They are exemplary human beings. I am so grateful for them and also very grateful for the NDIS.

As members would be aware, I am not a big fan of big welfare programs. I am not a big fan of government spending. I am not a big fan of splashing the taxpayers hard-earned, which a lot of governments like to do. Let us face it, they like to do that. We are currently into trillions of dollars of debt at the last look. But this particular program is worth the dollars. If we are going to spend money, let us spend it on something that is worthwhile, and on this occasion the feds have got it right. The federal government is right, and I believe justified, in spending the sort of money that they are spending. And it is taxpayers money; let us talk about that. We hear governments talking about 'We're giving this' and 'We're giving that'—no. That is taxpayers money. What governments do, whether they be state or federal or local, is they give that money back to people, and that is a good thing. They are also directing it in certain ways too of course, and that is a matter of priorities. But I think the NDIS has already proven its worth.

It does still have its problems; I am not denying that for a moment. I speak to people every day who are banging their head against a brick wall, many of them, at the moment. I just say, 'Keep going' and I try to help them find their way through the maze, and it is difficult to do. It is a major challenge but it is worth it. It is worth getting to the other end, let me assure you. If anybody is reading this or listening to this today, let me assure you that it is worth the perseverance. As Winston Churchill once said, 'When you are going through hell, keep going,' and that is the advice that I would give also to parents and to families who are having trouble with the NDIS at the moment.

Of course the NDIS does not just provide support for people with disabilities, it provides support for their families, and one of the biggest issues that I have seen and I have witnessed over a long period of time is the number of families, where they have children with disabilities, that actually break up. That creates another problem that they do not need. They just do not need it. It is hard enough when there are two, but when they split and go their separate ways, perhaps with the acrimony that many splits often create, they have got a problem that nobody needs. Governments, whether they be federal or state, really need to provide a valve that will release the pressure to help families stay together and to help couples stay together and provide the support that their children need, because of course once the family splits asunder the taxpayer has to come in to an even greater extent. Without both parents there it makes it very, very difficult, even more difficult, than what they had previously experienced. The NDIS has contributed enormously to keeping families together, and that is a good thing. That is something that I applaud. I know a lot of people with somebody in their family who has a disability; it is almost like they are all members of my family now. I know a lot of those people and we have been on journeys together, and some of those journeys have been pretty hellish.

The NDIS is something that probably should have happened a long time ago, because it has been so worthwhile and is so worthwhile in helping people through these difficult times. This legislation today ensures not just the continued success of the NDIS but also provides the sort of protections for not just children but adults as well from people who are pretty low, are pretty much undesirable and pretty much should be locked up and have the key thrown away. As far as I am concerned, anybody who takes advantage of somebody with a disability is the same sort of individual who hurts kids or who takes advantage of elderly people. They are just scum. I am not a great fan or a great supporter of capital punishment in every circumstance, but jeez I am tempted. I tell you what, in those situations I am sorely tempted.

Legislation such as this is needed. What a great pity it is needed, but it is needed to protect our kids however old they are, because let us face it—I think it was Dr Bach before who made the comment—you get to a certain age and a lot of parents are afraid to die, not because they are afraid of what is coming in the afterlife or whatever or being eaten by worms or whatever. What they are worried about is what

is going to happen to their children after they have gone. Many an elderly parent has said to me over the years, 'I cannot afford to die. What is going to happen to my son?'. Their son might be 60 or might be 70, but that son or that daughter is still the child, and in many instances pretty much acts like their child because they have not grown up in the way that we would expect a normal child to. It is very, very difficult. If the NDIS helps people who have got to a certain age have some peace as they come to the end of their lives, that in itself is a very good thing. That in itself is a major plus. But we must help the person with disability as well because we must always put the person before the disability. That is absolutely important because there are some people that regard people with disability as second- or third-rate citizens. That must and should never be the case. Disability should never, ever be a death sentence, no matter how old the child is. I support this bill. I commend it to the house, and I look forward to the Governor signing it into law.

**COUNCIL | Adjournment
29 October 2020**

Rothwell housing development, Tarneit

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I wish to raise a matter this evening for the attention of the Minister for Local Government. It concerns an email that I received from Preet Singh, who hopefully will be representing a good number of people down in Werribee if he wins a spot on the council. That is currently being counted at a very slow pace, I have to say. He says:

I am writing on behalf of Rothwell estate Tarneit residents who we have been deprived of basic facilities such as a park for over four years. Several promises have been made and there has been no real progress.

Residents have no open space to enjoy family time or even to go for a walk.

We are not asking for any favours but only what residents were promised. As a rate payer residents are not happy and this email is to register their dissatisfaction.

Mr Singh also included a number of photos which show just how appalling the conditions of some of the areas in the Rothwell estate are, and I have to say it is quite disgusting. The council

has a fair bit to answer for in this regard.

I recall going down to Tarneit, it would be four years ago, with a former Leader of the Opposition to see the community centre down there that had been completely destroyed. It seems that it has gone downhill from there. This is just totally unsatisfactory. Unfortunately it is typical of the way the Labor Party treats its own. This is just what we have come to expect from Labor councils and the way they treat people who loyally vote for them year in and year out. Maybe they will wake up one day. I do not know.

What I am asking the minister to do is to ensure that this situation is rectified. As I say, this has been going on now for some years. It is far from good enough; it is totally unsatisfactory. Nobody should be forced to live in an area with these conditions. The council has a responsibility. The Wyndham council has made certain commitments, has made certain promises, but has not carried those through. Now, given that I have made numerous comments about the Wyndham council over a number of years now—and they do not seem to take much notice of anything that anybody says—I think it is important that the minister makes a phone call or perhaps sends somebody down to visit Wyndham council to ensure that they do get on with the job of looking after the residents and the ratepayers of Wyndham and giving them the fair go that they most surely deserve.

**COUNCIL | Business of the house
30 October 2020**

Adjournment

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I think it is regrettable that this situation has arisen. I think it unfortunate that the Leader of the Government has not been able to provide the house with a good reason as to why this change has occurred.

Ms Symes: You don't want to sit?

Mr FINN: No, I am just saying that this government appears to just make things up as it goes. Everything is done by this government on the run, and this decision that the Leader of the Government has come into the house with today and dropped on us—to change the sitting date—is reflective of a government that does not have a clue what it is doing from one minute to the next. Quite frankly, I do not mind sitting—we will sit every week if you want—but for God's sake will you people get your act together so that

everybody knows what is going on? This is what people across Victoria are calling for—a bit of certainty—and you cannot even get your sitting days right. If you cannot get it right in here, what about all the people out there who are relying on you for certainty to get on with their business, to get on with their lives? That is my objection to this. I think that Victorians deserve better than a government that just makes it up on the run.

**COUNCIL | Production of documents
30 October 2020**

COVID-19

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I rise to support the motion so ably moved by Mr Davis earlier. What this motion is basically calling for is for the Parliament to see what the Premier has based his decisions on. Now, I say 'the Premier has based his decisions on' because it is pretty clear that he has been going alone on this; he has not been consulting anyone. First, he cut his caucus out—he did not want to talk to them about it. Then he cut his cabinet out—he did not want to talk to them about it. And then I think, from what I understand, he pretty much cut out most of his gang of eight, his politburo—he did not want to talk to them either. So he has been calling shots all over the place now for some months, and we do not know what it is based on. We do not know if there is any medical advice, we do not know the role of the chief health officer in all this—that is under a fair bit of speculation at the moment as well, it has to be said—but it is clear that the Premier has taken his nickname of Despot Dan to extremes. He has decided that indeed he is a despot and he can do whatever he damn well likes, and that is something that the majority of people in this state have had a gutful of.

We can talk about polls—and that poll the other day was a very, very odd way of doing things, as we all know—or we can talk about the reality of what Victorians are feeling at the moment. And what they are feeling at the moment is distrust of this government. That is what they are feeling. They are looking at this government and they are saying, 'Can we trust Daniel Andrews? Can we believe him?', and they are saying, 'No, we can't. We can't'. That is something that we must address, and this motion will go some significant way to doing so. If the Premier or the Minister for Health can come up with these documents as they should, if indeed they exist, then that

will settle that for Victorians. That will settle the argument that indeed the decisions were based on health advice and not on some whim of the Premier.

I pointed out earlier today how this government is just going on a minute-by-minute basis and we do not know what it is going to do from one minute to the next. I think a classic example of that was the curfew. Victorians for the first time in our history—indeed for the first time in Australian history—had a curfew imposed on us, and we were told that we could not go out after 8 o'clock or before 5 o'clock in the morning to begin with, and then 9 o'clock. In a moment of generosity the Premier allowed us an extra hour to go about what should be our right to wander the streets. But the Premier thought better. Now, it has been exposed since that that was not on medical advice. There was no advice from the chief health officer about a curfew—none, zero, zilch. This was an idea of the Premier. There was no advice from the Chief Commissioner of Police—although the chief commissioner said it did keep crime down. I suppose it would. If everybody is at home in bed, I suppose it would. If you want to live in a Soviet-style society, I suppose it is ideal. It is sensational. If the Premier wanted to relive the glory days of perhaps Leonid Brezhnev or Khrushchev or some of those lunatics that ran the Soviet Union for so long—if he wanted to relive those years—he was doing a damn good job of it. He was doing a very good job of it because he was telling Victorians without any support from the medical fraternity, without any support from the police, that they did not have the right to walk out their front door, their back door or indeed their side window. They had no right to do that.

There is a case before the High Court of Australia at the moment where the state government has questioned basic rights that we have all taken for granted for a very long time. Now, I think that is horrific. This virus is supposed to threaten our health. It is not supposed to threaten our human rights. It is not supposed to threaten our freedom, but that is what Daniel Andrews has done. That is what he has done, and that has to stop. The people are looking at this government. They are looking at this Premier and they are saying, 'What are you doing to us?'. I walked down the street last night through the city, and it was dead. It is dead, it is crushed, and we do not know why this has happened. This motion is asking for the evidence to back up the decision by the Premier to crush the city of Melbourne. Last night I went to a shop to buy some dinner just before

8 o'clock, and he was closing up—in Melbourne. Closing at 8 o'clock! This wonderful 24-hour city, the greatest city in the world, the most livable city in the world—well, it used to be anyway, until Daniel Andrews got hold of it. What we need is the evidence—

Ms Taylor: There is a global pandemic.

Mr FINN: Look, I do not know what members opposite or Ms Taylor are on about. We are just looking for the evidence to back up the decision-making process. That is all we are asking for. You would think we—

*(Time expired)
Motion agreed to.*

**COUNCIL | Constituency questions
30 October 2020**

Toxic soil dump approval

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan)
— My constituency question is to the Minister for Planning. The 3AW Rumour File, one of the more reliable sources of information in this town, this morning reported that Minister Wynne will today sign the permits necessary for the dumping of carcinogenic toxic soil in Sunbury, Bulla, Ravenhall and Bacchus Marsh. This is a monumental decision which will impact many thousands of my constituents. If approved, this will threaten their health, fill their roads with around 1000 extra trucks per day and poison nearby waterways that will impact local flora and fauna—all this without any genuine attempt to consult with those most impacted. Putting aside Labor's clear distaste for Melbourne's west, will the minister defer his decision on this matter until he has listened to the local communities facing most harm from this toxic dumping?

