



# FINN IN THE HOUSE

**Speeches February 2010 to June 2010**



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## Footscray: traders

**Mr FINN** (Western Metropolitan) — I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Local Government. It was very early in the days of 2010 when I attended a meeting with representatives of the newly formed Save Our Footscray committee in Footscray. This meeting represented over 90 per cent of all the traders in Footscray, including the Footscray Independent Traders, representing over 50 traders; Footscray Traders, with over 50 traders; Footscray Asian Business Association, representing over 60 per cent of traders in Footscray; Footscray Market, representing over 80 traders; and Little Saigon Market, with over 20 traders as well. These traders are deeply concerned that, based on a survey of 48 traders, business trade in Footscray is down by 25 per cent to 50 per cent, with an average of 33 per cent.

The main reason for the decline is fines from traffic surveillance cameras in Footscray. Every car that stops for more than 90 seconds, even to let other cars move into the traffic flow or to move into a parking space, has been fined \$70 plus. Since the installation of the cameras in April last year over 26 000 fines have been issued.

A letter from Mr Binh Le, president of the Footscray Asian Business Association, and Mr Bon Nguyen of the Vietnamese Community in Australia, Victoria chapter, makes their views very clear. They believe that the cameras are a disgrace. The letter says council claims to have a number of reasons to justify the use of these cameras, but there is significant dissatisfaction — to say the very least — about these cameras in the community. It states:

For many years now, the district has lacked reasonable amenities.

Streets are badly congested because of insufficient car parks and drop-off areas while Footscray has become increasingly prosperous due to features of multicultural and low-price shopping attraction.

The community has borne the neglect of successive Labor governments and councillors but is unwilling to let this continue.

I beg the Minister for Local Government to convene and chair a meeting between the Maribyrnong City Council and the Save Our Footscray committee, because there is a strong feeling of revolt in the air in Footscray. There is real anger amongst the traders

in the Footscray area, and it is my very great concern that if the minister does not take some sort of action to convene such a meeting, we may well see a western suburbs version of something akin to a modern-day Eureka Stockade.

COUNCIL  
3 February 2010

## Rail: Government Performance

**Mr FINN** (Western Metropolitan) — In rising to support Mr Koch's motion this afternoon I am reminded of what Mr Elasmar said in his contribution to this debate. His exact words were, 'It is easy to criticise the Brumby government on the transport issue'. He is dead right! He is spot on the money.

It is very easy to criticise the Brumby government on what it has done to the transport system in this state. It has turned the transport system in this state into a blithering mess. If the transport system in this state were a human being, it would be locked away for its own protection. This is a disaster on wheels — sometimes it is on wheels, sometimes it is not!

I have to say that when I listened to members of the government speaking against this motion today there did not appear to be a great deal of enthusiasm. There was not a lot of fire in the belly. That might have something to do with the fact that there is an admission and acceptance by members of the government that they have really stuffed up the transport system. Over 10 years they have made the transport system in this state a total mess.

I cannot quite remember who it was, but a little bit earlier I heard a government member alluding to what he saw as a fact, that it is all Jeff Kennett's fault. If I hear that once more, I think I am going to throw something. Jeff Kennett has not been Premier of this state for nigh on 11 years. This government cannot keep blaming Jeff Kennett for everything that goes wrong. Labor has held the great office of government of this state for nearly 11 years. It has got to start taking responsibility.

Mr Lenders — Who blamed him?

Mr FINN — Mr Lenders, the government must start taking responsibility for its actions over a decade; it has been there longer than the Kennett government was there. It has been there longer than the Cain and Kirner governments were there. This is one of the longest serving governments we have seen in recent

times.

It is necessary in my view that the government take responsibility for its own actions. To blame Jeff Kennett or somebody else for what is going on is wearing little bit thin.

Members of the government should go out and have a chat to the people in the street, their constituents. Maybe some of them do from time to time, I do not know; I certainly do. The feedback I get is that the people of Victoria are getting very sick of this government blaming Jeff Kennett for everything. There is no way Jeff Kennett or anybody else can be blamed for what the Labor government has done to transport in this state.

Let us go back to 1999 when the Labor government fell into office. I remember well that as part of Labor's policy it had an airport rail link. We all remember there was going to be a rail link between the airport and the city.

I tell you what: we in the western suburbs, particularly in the north-west, can lay claim to being victims of the first broken promise of the new government, because within I think one month of this government's coming into power, the airport link was off the agenda. It was gone. That was the very first broken promise of the new Labor government, and the first of many, I might say. But we claim the title of victims of the first broken promise of the then Bracks government.

Instead of having an airport link as they do in Sydney and Brisbane quite successfully — I have used them on a number of occasions and they work very well — we have something else. I do not wish to have a swipe at Skybus, because I think it does a relatively good job, but it certainly is not the rail link we were promised as part of the platform that brought the Labor Party to government in 1999.

Then we have the 'farce' rail. We all remember that because like myki it went on forever. Labor costed that at \$80 million. At the end of the day it came in at over \$1 billion. Right from day one Labor had its figures totally wrong. As we see on a daily basis, nothing has changed. We had the farce rail blow-out before our very eyes, and in some places, like Bendigo, for example, trains come into their stations up to 30 seconds earlier than before. We are spending over \$1 billion to get trains travelling faster and arriving 30 seconds earlier than before. That is quite ludicrous.

Then of course we have what I described this morning as the great gamble — myki. I went into a little bit of detail this morning.

It seems this is the latest gambling

game in Victoria, because you put money on the card and sometimes, as was discovered last weekend, you hit the jackpot and might get \$1600 and \$1700 put on the card for you. On the other hand you might lose the lot, as happened to one of my constituents just this morning.

Can I suggest to the house and the government that as part of the promotion — and let us face it, this government is all about promotion — and marketing