**COUNCIL | Adjournment
30 October 2020**

COVID-19

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan)
— My adjournment this afternoon is for the attention of the Premier. I have received an email from Caterina from Moonee Ponds. She wrote:

I was supposed to be married on May 2nd but due to COVID and the world suffering through this pandemic this could not happen. I myself have been effected by COVID. My family lost our grandmother on July 31st this year.

The whole point of having a wedding was to have our grandparents there and because of COVID I am unable to have this. I have seen first hand how quickly this can take over someone and have them pass away so quickly.

I saw grandmother one last time before the hospital was shut down and no one could see her and she passed away by herself, at this last visit she told me how she was going to get a beautiful outfit to wear at my wedding and she couldn't wait to be there. Even though my family has suffered so much my wedding will be a time for my family and I to gather to not only celebrate my wedding but also my grandmother as we did not get to do so at the time of her passing.

We as brides are asking that we be given some sort of map that is realistic. This pandemic has taken so much from so many people. Allow us to celebrate in a "COVID SAFE" way. So many of us are suffering mentally allow us to have some joy in our lives.

I hope you hear me.

I think Caterina is in a situation that many, many brides are facing this year. It is a dreadful situation for many of them, and clearly it is having an impact on so many people in that position. So I am asking the Premier to not just hear Caterina; I am asking him to act on what Caterina has requested. I am asking him to allow Caterina and those like her to be married in the way that they desire.

**COUNCIL | Questions without notice
10 November 2020**

Remembrance Day

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan)
— My question without notice is to the minister for veterans affairs. Minister, tomorrow, as we know, is Remembrance Day, and veterans and communities would normally be marking the occasion by gathering at 11.00 am for a short ceremony and a minute's silence. This year is different because of COVID-19, and everybody understands that. However, how is it fair that only 10 people are allowed to gather for Remembrance Day outside at a cenotaph and yet 50 can gather outside for funerals or 50 can gather outside for religious ceremonies? On what health advice is this unfair treatment of veterans based?

Supplementary question

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I concur with the minister when he says that we sincerely hope that we never have to face this again, but tomorrow we do. Minister, did you speak to the Premier or the chief health officer on this matter and put the case for veterans? If you did, what evidence did they offer, and if you did not, why not?

**COUNCIL | Constituency questions
10 November 2020**

Western suburbs tree planting

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — My constituency question is to the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change. An article came to my attention just yesterday which reports that huge swathes of our suburbs are in danger of becoming virtually unlivable, with residents jumping from aircon to aircon via a car with aircon to avoid the searing heat. Green cover should be managed as critical infrastructure alongside communication, transport, water and the electricity network, RMIT Centre for Urban Research Associate Professor Joe Hurley said. What concerns me greatly is that green cover in Wyndham, which includes Werribee, is the lowest in Australia. Jostling for the position of lowest in Australia are Melton, Maribyrnong, Hobsons Bay and Hume. This is an enormous worry to those of us who live in that part of the world, and I ask: what is the minister doing to ensure more trees are planted in Melbourne's west?

**COUNCIL | Members statements
10 November 2020**

Local government elections

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — Elections, as we know, can sometimes be very disappointing, and I am very saddened to see that Rebecca Gauci Maurici is not able to continue in her role as a councillor for the Moonee Valley City Council. She has done a brilliant job, and I thank her and pay tribute to the work that she has done over the past four years. However, the great news is that in the City of Melton Moira Deeming and Julie Shannon have joined Cr Goran Kesic on the council, and that is exciting

for all involved. In Brimbank we have two outstanding councillors joining in Maria Kerr and Trung Luu, who I have known for some time. They are going to be I know just brilliant councillors, representing the real interests of the people of Brimbank. That will be a marvellous thing. I should also mention that in Hume, Jim Overend, a well-known Craigieburn identity, has been elected to the Hume council, which I find very exciting. But that is perhaps just shadowed a little by the fact that the man I voted for, Trevor Dance, in the Jacksons Creek ward of Hume council, also won. I was delighted to vote for him, I was delighted to see that he won, and I know that when it comes to a whole range of issues he will not let us down.

**COUNCIL | Second reading
10 November 2020**

Justice Legislation Amendment (Supporting Victims and Other Matters) Bill 2020

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I rise to speak on the Justice Legislation Amendment (Supporting Victims and Other Matters) Bill 2020. I rise to speak as the father of three young ladies, two of whom in fact are turning 15 today. It is days like today that make me think back to when they were born, how small they were at seven weeks premature and how I would be able to hold them in the palm of each hand because they were so small. Of course we have nurtured them, we have cared for them, we have loved them now for 15 years, if not more, and the prospect of anything happening to them or the prospect of anything happening to our other daughter is just horrendous; it is just horrific. It is the worst possible thing I could imagine. I would much rather something happened to me than have something along the lines of what we are talking about happen to them.

I recognise the extraordinary contributions that have been made today by people who clearly are not used to speaking in public about their own experiences. I want to congratulate them and I want to thank them, particularly Ms Maxwell and

Mr Limbrick, because they were really gutsy efforts. I want to say 'Well done' to you, Mr Limbrick and Ms Maxwell, and give you a pat on the back, because that would not have been easy—in fact it clearly was not easy.

Sometimes—and I am sure we have all done it over the years—people look at this place, they look at Parliament House in Canberra and they look at our politicians, federal and state, and local government too, quite often, and they just shake their heads and say, 'What the hell are they thinking about?' This bill is one such instance. Yes, this bill has some good parts—absolutely, no question about that. Under normal circumstances I would not be speaking on this bill. Under normal circumstances I would be very happy just to let it go through and do what it is supposed to do. But it is not going to do what it is supposed to do. It is going to cause more pain and it is going to cause more suffering for those who have already had more pain and more suffering in their lives than can, under any circumstances, be tolerated. That is why I am speaking today.

I am only going to speak briefly, but I want to say to the government and particularly to the Attorney-General and to the Premier in possibly the only language they understand what this legislation will do to them. Now, we all agree that this legislation has some good components. We all agree that this legislation if handled properly would have been quite acceptable to just about everybody in this house. But do you know what? If this legislation goes through as it currently stands, do you know what it will be remembered for? It will be remembered for shutting up the families of victims. All of those good parts of the bill will not be remembered. They will not be remembered by the lawyers or the victims or the public or anybody else. They are not going to remember that. This government will be remembered for shutting down the families of victims. I just put it to you in those simple terms. If that is the way the government wishes to be remembered by the people of Victoria, keep going the way you are. Push this thing through the Parliament. But if you are serious about providing legislation which is going to do what you say you want it to do, let us put it aside for a minute. Let us fix it and let us come back with something that we all agree on and that the government will actually be applauded for, so that the people of Victoria will actually say, 'That is something that the government has done that we agree with and is good.' It is up to the government. I urge them to do that.

In the meantime I will certainly be supporting Mr O'Donohue's amendments. I just ask the government to think about it. If they are not thinking about the families, if they are not thinking about the victims, think about themselves and the political implications of this legislation, because if this bill is passed in its current form, the government will not come out of it well, and that is something that they probably—well, maybe they are not aware of it; I do not know—should consider. I hate to put it in those terms, but we are dealing with a government that seems to have only one Achilles heel, and that is a political one. If I do not point out the political implications of what this legislation will do to them, then they are probably not going to be interested in anything else I have to say. I urge the government to rethink it. I urge the government to take this legislation back to the drawing board and to bring it back when it is fixed, we can all agree to it and we can provide a satisfactory result for every Victorian. And that very much includes the families of the victims of the sorts of dreadful, dreadful crimes that we have spoken of today.

**COUNCIL | Adjournment
10 November 2020**

West Gate Tunnel

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan)
— I wish to raise a matter this evening for the attention of the Minister for Transport Infrastructure. I want to thank her for her reply to my adjournment matter from 17 March this year, St Patrick's Day, which I have just received today. It was very good of her. It has only taken, what, seven months to respond to my request. I say it is a response because it is certainly not an answer. It has certainly not given me anywhere near what I was requiring. What I have asked for is that I have asked the minister to tell me and indeed to tell the community if any toxic soil has been dumped in the western suburbs of Melbourne and, if so, where.

Now, the minister has not even come within a bull's roar of answering that or given any sort of reasonable answer at all. She has been a smart bottom on a couple of occasions and has had a couple of cracks, and that is all very well and good, but I tell you what, it does not do much for the people of the western suburbs of Melbourne who are having toxic soil dumped on them at a great rate and who anticipate having a lot more. It does not do much for the

people of the western suburbs who are having a thousand trucks a day roaring through their roads and their streets. It does not do much for the people of the western suburbs of Melbourne who are concerned about what this PFAS material—this vile, dreadful, toxic soil—will do to their children in years to come. It does nothing for the peace of mind of the people of the western suburbs to have the minister be smart in the way that she likes to think that she is.

So what I am doing tonight is I am asking the Premier—sorry, I am asking the minister. She might be. There is a Freudian slip. She may well be the Premier very soon. I understand Dan's got the parachute on, so she may be Premier soon. What I am doing is I am asking the minister again to tell me tonight, and indeed tell the community, if any toxic soil has been dumped in the western suburbs of Melbourne and, if so, where. This is not a difficult question. A yes or no and then a geographic location will be fine. I just want to know what we are dealing with here. I would greatly appreciate it, as would hundreds of thousands of people throughout the western suburbs of Melbourne, if the minister would come clean, if the minister would give us a straight answer—yes or no. Have you been dumping this crap on us?

**COUNCIL | Adjournment
10 November 2020**

Responses

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan)
— President, as you are aware, ministers are given 30 days to respond to adjournment matters. I draw your attention to a matter I raised for the Attorney-General on 18 June this year, which is almost five months ago now, and to which I am yet to receive a response. I would like to know if indeed I am going to get one, and if so, when?

**COUNCIL | Motions
11 November 2020**

China Trade

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan)
— I rise to support the motion so very ably put by my friend and colleague Mr Davis today. In doing so I congratulate Mr Limbrick on his contribution, because I too have had a great deal to do with Falun Gong practitioners and their associated supporters now over a number of

years, and they are good people. They are very good people. They do not deserve the persecution and they do not deserve the treatment that they have received from the barbarians in Beijing, and that is the flat-out truth. It is a disgrace, the way that they have been treated, and of course they are not alone. When you talk about human rights it is not something that you immediately connect with the Chinese government. There are probably—I would say almost certainly—very few governments in the world that are more involved in the violation of human rights than the Chinese communist government. They are despicable in many ways, and I commend Mr Davis on making the point that whilst we are a friend of the Chinese people, and I have many, many, many Chinese friends, the Chinese Communist Party is not one of them.

Anybody who tries to tell you that the Chinese communist government is a friend of Australia is having a lend of you. The fact of the matter is that it is not, and it has shown that of recent months. Putting aside the debate about the genesis of the Wuhan virus and whether it was allowed deliberately to infect the world—some have even suggested that it was part of a Chinese government plan to destabilise the US in the lead-up to the election, but putting all that aside—you have got to wonder why the Chinese communist government reacted so badly when Scott Morrison suggested that we have an inquiry, we ask some questions and we find out what happened. They went berserk, and you can understand why—because if there is a more secretive government, apart from North Korea perhaps, in the world than communist China, you will be hard-pressed to find it.

Of course the Chinese government is not just an enemy of Australia; it is an enemy of its own people. Anybody who shows any form of criticism at all cops it in the neck. There are many, many, many people in prison camps, in jails. There are many, many people who were taken away in the middle of the night and have not been seen since. There are many, many people who have been murdered by the Chinese government for the simple deal of criticising the Chinese regime. It is appropriate, as Mr Limbrick pointed out, that the ABC would be supporting the Chinese Communist Party, because there is a pretty strong link there as far as I am concerned. Maybe—not maybe, definitely—the sooner we pull the plug on the ABC, the better we will all be in this nation as well.

I am not going to go on forever today, because I know there are a number of people who wish to have their say and I will be considerate in that regard. But I am very concerned about the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) that has been put up by the Andrews government. The Premier seems to regard himself as some sort of Chinese communist best friend or something similar to that. I am not sure what it is. Until the Wuhan virus hit he had spent more time in China than he had in country Victoria, and that tells you a fair bit about where his priorities are. What I am very concerned about is that the Premier of this state is selling our future. He is selling Victoria's future, and that is something that every single member, whichever side we are on, should be deeply concerned about. I do not want our future owned by the Chinese Communist Party. That is not on. That is not an option. I do not want in any way, shape or form my children or my grandchildren being controlled by the Chinese Communist Party, and that is my very deep concern. That is a very real possibility, indeed a probability, if Mr Andrews continues down this track.

I know there are huge number of people in the community who are equally concerned. It is certainly an issue to which, when it was first raised about I suppose 12 or 18 months ago, the reaction in my electorate was huge, because of course there are a number of people in the west of Melbourne from China, from Vietnam, from a number of communist nations. They have come here to Australia for freedom. They have come to Australia to escape the communists. They do not want our Premier selling our state and our future—and their future—to the Chinese Communist Party. That is the last thing they want, and they are genuinely afraid of that because they have seen communism firsthand and they know how totally and thoroughly evil it is. So I have given them a firm commitment that I will fight BRI in every way that I possibly can. I will do that with every fibre of my being because this is something that is so very, very important.

China has shown over recent times that it cannot be relied upon for trade—or for anything else for that matter. We have to find new markets. We have to go out beyond what we have traditionally done and find those markets. They are out there. We need to do that because, as I say, we just cannot rely on China.

I find it disappointing, but not surprising, that the government is not supporting this motion today. We know the connection between the Andrews government and the Chinese

Communist Party, so it should not surprise anybody that the government of Victoria does not in any way wish to upset their communist overlords in Beijing. That is not surprising to anyone, but certainly it is very, very disappointing. I commend Mr Davis for this motion. I think it is an extremely important motion, and I urge all members of the house to give it their full support.

COUNCIL | Constituency questions 11 November 2020

Sinclairs Road, Plumpton

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — My constituency question is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. Minister, the growth in Melbourne's outer west is putting unprecedented pressure on roads. Roads that were built long ago cannot cope with the traffic numbers clogging these roads today. From Werribee to Sunbury and beyond, traffic congestion is causing major headaches for many thousands of local residents every day. Even those roads that are being upgraded often take what seems like forever, causing greater problems for motorists. There is a list of roads I could direct the minister's attention to, but on this occasion I will ask about one only. Construction on Sinclairs Road in Plumpton was due to be concluded by the beginning of October. It is now approaching the middle of November, and obviously that has not happened. When can locals expect these works to be finished?

COUNCIL | Motions 11 November 2020

Green New Deal

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — Well, it is with a great deal of pleasure that I rise to speak on Dr Ratnam's motion, because what we have heard from Dr Ratnam this afternoon is a wish list the likes of which I do not think I have ever heard in my 21 years in Parliament. It was a hell of an effort. It was a remarkable achievement to come up with that list, and I commend her and I commend her imagination.

The reality, however, might be a totally different thing. Along with many of those things, the many thousands of millions of dollars that Dr Ratnam has just spent—of taxpayers dollars, I should say—I would like to add my own personal list, if I could.

I would like to double the size of my house. I would like to triple the size of my backyard. I would like a brand spanking new Mercedes in my driveway. I would like a holiday house in Lorne. I would! I would love a holiday house down in Lorne. I would like a first-class round-the-world ticket every year. Every year I would like that. That would be wonderful. But you know if I went out and tried to do that, I would have to ask myself the same question that I am asking Dr Ratnam, which is: how the hell do you pay for it? How do you pay for it?

The fact of the matter is that the state is already in more financial trouble than you can poke a stick at. I mean, we were in financial trouble before the Wuhan virus came along. Now we are down the sewer. We are in deep and diabolical financial trouble. Now is not the time to be running around the streets throwing \$100 notes at anybody who looks at you sideways. It is just not realistic. It is wonderful to say, 'I'm going to spend this on this and I'm going to spend another couple of hundred million on this and another half a million on this and another half a billion on this'—it is all very well to say that—but you have got to have the money to be able to do that and you have got to be able to get your hands on the money to be able to do that.

The only way that Victoria, Australia and indeed the Western world will recover from this virus—the only way—is to let business get on with doing business. That is the only way that we are going to get the money to do the sorts of things that Dr Ratnam spoke of, the only way that we are going to create the sorts of jobs that Dr Ratnam speaks of and the only way that we are going to create the sort of prosperity in our society and in our communities that we need to provide the support for those who need it. The only way to do it is to let business get on with business, and I am really disappointed that this motion today does not include any mention of business at all. That is a pity, because without business you have got no taxes and you have got no jobs—you have got nothing. I mean, that is the bottom line. There is only one place that governments get their money from, and that is taxation. That means people who work for a living have to give some of their money away to other people.

Mr Limbrick: And fines, Bernie.

Mr FINN: And fines is another one. That has been described as 'involuntary taxation', or perhaps 'voluntary taxation' might be a better description. Whether it is or not is another thing altogether, particularly at the moment. But the reality is that we

cannot spend the sort of money, and I do not care who is in government, no government can spend the sort of money, that Dr Ratnam speaks of. It is all very well to come in here with your wish list—and I have got my own wish list too, and I could get up and I could spend billions easily—but you have got to be realistic. You have got to look at the realities of what we are facing, and the realities of what we are facing are hundreds of thousands of people out of work and businesses that have hit the wall. Can you believe this—I was down on Collins Street late last night and even Macca's is closed in Collins Street. You would not have thought that a McDonald's franchise in the city would go under, but it has. That is just indicative of how widely this recession that we are having in Victoria is impacting people. Businesses are being hit left, right and centre, and you just have to walk through the city to see how many empty shops there are. You just have to walk through the city to see how many businesses that were going perhaps very nicely earlier in the year are now gone. Just walk down Bourke Street, just between here and Exhibition Street, and you will see them. You do not have to walk very far. They are just across the road from the front steps of this building. These are the issues that we need to exercise our minds on.

The prospect of a Green New Deal I have to say puts a chill down my spine, because no doubt this Green New Deal has been picked up directly from the Democrats in the US. We know that whilst Joe Biden may be President—we do not know yet; that is yet to be decided, but he may be President—the Democrats copped a hit in the House and in the Senate. We know that. The people of America know what the Green New Deal over there is, and I tell you what, if the people of Victoria find out what the Green New Deal is, they will be voting the same way. Can I point out to Dr Ratnam there is a reason that she lost four of her colleagues at the last election. It is because people have had enough of this Green New Deal and 'We're going to make everything wonderful'. It is just nonsensical.

I have to say, I have a vested interest in fighting a Green New Deal. I have a vested interest, because I have a family. I have to pay bills. I have to pay my electricity bill. I have to pay my gas bill. I have to pay a variety of bills—food bills—and everything will be impacted by the cost of energy if we go down the path that Dr Ratnam speaks of, and that is something that does concern me.

And interestingly enough the people in the inner city that Dr Ratnam represents are not the ones that are going to cop it in the neck; it is the people in the outer suburbs, the workers, the people that the Labor Party used to represent years ago. They are the ones who are going to suffer as a direct result of what Dr Ratnam is proposing.

I am going to move a couple of amendments to this particular motion, and I would ask that they be circulated. I move:

1. Omit paragraph (1).
4. In paragraph (5)(g) omit 'wildlife.' and insert the following in its place:
'wildlife; and
(h) significant infrastructure projects, including transport infrastructure, particularly projects that are shovel-ready with completed and available business cases, that can generate jobs quickly.'

The amendments are very clear. The first amendment that I moved is:

1. Omit paragraph (1).

That I think is self-explanatory. I think that that is something that makes sense. That is something that is not going to scare the horses. That is something that will give business confidence that they are not going to be sacrificed on the altar of the Green New Deal. If we can remove the Green New Deal from the motion, it automatically makes it far more acceptable to us all, and that, I think, is a major plus. The second amendment, which I did not move, is:

2. Omit paragraph (3) and insert the following in its place:
'(3) further notes increasing unemployment due to the COVID-19 pandemic;'

We know that the COVID pandemic has caused untold damage right through the world, and we are no different. This is something that we as a Parliament should be directing almost our entire attention to at the moment. This is something that we have got to drag this state back from. Victoria has suffered enormously as a result of this pandemic. It has suffered a lot more, I have to say, from the policies of a government that has absolutely crushed small business in this state and has crushed the economy in Victoria. So we are going to have to put our considerable energies and concentration into restoring the economy that the Andrews government has crushed.

I think it was Dr Ratnam who was talking about patting us on the back for coming back from the second wave. Of course we know the second wave was

caused by the Andrews government when they absolutely, totally stuffed up the hotel quarantine procedure, and we are now seeing somewhat of a farce of an inquiry going on, not being able to tell us exactly what happened. So nobody knows anything, but what we do know and what Victorians know is that the mess that we are in now, the great lockdown that we had for months and months and months—the greatest and longest lockdown of anywhere in the world—was caused by the Andrews government's stuff-up. That is something that Victorians know, and they want to know that the government is not going to take it out on them again.

They have suffered. Victorians have suffered for months as a result of what the Andrews government did, and they want policies which are going to give us a brighter future. They do not want policies which are going to put us into the toilet bowl and flush us—because that is what all this spending will do. I do not mind a bit of spending. In fact I said yesterday we should have more trees. I do not know if Dr Ratnam heard this, but I said yesterday that we should have more trees in the western suburbs. There were a few people that expressed surprise that I might be saying that, but I like trees. One of my favourite places in the world is the Otway Ranges, and I love all that stuff. But the fact of the matter is you have got to get your priorities right, and at the moment our priorities are looking after those who have been hit so very, very hard by the lockdown. We have to get our priorities right, as I say, and we must ensure that those who can actually get us out of this mess are allowed to do that.

Now, if we need to give a little bit of money—and I say 'a little bit of money'—to business to get them out of the mess and to help them to achieve what we are all on about, then so be it. But until such time as we have the amounts of money that Dr Ratnam speaks of, as far as I am concerned it is a no-go. So the opposition will be opposing the motion and indeed supporting—I hope, anyway—the two amendments that I have put up.

Members interjecting.

Mr FINN: Well, you can never be sure in this caper, can you? But I am fairly confident that they will be supporting amendments 1 and 4, and I urge the house to do likewise.

Bulla Bridge

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — My constituency question is directed to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. I have often spoken in this house about the importance of the Bulla Bridge. This bridge links the Melbourne Airport and Tullamarine Freeway with Sunbury and beyond to the Macedon Ranges. On the all-too-frequent occasions the bridge is blocked by a traffic incident thousands of motorists are sent scurrying onto country roads that will eventually get them to their destination. It is far more than just a minor inconvenience. This bridge is over 150 years old and not built to carry the extraordinary traffic load it now does. Minister, I am informed that last week the Bulla Bridge developed a crack, causing great concern to many locals. This crack was, I am again informed, not attended to by the minister's departmental agency—again a matter of grave concern. Minister, will you ensure the Bulla Bridge is put on a priority watchlist before it collapses?

COVID-19

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I wish to raise a matter this evening for the attention of the Premier. Now, Victorians this year have had it pretty tough. It has been very, very, very difficult for I think the overwhelming majority of Victorians, and of recent times we have seen a partial opening up of our state. We have seen retail, we have seen—

Ms Crozier: Smashed.

Mr FINN: Well, retail was smashed. It was indeed. But we have seen the surviving retail sector start to reopen. We have seen some of the sporting clubs and some of the gymnasiums open up. We have seen some of the hotels and some of the hospitality areas start to open up as well. But there is one area in our society, one sector of our society, that has not had the benefit of the sort of relaxation of restrictions that so many others have had.

Last week I met with a delegation of Christian pastors and ministers from the western suburbs of Melbourne. They expressed their very deep concern to me that they were being discriminated against for whatever

reason. They were not getting a fair go because they were not allowed to meet in congregations. The churches were not allowed to resume even if socially distanced and under control in that regard. They are not allowed to expand as many other sectors of the community have done. And of course it is not just a question of discrimination against churches; it is discrimination against those using synagogues, using temples and of course using mosques. It is something that does cause me very great concern. Any thought that government would be discriminating against any religion is one thing, but for a government to be discriminating against all religion is pretty outrageous. Some might say that is even handed, but I think it is pretty disgraceful, actually. So what I am asking the Premier to do is to allow religious freedom again in Victoria. What I am asking the Premier to do is to allow folk to gather in churches, in synagogues, in temples and in mosques, keeping the rules of the chief health officer but at the same time able to worship, able to continue their religious practices, so that this apparent discrimination will end as soon as possible.

Parental attendance at schools

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — My constituency question is to the Minister for Education. Minister, I have been contacted by a number of constituents concerned about the dilemma facing them and their children. The problem surrounds those parents whose children are starting school for the first time next year. As things currently stand parents are not allowed at schools at all. Parents tell me that they are not even allowed to attend transition sessions. There is a huge question mark over whether they will be able to even take their preppy to school when it begins next year. This is causing great distress to parents and children alike right across the western suburbs. Minister, will you provide assurances to my constituents that this dreadful situation will change come February?

COVID-19

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — Legislative Council Electronic Petition:

The Petition of certain citizens of the State of Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Council the harsh and unjustified extended COVID-19 lockdown measures which have significantly impacted the multibillion-dollar wedding industry.

Many couples have now postponed their wedding for a third time, causing financial hardship. These couples have been unable to make changes to their wedding date and have lost deposits from multiple vendors—all costs that can't be recuperated. The mental impacts are obvious and many couples and their families have been overwhelmed by the loss of years of planning and finances. There has been no roadmap or indication as to what the future of weddings will look like.

The extended lockdown has caused supplies and vendors loss of income, or in some cases trading has ceased completely. No consideration has been made for this sector.

Community transmission and case numbers have reduced significantly. The current restrictions on any celebration, including weddings, has meant that couples are unable to start their life together. The current restrictions have no consideration for cultural or religious values whereby some couples are not permitted to see each other alone or start a family until they can be married.

We are not willing to accept harsh and unjustified restrictions which do not allow for any celebration. We want a wedding without masks. We are willing to implement COVID-safe measures at venues including documented guest lists, prior COVID-testing and the use of hand sanitiser. The options are endless yet have been completely disregarded and not even considered. The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Council call on the Government to urgently outline a roadmap for re-opening the wedding industry, including the implementation of a COVID-safe plan to allow small family run businesses to return to operation and generate revenue.

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

West Gate Tunnel

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan)
— Yesterday two great myths were smashed for all time. Labor likes to say it cares for the west. We can now say without any fear of contradiction that that is a monstrous lie. Labor also likes to say it cares about the environment, another monstrous lie. The decision by the Minister for Planning, Dick Wynne, to give the go-ahead to the dumping of carcinogenic toxic soil in Ravenhall and Bacchus Marsh buries both myths. It is a despicable decision that shafts locals in the west and presents ongoing danger to them and their families. Never again can Labor lay claim to being the party of Melbourne's west. Never again can Labor lay claim to my constituents as their own. Never again can Labor put up any pretext that it cares for the environment in the west. Locals are furious at this decision, and they should be. And so am I. Daniel Andrews was warned years ago about this toxic soil, and he has now reaffirmed his view that the western suburbs are the dumping ground of Melbourne. He also reaffirms his place in history as the worst Premier in Victoria's history. The people of the west will not forget, and nor will we forgive the crime committed against us by this evil Andrews government.

Energy Legislation Amendment (Licence Conditions) Bill 2020

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan)
— In rising to speak to the Energy Legislation Amendment (Licence Conditions) Bill 2020, I cannot help but make the observation that of all the stuff-ups that this government has been involved in over the past six years energy is probably its greatest, because without energy, society does not work. Business does not work, families do not have the use of energy for their purposes and a whole range of people in our society just suffer as a result.

It is hard to believe that just six years ago Victoria had the cheapest and most reliable electricity in Australia. How things have changed. Now electricity bills are through the roof—through the roof. My electricity bill last quarter was approaching \$2000, and that was to my way of thinking just outrageous—and we were only using what we needed to just to keep warm, basically. But that is the norm these days. If you stay warm during winter, by God you are going to pay come spring, because that is the way that this government has set things up. And that is a great tragedy because, as I said, we did have the cheapest and the most reliable. Now come summer we know we are going to have blackouts. We know that when it gets to 35 or 36 degrees—sometimes even less—large chunks of our power grid are going to fail. We know that thousands and thousands of people, if not hundreds of thousands of people, will be stuck in the dark in the heat because the power system has failed.

We know that gas is not really an option, because this government does not want to explore, does not want to find gas. It was interesting to listen to the President-elect—maybe—when he said a number of times during the campaign that he would never stop fracking. Now, over here of course that would be sacrilege. That would be something that you would be put up against the wall and shot for in the ALP of course, but over there Mr Biden said there was no way—no way—that he was going to stop fracking. Perhaps the left in Australia and the left in America might like to have a chat at some stage and see if they can get their act together.

I do not know whether fracking is the answer or not, I have to say. I do not think it is probably all that necessary here at the moment. But we most certainly do need the research, we do need the exploration necessary to find conventional gas. Why on God's earth we are not doing that I have no idea. That is just another part of the ratbag ideology of this extreme left-wing government. That is a great pity to me and a great pity to the people of Victoria, and particularly to families in Victoria.

As I said before, my power bill was through the roof. When you are living on a budget, when you are struggling to get by and you are paying your mortgage or you are paying your rent, you have got to pay your food bill—you have got to pay a whole range of bills. You have got kids going to school, and that is not cheap. Even in the so-called free system it is not cheap. So when you get a power bill for \$1000, \$1500,

\$2000, that is a giant whack for any family. That is something that affects families in a very real way in this state. I think it is very sad that the Premier and the government do not recognise that—that they do not accept the suffering that families go through as a result of these extraordinarily high prices. It is a great tragedy that the government does not accept that this really hurts families.

Of course it is not just families. I have been hearing for some time now, the last few years, of elderly folk who do not get out of bed in the morning. They stay in bed all day, or perhaps if they have to go out in the morning to get their shopping they will come home and go straight to bed. It is the only way they can keep warm, because they cannot afford electricity. They cannot afford heating. They cannot afford electric heating; they cannot afford gas heating. What sort of society are we living in? What sort of government do we have in this state that allows that to happen? These are elderly people who have perhaps worked all their lives, paid taxes all their lives, raised their families, done all the right things all their lives, and this government treats them in this way when they get old. That is just appalling.

I have got to say to the house that that is not an irregular event. That is something that happens all too often, where elderly people just cannot afford to get out of bed in winter, and that is a tragedy. What they must go through in summer when it gets up to 35 degrees or 40 degrees you fear to think. I am sure there are some who do not actually make it through that, because that heat would actually kill them. You just have to go down to the local shopping centre, the local cinemas perhaps or somewhere that is air-conditioned, to see aged people gathered in numbers to escape the heat because they cannot afford to have any cooling in their own home. As I said, what sort of a state are we living in? What sort of a government do we have that allows that sort of thing to happen?

Then of course you have the unemployed or perhaps those who are infirm, those who are disabled. They are struggling, very much so. They are, I suppose, the traditional battlers. They are the ones that I am thinking of today, because they are the ones who find it almost impossible to pay all these extraordinary bills. The Labor Party like to talk about the need to look after the disadvantaged in the community, but then they slug them with a power bill the size of which a horse could not swallow. It is quite extraordinary in its own way

that the Labor Party thinks in the way that it does. So if the Labor Party was fair dinkum, it would put ideology to one side and it would look after those people who are battling to pay their bills, those people who are living in fear of a postman coming and getting one of those bills that I spoke of just a moment ago.

Then of course we have the impact that these extraordinarily high power prices, energy prices, have on small business. Now, it has been said quite often this year that small business has really suffered. Everybody has felt the impacts of the Wuhan virus, there is no doubt about that, but the small business community have particularly felt it, because it has really hit them. I was a small business man—a very small business man—some years ago before I came into this house, and I know what it is like to wait for the next cheque to arrive, to wait for the next payment, and pray that it might not be too far away. These small business people, they are the heroes—the national heroes in fact—of our economy. Without them we would not have an economy; it is as simple as that. Small business employs more than anybody else and small business should get a better go from government than it does, and to have it being hit with these abominable power prices is just something that should not be tolerated, because every time a small business operator goes broke, every time a small business operator closes his or her doors, jobs are lost.

I will put this in ways that members opposite might understand. If you do not have employers, you do not have employees, and if you do not have employees, you do not have union members. That might be the only thing that will impact members opposite if I appeal to, well, I suppose their base self-interest. That is what it is about—the preservation of jobs, the preservation of these small business people and flowing through of course to the union movement.

So it is just horrendous, and I go around and I speak to small business people all the time. Unfortunately I have not been able to get out as much this year as I had been last year. Last year I travelled a fair portion of Victoria and spoke to small business operators one on one about the problems that they were facing, and I think just about every single one of them said to me the cost of energy, the cost of power, was something that was knocking them around chronically. But this government does not care about that. This government does not care, and that shows when these people in small

business are impacted, and it is just dreadful.

We have the situation now where many small business operators and many business operators generally are preparing to flee Victoria. They are preparing to head interstate or indeed offshore. They have had enough, and they can see what is coming. They can see what is coming in Victoria, and after today I think we can all see what is coming in Victoria, and it will not be pleasant. I suppose it is very sad to see business, to see jobs, fleeing Victoria, but in their situation you can hardly blame them. With a government that is as irresponsible, that is as out of control as the Andrews government it is little wonder that business wants to head north, south, east, west—anywhere as long as they get away from the Victorian government.

It should be remembered that one of the biggest reasons for the price rises, the savage price rises of which I speak, was the closure of the Hazelwood power station. This was a classic case of politics by the Andrews government, and I see Ms Taylor over there waving her arms in the air, and I suspect we have got another classic performance coming here. This could be particularly good, so I am looking forward to that. It might even keep me awake. That will be a very good thing, so that will be good. But the fact is the Andrews Labor government was elected on the promise of closing down Hazelwood, and that is what it did. They went out of their way to deliberately close the Hazelwood power station and remove a quarter of our power capacity. Now, if you remove a quarter of our power capacity, of course prices are going to go through the roof and of course we are going to have blackouts. Of course that is going to happen.

But ideology with this government comes before all else. They do not care about families. They do not care about old people. They do not care about the poor. They do not care about small business. They do not care about jobs. They just care about pushing their ideological barrow, and they do not care what impact that has on people, ordinary folk here in Victoria, whoever and wherever they may be—all impacted, all hit hard, by policies from a government that is so wrapped up in its own ideological agenda. It is very hard to understand how they can do that to people who in many cases voted for them. I talk about the western suburbs; you should see the impact these policies have in the western suburbs. Yet the people in the western suburbs largely put them there. It is hard to understand, as I said—very hard to understand—but

that is the reality of life in Victoria in 2020, where hard left ideology is more important than the people of Victoria. I look forward to having a government soon where we will put people before politics.

**COUNCIL | Adjournment
24 November 2020**

Western suburbs tree planting

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan)
— My adjournment matter is for the attention of the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change. The house may recall—indeed the minister may recall—that in the last sitting week I asked the minister what she was going to do to increase the number of trees in areas of the west such as Wyndham, Brimbank, Melton and even Hobsons Bay, and I have been thinking about that a great deal since I asked that question around two weeks ago. I have long been annoyed at the description of the eastern suburbs as the leafy green suburbs. I know many suburbs in Melbourne's west that also are green and leafy, but we desperately need to make it more. And as I pointed out in my constituency question a couple of weeks ago, there are a number of areas—particularly new developments, which are going ahead at a great rate of knots in the west—that are hardly treed at all. Their houses are built and they have a road and footpath, and that is about it.

What we need is a comprehensive and intensive program to ensure that more trees are planted throughout the western suburbs of Melbourne, because not only does it enhance the aesthetics of the local area but of course it also, as has been pointed out, does lower the temperature. With summer coming up that would be a very good thing, particularly in the west, because it does get mighty hot in the western suburbs of Melbourne, and this would be something that we could do to assist local people in fighting that heatwave that inevitably comes every summer. So what I am doing is suggesting to the minister that we work together. People say that politicians do not work together from either side. Well, I am suggesting that on this occasion we do work together. I am suggesting that we put together a program which would see the planting of a large number of trees—I would not go as far as Bob Hawke's billion, I think it was, some years ago, but let us say a substantial number of trees—to be planted in the western suburbs of

Melbourne, and that will ensure that the west is a much better place to live. It will ensure that the air is cleaner in the west. That would also be a very good thing, and I know that a number of people have been worried about that for a long time. So I ask the minister to sit down with me to come up with this program and to put it into effect.

**COUNCIL | Motions
25 November 2020**

Secure Work Pilot Scheme

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I move:

That this house recognises that Victorian small businesses have done it very tough through the COVID-19 pandemic and that now is the wrong time to foist a new tax onto the small business sector already struggling to recover from the lockdown.

To paraphrase Her Majesty the Queen, 2020 has been an annus horribilis for small business in this state. To quote me, it has been a shocker. I doubt if it could have been much worse than it has been. The first wave hit earlier this year, and of course that was particularly hard on many small businesses. But then, when we thought we had it under control—remember back in, I think it was, March or April we had days where we had no new cases at all—we had the situation where this government stuffed up monumentally and allowed the virus back into the community, meaning we had a second wave. As a result of that second wave, the government implemented a lockdown the likes of which we had never seen in this state before, indeed a lockdown the likes of which we had never seen in this country before, and we had a curfew for the first time in the history of this nation—all because the Andrews government stuffed up the hotel quarantine process. And we should remember that. We should remember that at all times. Those people patting Daniel Andrews on the back now should remember who caused the problem in the first place. It was him, it was his government and it was their monumental stuff-up.

That second wave, that horrendous lockdown, that scorched-earth policy, that policy that said, 'We will kill you to save you', was something that destroyed many small businesses in this state, and that is a tragedy. If you do not believe me, can I suggest that you walk down the steps of this

building and go for a walk down Bourke Street. Just go for a walk down Bourke Street, go for a walk down Collins Street—any of the streets in Melbourne, in the city—or go to a suburban shopping centre, whether that be a strip shopping centre or whether it be a mall-like centre. Go to that shopping centre or go to the City of Melbourne and just count the number of empty shops. Count the number of shops that have 'For lease', count the number of shops that have 'Out of business', count the number of shops that have 'Closed' in their windows. It is horrendous.

I have gone around, and I did it again last night; I went down to the city last night and had a look for myself, knowing that I would be speaking in this debate today, and it was horrendous. It was horrendous, the number of shops that were empty, that were vacated and that I have to say are unlikely to see the light of day again. It was good that the Elephant was open, but that was about the only thing in the part of Melbourne that I was in. There were shops galore that were empty.

The opposition, sorry, the government—I am getting ahead of myself here—likes to talk about jobs. They should realise that an empty shop, a small business that has gone out of business, means the jobs are gone. That is the bottom line: the jobs are gone. That is what we are facing in this state at the moment. Small business is the heart of the economy, and we know what happens to us if our heart is playing up. We know what happens to us if our heart is underperforming. Well, it is the same with the economy. It is exactly the same thing. If small business is underperforming, if small business is not doing what we have expected it to do now for such a long time, then the economy will suffer and people will suffer because the jobs will not be there. They will not be there. As I pointed out to members of the government yesterday in language that they might understand, if there are no employers, there are no employees. And if there are no employees, there are no union members, and that might be the thing that just strikes the chord that makes the government realise how important small business is—because they employ people. They give people jobs and then quite often those people—well, perhaps not quite so often as they used to—now can in fact join the union, and that is something that, as I say, may well appeal. In fact I will be staggered if it does not appeal to the instincts of this government.

It is quite astounding, having seen what has happened this year

and knowing that so many small businesses have hit the wall, that so many small businesses are on the brink of hitting the wall and that so many small businesses across this state are hanging on by the skin of their teeth, some of them almost hour by hour waiting for something to happen which will enable them to continue, that in that circumstance we have a government that says, 'Well, we're going to slap another tax on you.' If that does not send more small businesses to the wall, if that does not create more empty shops, if that does not create more unemployed, then nothing will—because that is what this government has set out to do. It is quite extraordinary that, in the circumstances that we have right now, Daniel Andrews would stand up and say, 'Yeah, we know that your backs are against the wall. We know that you're hanging on by the skin of your teeth. We know that you're on the verge of bankruptcy. But we are going to give you another tax anyway. We are going to do you over. We are going to screw you over in fact.' That is what is going on here.

It is going to hit small business savagely, but what else it is going to do is destroy the casual workforce. It is going to destroy almost immediately that section of the workforce that is casual. Of course this is a very deliberate ploy by the government—a very deliberate ploy by the government to destroy the casual workforce because you cannot sign casual workers up, or not without great difficulty. You cannot sign them up to the unions, and that is something that the government cannot cope with. This government would prefer to see people out of work, unemployed, on the bones of their bum—they would prefer to see that—than have them not sign up to the union. That is what this government's priorities are. They would have those people out of work. They would have those people not able to support their families, those people not able to keep their homes. They would rather that happen than have a situation where those people would not be able to join the union—quite an extraordinary set of priorities. I would suggest to you it is a despicable set of priorities for any government to set out to deliberately create unemployment in the way that this government has set out to do over the last couple of days.

It really should not surprise me that it came from the mouth of Daniel Andrews, because what we have seen over the last six years, but particularly over the last 12 months, is absolutely no sympathy, absolutely no empathy for those in the small business community. There is absolutely no

sympathy, absolutely no empathy for those people in small business who put their homes on the line, who put everything they have quite often on the line, because they want to run their own business. They want to be their own bosses and they want to employ people. They want to create jobs. That is why they are the centre of prosperity in this country, and perhaps that is why this government wants to kick them in the guts, or perhaps a little bit lower than what they are expecting. I mean, it is just appalling. I heard the Premier say it the other day. I could not actually believe it. I had to wait for the news to come around an hour later so that I could hear it again before I actually believed it. I could not believe that a Premier of any state, much less this great state or this formerly great state of Victoria, would be so callous, would be so uncaring to announce what he had announced knowing—and he knows—the impact that it will have not just on small businesses and small business men and women but on the casual workforce.

There are a lot of people out there who are very happy to work on a casual basis. That is the way they want to work. They are very keen to do that. They accept that they work on a casual basis, and they get an extra loading for that. They are happy for that to work that way. But no, the government says, 'We can't have that. If you don't accept our rules, if you don't accept unionism, you're out the door, you're on the street. Forget it.' That is what this government is on about. It is just appalling, because what this government should be doing is supporting small business. At the very least it should be getting the hell out of the way of small business and allowing small business people to get on with what they do well. Let them run their own businesses. Let them employ people. Let them do what they want to do in their own businesses. That is at the very least what the government should be doing. But this government is going out of its way to smash small business even further. Can you imagine, after what they have done this year, they want to smash small business even further now.

Business interrupted pursuant to sessional orders.

COUNCIL | Constituency questions 25 November 2020

Return of school parent volunteers

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — My constituency question is to the Minister for Education. Minister, because of the economic circumstances of many families in Melbourne's west and the particular needs of a wide variety of multicultural communities in Melbourne's west, parent volunteers in local schools are even more important than in most other parts of Victoria. Volunteers provide help and support to teachers and students alike—help and support that would not otherwise be available. These volunteers are a crucially important part of education in the western suburbs, and their presence right now is sorely missed. Minister, we need these committed volunteers back in our local schools. When do you anticipate volunteers will be allowed to return to do their wonderful work in Melbourne's west's schools?

COUNCIL | Motions 25 November 2020

Secure Work Pilot Scheme

Debate resumed.

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — Before the extended break I was talking about the government's contempt for small business in this state, and I was pointing out in fact that if we have a strong small business sector, we have a strong employment sector, because small business means jobs. Small business is the biggest employer in Australia. If you do not have that support for small business, then you are not going to have the jobs growth and the jobs strength that we need for a strong economy and indeed for individual families to have security in their lives, and that is something that is very important.

People talk about economic this and economic that, but what it is really about is ensuring that people are able to live the lives that they want to. That is what it is about—that they are able to work, that they are able to be self-sustainable, that they will be able to do what they want to do to pay off their homes, to go on holidays, to do whatever they may want to do. That is what economic strength is all about.

That is what economic strength allows Victorians to do, and unfortunately at the moment there is not a lot of it around. It is a very bleak situation at the moment, and I have a great fear that next year could actually be worse.

What we are seeing is a government that has embarked upon ideological warfare against the small business sector. Despite what the government says, the fact of the matter is that the only long-term, sustainable recovery that we can have is through growth in the private sector and in particular in small business. That is what we should be putting emphasis on, but instead the government is out there spending every cent that you and I have and that our children have, our grandchildren have and probably our great-grandchildren have as well. This spend that they have been trumpeting for the last 24 hours will still be being paid off in probably 80 or 90 years time, such is the debt that we face in Victoria at the moment. That is not going to be good—slugging people.

You have got to remember that the only place that governments can get money from is taxation. Now, whether it is via the federal government or directly to the state government it does not matter. The only place that governments get money from is taxpayers—simple as that. When we talk about this debt that Labor is building up, this \$155 billion debt, that is not the government's debt; that is individual taxpayer debt. I understand every baby now is born in Victoria with somewhere in the vicinity of a \$24 000 debt. That is not something that we should be proud of, it is not something that we should be crowing about, but unfortunately the Premier seems to think that that is the makings of a recovery, which I find quite extraordinary. As I said earlier, I find it quite amazing at a time when we need support for small business or at the very least for government to get out of small business's way.

I recall when I ran my own small business that all I wanted to do, all I wanted to have happen, was for the government to get out of my way and let me get on with what I did. The government should be doing that. If there is some degree of support that can be offered at the moment, that is great, but at the very least they should be getting out of the way of small business. Instead they slug them with a new tax, and that is quite extraordinary. We should be throwing our support behind the private sector. We should be throwing our support very strongly behind small business in particular. We most certainly should not be hitting them

with another tax at a time when they are teetering on the precipice. Many small businesses are teetering on the precipice, and this tax that is being proposed by the government will hurt a lot of businesses and will push a lot of businesses into bankruptcy, out of business, and of course their employees will suffer because they will lose their jobs.

I just want to emphasise, and then I will sit down, that strong business means jobs. I cannot put it any simpler than that. If you want people to have jobs, you will support the business community. If you do not, then at some stage the whole thing is going to come crashing down, and that is the simple fact of the matter. You can build up debts of billions and billions and billions and billions of dollars, but at some stage the whole thing, the whole game of cards, is going to come crashing down around your ears. The only way that we can recover from what we have been through, the only way that we can recover from what we are still going through, is through a strong business community who are working hard, employing people and getting the results that they need to ensure that the recovery for Victoria, the recovery for Australia, is there for each and every single one of us to enjoy.

**COUNCIL | Motions
25 November 2020**

Commercial passenger vehicle industry

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — Wasn't that an experience, listening to Mr Melhem there? He had some interesting words did Mr Melhem. I would love to know what his definition of 'reasonable' is, when he said that what the government had done to taxi operators was reasonable. 'What they had offered taxi operators was reasonable.' He then went on to tell us that there were in fact losers and losers. There were no winners in this. There were losers and losers, and that is the truth. That is the truth. Mr Melhem puts his tail between his legs and heads out the door, and I am not surprised after that performance. He tells us there are losers and losers, and that is the absolute truth. Nobody won here. It was a disgraceful situation, and I recall having some words with people back when we were in government, before 2014, about what was being discussed back then. But I never thought for

a moment we would see what this government did to people who had done nothing but work hard, build up a bit of capital and were preparing for their retirement. I never thought I would see the day where a government would just get hold of people, throttle them and leave them for dead, and that is exactly what happened.

It is appalling, and I challenge anyone—anyone in this house or anyone outside this house who listened to Mr Barton today. I challenge them not to be deeply moved by his story. I challenge them, and I challenge anyone in this chamber or indeed outside this chamber, again, not to be outraged by the injustice—yes, that word 'injustice'—of what happened to Mr Barton and what happened to so many others who lost everything they had at the whim of a government. If it could happen to Mr Barton and if it could happen to taxi owners and operators, why can't it happen to every single one of us? Because once the precedent is set, it can be followed. Once the government sets itself up as judge, jury and executioner, and once it successfully does that, there is nothing that will stop it doing it again and again. That is something that really should stay with all of us. But I want to talk for a moment, and I will not do what Mr Melhem did—I will not go through my full 30 minutes, because I do not think that is necessary. I think Mr Melhem probably could have, to quote Sir Robert Menzies, cut his speech in half and it would not have really mattered which half.

I think that I have seen the pain firsthand. I have seen the agony firsthand of what Mr Barton has spoken about here today. I have spoken to many constituents, and I have many constituents in the west of Melbourne and in the north-west in particular, around the airport, who have lost everything that they owned—many of them, I have to say, who came to this country many years ago from perhaps Greece, perhaps Italy or perhaps even Egypt or somewhere like that. They have come to Australia and they have worked like Trojans ever since they got here. All they have done is they have worked seven days a week. They have not taken holidays. They might have gone back to the old country for a couple of weeks every few years, but apart from that all they have done is worked and prepared to ensure that they would have a retirement that they would be able to enjoy. They looked after their families, paid their taxes—all those things. As Mr Barton says, they did nothing wrong. Now, if they did nothing wrong, how the hell can they be put in this situation

now? How can any government—and I do not care whether it is a Liberal government, a Labor government, whatever government; I do not care what government it is—how can anyone, do that to people who have just worked hard for a living and have done the right thing all their lives?

I have seen the faces of bankruptcy. I have seen the faces of ruin. I have seen the faces—well, not the faces directly but certainly the faces surrounding—of those who have committed suicide, and that is how serious this is. People are not alive today—people have taken their own lives—because they were destroyed by the government. How the hell can that happen in a nation like Australia? How could it happen? But it did. It is quite extraordinary.

When I was chairman—as Mr Melhem referred to—of the Economy and Infrastructure Committee and we did an extensive inquiry into the taxi industry, I remember looking into the public gallery of that inquiry. I think it might have been actually when I first met Mr Barton, if I am not wrong. I saw many anguished faces in that public gallery, men and women who had been screwed over monumentally. You just imagine yourself. You have done very, very nicely—well, put it this way: you have done all right for yourself. You have worked hard and you have built up an asset. You are preparing for your retirement and you think that you are going to be relatively okay. You are going to be comfortable—if not over the top, certainly comfortable. All of a sudden you wake up one day and you are penniless. How do you reckon you would feel? How do you think you would feel?

But that is what happened to these people. They were penniless. They had lost their assets. They had lost their homes. They have still got, many of them, hundreds of thousands of dollars owing on loans. They still have to pay their bills, but all of a sudden they wake up one morning and they have nothing. I saw those people in the public gallery of those hearings that we conducted in this building, and I have to commend those people for their restraint, because I tell you what: if it happened to me, I would not be so restrained. I am not sure what I would do, but I can guarantee I would not be as restrained as those people were. Certainly they were upset, certainly they were emotional. My God, who would not be, having been put through that. But they were restrained and they were dignified. These people are decent, hardworking Australians who do not deserve what has happened to them. They do not deserve that,

but it is something that has occurred and it is something that we should rectify. It is not good enough to say, 'It's happened in the past, there's nothing we can do now.' We are members of the Parliament of Victoria. We do not just have the power to do it; we have an obligation. We have a duty to right wrongs, and this is a wrong that must be righted. It must be righted.

Yesterday we saw a budget where the Treasurer got up and threw billions and billions and billions of dollars in every direction—mainly in marginal seats, but in every direction. Why can't some of that go to compensating these people who have been screwed over by the government? Would that be a fair and a reasonable thing? I use that word again, 'reasonable', Mr Melhem. Would that be fair, would that be reasonable? Too right it would. If we are serious about representing people in this Parliament, if we are serious about doing the right thing in this Parliament, then we should support this motion. Not only should we support this motion, we should follow it up and ensure that the government does the right thing by these people. We should, we must. It is something that I have felt very strongly about for a very long time. It is a sense of outrage at this injustice that has occurred.

I am pleased that Mr Barton said toward the end of his contribution this afternoon that he stands here prepared to rebuild and to help rebuild the industry that he loves. I am delighted that he said that, and I give a commitment here today, very publicly—it does not get much more public than this—to Mr Barton that I stand here willing to help him do that in any way that I possibly can. The deal that you and your fellow operators received stinks to high heaven. It should not be swept under the carpet, it should not be forgotten about. It should be rectified. And those people who have suffered should be given the opportunity to get back what they lost. That is so important. If you want to right a wrong, here is the opportunity to do it, and I urge every member of this house to support Mr Barton's motion.

**COUNCIL | Adjournment
25 November 2020**

West Gate Tunnel

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan)
— I wish to raise a matter on the adjournment this evening for the attention of the Minister for Planning. Can I just say to the minister that the level of disgust, the level of anger

with his decision earlier this week to approve the dumping of toxic soil in Ravenhall, and in Bacchus Marsh as well, is through the roof. The anger is white-hot throughout the western suburbs of Melbourne, and I can assure you the people of Sunbury and Bulla are watching very, very closely to see what will happen in the days ahead. They understand, and we are hearing from sources close to the minister's office, I gather, that Sunbury is going to cop it as well, which is just absolutely staggering. These people have bought homes, and I am talking about people in Caroline Springs, in Deer Park, in areas surrounding Ravenhall, people in Sunbury, in Bulla. Sunbury is about to explode in terms of population, about to double its size, and here we are with the potential of toxic soil being dumped just a few hundred metres from new homes. It is just deplorable, and I cannot understand what the minister was thinking when he approved that. That is what I would like to know tonight, because what I am doing is inviting the minister to join me in the western suburbs at a public meeting to tell the people of Caroline Springs, Deer Park and surrounds, and the people of Sunbury if indeed he goes down that path, directly why he has approved this carcinogenic toxic soil to be dumped in their neighbourhood. They have a right to know.

It is a bit like the debate we had earlier over the taxidivers. They have done nothing wrong—apart from raise their families, pay their taxes and work hard—and all of a sudden we find here a minister, who probably would not even know where Ravenhall or Bulla or Sunbury are, declaring that those are the areas that will get this very dangerous, poisonous toxic soil. It is deplorable, it is despicable and it is something that I have to say as a representative of the western suburbs just sickens me to my stomach. It is horrendous what the minister has done. This is a shocking decision, an appalling decision. I am asking the minister to accompany me, to look those people in the eye and to tell them why they must carry the weight of this poisonous toxic soil.

**COUNCIL | Constituency questions
26 November 2020**

Toxic soil dump public meeting invitation

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan)
— My constituency question is to the Minister for Planning. Minister, the people of Melbourne's west are appalled and deeply angered by your decision to give the go-ahead to the dumping of carcinogenic toxic soil at Ravenhall. The people of Sunbury and Bulla are fearful of an upcoming decision that may see Sunbury Road turned into a toxic soil dump. Locals have many concerns they feel have not been listened to. They have many questions as to why their area would be chosen to have this poisonous soil dumped. The time for genuine consultation is now well past. Minister, if I were to hire a venue in Melbourne's west and invite locals along to express their concerns and ask their questions, would you attend such a meeting with aggrieved residents to hear those concerns and answer their questions?

**COUNCIL | Constituency questions
08 December 2020**

Ravenhall landfill

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan)
— My constituency question is to the Minister for Planning, and it concerns a letter that I received yesterday from the mayor of Melton, Cr Kathy Majdlik—and I congratulate her and the deputy mayor, Cr Goran Kesic, on their recent election; it is a very exciting time for them and, I am sure, a very exciting time for the City of Melton. She wrote:

The City of Melton has expressed serious concern and extreme disappointment over a Victorian Government decision that enables Ravenhall landfill to become the dumping ground for the contaminated West Gate Tunnel soil.

...

I'm absolutely shocked that the State Government thinks a proposal like this is appropriate. We're talking about toxic soil and hundreds of truck movements every day in an area where families live and work.

...

Our residents do not deserve this. Council advocated extremely hard to stop the Ravenhall tip ...

I agree with the mayor. Minister, will you reverse this disgraceful decision?

COUNCIL | Petitions
08 December 2020

Tarneit train station

Legislative Council Electronic Petition:

The Petition of certain citizens of the State of Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Council that an overbridge connecting Platforms 1 and 2 at Tarneit Railway Station, on the Derrimut Road side, is needed.

Currently, commuters have to park their cars and walk almost a kilometre to get to either side of the railway station, which is very inconvenient, especially to the elderly and families with young children.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Council call on the Minister for Public Transport, the Honourable Ben Carroll, to facilitate the construction of an overbridge connecting Platforms 1 and 2 at Tarneit Railway Station.

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) (244 signatures).

COUNCIL | Adjournment
08 December 2020

Hume City Council

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I wish to raise a matter in the adjournment this evening for the attention of the Minister for Local Government. Exactly one week ago the Hume council was having a good old time with the ratepayers money in that particular municipality. They were having a knees-up, a booze-up, a nosh-up. They were having a right old time. One hundred and twenty of their closest friends got together to celebrate those councillors who had been recently elected and to farewell those who had been given the old 'Thank you very much—out the door.' And of course it was all paid for by the ratepayers, and what a marvellous thing that is! But I had to congratulate newly elected councillor Trevor Dance, who strongly objected to this absolute travesty of waste. He actually rang the council and said, 'I don't wish to go. I wish my allocation of money—

Dr Cumming: He brought his own lunch.

Mr FINN: Hello, cocky! He said, 'I wish my allocation of money to go to those who are without, those who are suffering.' And I thought that was indeed a very fair enough sort of suggestion—a very, very good suggestion indeed. The council distributed it amongst other councillors so that that money did not go to where Cr Dance had asked. It went to that aforesaid booze-up, nosh-up, knees-up.

It was some absolute horror for me to find out that the reason that was given for this particular gathering was, 'Well, we've always done this. This has been approved by council, and this is the way we do it.' Well, my view is that that is not the way you do it. The fact of the matter is: could you imagine the outcry if we all got together here, invited our family and friends along and had an almighty great booze-up upstairs—perhaps in the Legislative Council committee room or room K or somewhere like that? It is the Federation Room now; that is right, isn't it? Imagine the outcry.

Well, I think it is about time that we had an outcry for what is happening at the Hume council. I think for them to be spending the sort of money that they are spending on these sorts of gatherings is criminal waste and a gross insult to the hardworking people of the City of Hume, keeping in mind that the airport is in the City of Hume and there are a good many people in the aviation industry who do not have a job at the moment but I would assume are still expected to pay rates. So I am asking the minister to appoint a monitor to audit all of this sort of unnecessary spending that the Hume council commits itself to.

COUNCIL | Motions
09 December 2020

COVID-19

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I rise this afternoon to speak on Mr Quilty's motion, and in doing so I commend him very strongly for putting this motion forward, because I think it is a very important motion, particularly as we near the end of 2020, which is a year like no other that we have certainly seen in our lifetimes and a year where I have to say we have witnessed some extremely distressing scenes on our streets as a result of people seeking to express their views, to exercise their basic rights. We should always remember of course that the right to protest is a fundamental right

in any free and democratic nation. It is not for the first time this week that I rise to speak in support of human rights and civil rights, and it is so important that we keep them in mind.

There are some who will say that if you talk about human rights or civil rights, civil liberties, you are some sort of leftie crackpot. Well, I can assure you, and I am sure that most members of the house would be probably aware, that I am not a leftie crackpot. I can certainly guarantee that my concern for civil liberties has grown significantly over the years, as I have seen quite a few things that have made the hair on the back of my neck stand up. It is quite extraordinary, and as Mr Quilty said, you just have to look around most of the world—and I say most of the world—to see the violation of human rights on a daily basis. In fact the violation of human rights in most countries in the world today is a way of life, and that is a tragedy and one that we should always be wary of.

I am tempted here to throw in the famous quote from the great Ronald Wilson Reagan, who said that the loss of freedom is never more than just one generation away, and that is the truth. If we are not careful, if we are not wary, if we are not standing up for our basic freedoms, they will be taken away from us.

There is no shortage of people in this world today who would take those rights off us, whether they be bureaucrats, whether they be politicians, whether they be trade unionists, whether they be journalists. They will take our rights off us, and they will not have a problem in the world in doing so. Of course it will be inevitably to enhance, to increase, their own power. There seems to be a correlation there, the less rights we have the more rights they have, and that is something that has concerned me now for quite a few years—to see the elites of this world treating us mere plebs as something less than should be respected.

I think what we have seen in the United States over the last four of five years is a fair indication that a hell of a lot of people are really sick of being treated badly by these elitists—they feel that their rights are just as important as people who might have a bit of money, who might have a bit of fame, who might have a flash car—just because they do not necessarily have all that.

Their rights—people with families who live in the suburbs or live in country towns or on farms—are just as important as the rights of anybody else. It has been interesting to see that over the last few years evolve in the

United States, and I think, given the latest developments over there today, there may well be future evolution in the not-too-distant future. But we will wait for a significant Supreme Court decision very, very soon. When you have almost half the states in the US taking a case to the Supreme Court, you know that there is something afoot. We will wait and see what happens. But certainly what we have seen in the US over the last few years is indicative of a revolution of sorts by people who have been trodden on for far too long, and that revolution must come here.

The thing that distresses me possibly more than anything else—although there are few things that distress me, I have to say—is those people who feel that their rights do not matter. They feel that they do not matter. They feel that they have no impact in life. They feel that they have no influence on what happens in here and what happens in Canberra. They feel that it does not matter what they do; they will not be listened to. Now, my view is that at some stage they are going to wake up and realise that for their rights to be taken seriously, for their lives indeed to be taken seriously, they are going to have to do what happened in the US, where ordinary folk—if I could use that term; I do not use it in a pejorative way, but folk who would regard themselves as ordinary folk—have taken a stand for themselves. I think that is a very, very good thing.

Now, one thing I want to point out is the role of Victoria Police in the demonstrations that we have seen this year. I do not hold the men and women of Victoria Police—the thin blue line, the rank and file—responsible for some of the scenes that we have witnessed on our streets this year. Certainly they have their orders and they have followed those orders quite often to the letter, and they have done what they would be expected to do under those circumstances. The people that we should be really concerned about—and this is where the real issue lies—are in the government that gives these sorts of orders that allow this sort of stomping of human rights to occur. That concerns me, because as Mr Quilty said, if we allow governments to do that, they will. There is nothing surer. I have to say that there is probably one side of the house more inclined to do that than this side, but there is every chance that, given the right sort of person running the show or the right set of people running the show, it could happen on either side, and that is something that we should all be aware of. That is something that we should all be very, very wary of.

That is why I do not support big government, because big government means that they have the view that they can tell us what to do—they can tell us how to live our lives, they can tell us what we need to do on a daily basis. They feel, because they are big, they are powerful and they are strong, that we are not and that they can tell us how we can live our lives, and that is what we have seen this year.

I have to say I have been deeply saddened and distressed by some of the scenes that we have seen this year. I recall being at home one Saturday afternoon. I think I was watching Sky News—how unusual. I was sitting on the couch, and there from the helicopter was a scene of a protest—it was a Reignite Democracy Australia protest or something similar to that—down near the Myer Music Bowl I think from memory. All of this vision was being taken from a helicopter above, and it was being shown in lounge rooms around Australia. It was fascinating to see the way the police worked and then the way the demonstrators moved. I thought to myself as they moved in toward the Royal Botanic Gardens, ‘Now, if they take Government House, we might have a show here.’ But they did not even try. I thought to myself, ‘Isn’t it extraordinary where people can be literally hunted through the city of Melbourne?’, hunted down as they were on that particular occasion. I thought to myself, ‘What is going on in this country?’

Acting President, this will probably surprise you personally, but I have protested on a number of occasions. In fact this might surprise you even more—

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Ms Patten): I think I was there.

Mr FINN: I was just going to say it might surprise you even more that we may have actually been on opposite sides of the protest on a number of occasions. That is something that I believe is everybody’s right to do as long as they are peaceful. Yes, you can be loud. Yes, you can make your presence felt, but as long—

Mr Leane: You can be loud.

Mr FINN: You can be pretty loud yourself when you get going. But what we cannot allow are violent protests, and I have been a victim of the sorts of violent protests that I speak of, where people feel that they have a right to come and bash people, they have a right to knock elderly people down riding bikes and they have a right to cause all manner of physical distress to people. I remember a few years back now that a then member of this place, Andrew Elsbury, who was with

me at a demonstration—the March for the Babies—had a rib cracked. A chap from the United States had a couple of ribs broken out the front of this building because demonstrators—the extreme, foul left—decided that they had the right to belt us up. Unfortunately on that occasion the police agreed with them and let them go, which I still shake my head about to this very day.

But I have been in that particular march every year for the last 12 years—sorry, 11 years because we did not have the march this year; it was all online. Whilst we had thousands of people viewing, we did not have the physical march this year for the obvious reasons, but we are certainly very much looking forward to being back on the streets next year. I am sure you, Acting President, will enjoy being with us again as we do our thing.

As I said earlier, I think it is fundamentally important that we all have the right to protest in a constructive, in a positive and in a non-violent, peaceful manner. It can be annoying. If you are driving and you do not know there is a protest going on and the streets are blocked, yes, that can be annoying. There are no two ways about that. I have been in that situation myself, and it can be very, very annoying. But that should not take away from the fact that people do have the right to protest in the way that they should.

I well remember many, many years ago a bloke called Joh Bjelke-Petersen up in Queensland: ‘Don’t you worry about that.’ He declared a law that banned street marching. Now, I was, back in those days, a very, very great supporter, in fact a fan, of Joh Bjelke-Petersen. In fact I am still enamoured with the man; I thought he was wonderful. But even back then, and that is going back a long, long time now—probably when I was about 12 or 13 or something, so it is a long time ago—I was very unnerved by the thought that people could not actually protest in the streets.

I have protested since against a couple of Labor governments. I remember back in 1992 we had about 150 000 people out the front here—they filled down Bourke Street as far as the eye could see—calling for the Kirner government to resign. She did not, and it did not, but the election finally was called and—‘goodness gracious me’—out the door they went. But again it was everybody’s right to protest, just as six months later there were another 100 000 people out the front to protest, calling for the Kennett government to resign. These things come and go, they flow, and

you just accept that that is the way it is. But if people feel strongly about it, they should be allowed to do that. It certainly beats the alternative where overseas you have people taking up arms, you have people throwing bombs and all of the more extreme elements of protest movements that we have largely managed to avoid by respecting everybody's right to protest.

So I congratulate Mr Quilty—or is it Dr Quilty?—for his motion today. I support it very much. I think it is a fundamental principle that we all should support, and I urge everyone in this house to give this motion their support when the vote comes.

**COUNCIL | Adjournment
09 December 2020**

Kealba landfill

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I wish to raise a matter this evening for the attention of the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, and I have to say that I am heartily sick of raising these issues with the minister and the situation not improving one little bit. This is yet another environmental disaster that is occurring in the western suburbs and severely impacting local residents and those who work nearby. I refer to an article just this week in the Brimbank Leader by Rebecca DiNuzzo. It starts off:

The stench of burning rubbish from Kealba tip—which one resident has likened to “dead bodies”—is so bad homeowners as far away as St Albans say it is making them sick.

The fire at the tip—run by Barro Group—has been burning for more than a year, and with summer approaching, fed up residents say they're taking the fight against the multi million-dollar company into their own hands.

Kealba mum Siobhan Brister said she was dreading the warmer months because she predicted the smell—which she likened to “dead bodies”—would get worse.

...

St Albans resident Nicole Power erected a sign on her fence this week urging people to lodge complaints about the tip to the EPA.

And there lies the problem in itself, because the EPA is one of the most useless organisations on the face of the earth. Anybody who lodges a complaint with the EPA might as well just open the window and throw a piece of paper out, because it is just a total waste of time.

Minister, the EPA has let down the western suburbs now for close to generations. It is staggering what is going on in the west. The situation at the Kealba landfill, the tip there, is just as bad if not worse than we have up at Ravenhall and we have at Bulla with the great mountain, which they are now calling Mount Bulla. It is just appalling what is going on right across the western suburbs of Melbourne. What I am asking the minister to do is to take responsibility, to take this thing by the horns and to put this fire out—to do whatever is necessary to get this fire out. It has been burning for over a year. The minister needs to get this fire out and to stop the stench. I mean, I am sure she would not want this in Mill Park, where she lives. I am sure she would not. Certainly the people in Kealba and nearby do not want it where they are. So I am asking the minister, begging the minister—I will get down on my knees and plead with the minister if I absolutely have to—to do her job, to get the EPA onto the job and to fix this stinking mess in Kealba.

**COUNCIL | Members statements
10 December 2020**

Felicitations

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — Who would have thought a shortage of toilet paper would have signalled a year like 2020? Indeed, if it was not for the mighty Tigers going back to back in the first grand final away from Melbourne, this is a year that we could readily petition to have cancelled. For many it was a year of tragedy. My heart goes out to the families of those 800-plus people who died as a result of Labor's second wave. Equally, my sympathy is extended to those families who have lost a loved one as a result of the subsequent lockdown. I wonder if we will ever know exactly how many ended their own lives because of the devastation to their businesses. I am thinking of them particularly this Christmas.

Despite the dreadful year we have endured, I take this opportunity to wish all members and their families a very happy, very safe and, if they are so inclined, a very holy Christmas. A very happy Christmas to the staff of this Parliament and their families. The amazing people who keep this place running deserve the season of peace that is ahead after putting up with some of the ratbagery that has gone on in here from time to time. To all Victorians, particularly those who live in Melbourne's west, I wish every joy for Christmas and a much, much better

year ahead. They can be assured I will keep fighting for them in 2021.

**COUNCIL | Constituency questions
10 December 2020**

Sunbury Road safety issues

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — My constituency question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. The condition of Sunbury Road between Oaklands Road and Melbourne Airport is disgraceful. So bad is the surface, the minister's own department has erected signs warning motorists about it and has lowered the speed limit yet again. The proliferation of heavy trucks on local roads and the refusal of the Andrews government to build the Bulla bypass has led to this breakdown of the road surface. The prospect of the Andrews Labor government pushing a further 800-plus trucks laden with toxic soil onto our roads every day promises to make it much worse, probably in the not-too-distant future. Minister, what are you doing to ensure Sunbury Road is safe for use by local motorists?

**COUNCIL | Second reading
10 December 2020**

Appropriation (2020–2021) Bill 2020

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I rise to speak on the budget and cannot help but remark that whilst there might be some around who are very pleased with the budget, future generations will not be, because the one thing that this budget leaves more than anything else is a huge debt. And that debt will have to be paid one day. This is like somebody, perhaps a child, who has just discovered a wonderful new device called a credit card and has run amok with that credit card without any care as to who will have to pay the bill. The tragedy is that at some stage somebody will have to pay the bill, and that will be our kids, that will be our grandkids and maybe it will be our great grandkids. At this point in time, in four years time we will have a debt of somewhere in the vicinity of \$155 billion—\$155 000 million. That is an extraordinary legacy to leave future generations in this state.

Now, Daniel Andrews will say, 'I've done this' and 'I've done that' and 'I've spent this'. That is the good old-fashioned socialist way of doing things—you measure success by how much you have spent. You do not measure success by what you have achieved; you measure success by what you have spent. And if that is his measure, well, he has been very successful, because the budget has been, as Rex Hunt would have said, 'blown to the scheissenhausen'. And that is very, very unfortunate, as I say, for generations to come. I see Mr Leane over there readily agreeing with my comments.

The other thing about this budget is that it is almost entirely dependent on government spending for our recovery. Now, again, good old-fashioned socialist economics does not recognise that if we are to have a sustainable and a vigorous recovery, the only way that is going to happen is with a strong business sector—a strong private sector. That is the only way that it is going to happen, because governments do not create wealth; governments draw wealth. And, well, it is just around and around—talk about your circular economy! Around and around you go. We take the money to pay you, and around and around you go.

The only way that we are going to have a strong, viable and sustainable state in the future is for businesses, particularly small businesses, to be strong, to be vibrant and to be exciting. That is the way of the future, and if we are serious about Victoria's future but we ignore small business then the whole thing is just a joke—it just will not happen. Unfortunately, it is spending vast sums of money, putting us in debt, as I say, for generations to come without accepting the importance of business in employment. As I have said to this house on a number of occasions, you cannot have union members if you do not have jobs. I see Ms Terpstra over there has cocked her head and looks most interested when I mention union members. But that is the fact of the matter: without employers you do not have employees, and without employees you do not have union members. Members opposite might like to keep that in mind.

I will just mention briefly that the west is carrying a large cost of this budget in the toxic soil dump that is coming our way, perhaps to Bacchus Marsh—that is a matter of conjecture, I note, at the moment, with the EPA having done a somersault this week—but certainly to Ravenhall, which has copped more than its fair share over the years. It seems that that area will be blessed, if I can use that term, with more toxic soil. I note that today I have received another letter from the mayor of Melton expressing her very strong opposition to the dumping of toxic soil at Ravenhall. Of course the other possibility—probability in fact—is that that soil will be dumped near Sunbury Road between Bulla and Sunbury. That is just appalling for locals, and I speak from personal experience there.

This is a budget that is remarkable in the legacy that it will leave Victorians. We will be paying this debt for generations to come. In many years, long after I have left and we have all left this Parliament, we will still be paying this debt. Victorians will still be paying this debt when I have been long in the ground. Victorians will still be paying this debt, and we can look back and say, 'Thank you, Daniel Andrews—thank you for nothing.'

**COUNCIL | Adjournment
10 December 2020**

Autism education

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan)
— I wish to raise a matter in the adjournment this evening for the very last time in 2020 for the Minister for Education. I have received an email from a constituent who tells me that she believes she has two boys who have been subject to indirect discrimination regarding the provision of appropriate and timely educational opportunity. Her son Luke is 15 years old, and he attends the Western Autistic School's adolescent program called Wattle. The program was offered to support secondary school children with ASD with additional mental health issues who had disengaged or were at risk of disengagement from a mainstream school. I know from personal experience the impact that

that particular problem can have. She says:

The Wattle program is under the auspice of the Western Autistic School and had been operating from a location in Ascot Vale.

Staff and parents received notification on the last day of term 3 this year that the program was to be moved to Essendon-Keilor Secondary College ... for Term 4.

Western Autistic no longer wants to run this program for a number of reasons and is shadowing the closure of the Wattle program without giving due regard to a genuine pathway for the current students, my son included. The rhetoric is that now these students are entitled to be enrolled in, and should be enrolled in a mainstream school. The reality is that these students, my son in particular, have been significantly impacted and traumatised from their past enrolments in mainstream school to the point of disengagement and the emergence of complex mental health issues.

She says:

This is not a suitable alternate placement for my son. The decision will have a disadvantageous impact on his current and future presentation and educational opportunities.

Parents of kids with autism have enough on their plate without having to put up with this. It is staggering to me that we have these sorts of problems still occurring where parents are notified that something is happening just like that and they are expected to rearrange basically their entire lives in order to fit in with somebody else's plans. It seems to me that this particular lady has got a very, very fair case. I think she and those like her—and as she says, she is not the only one—have been dealt a very rough hand on this particular issue, and what I am asking the minister to do is to investigate her issues with Western Autistic School and particularly the Wattle program, and I ask the minister to come up with a solution to this particularly difficult problem.

Finn In The House readers, please note that the speeches here have been extracted from *Hansard*. Formatting here is slightly different however; for example, Constituency Questions in *Hansard* only have the electorate name for the speech heading, whereas here each contribution has a heading reflecting the topic of debate. Also at times, where multiple contributions are made (for example in the Committee Stage of a bill), they are aggregated under a single heading. Supplementary Questions are shown here directly after a Question Without Notice, as this book only contains Bernie's contributions (whereas in the House, the supplementary question is asked after the minister's first answer). Refer to *Hansard* for the official record of the Parliamentary debates.



FINN IN THE HOUSE

Speeches August to December 2020



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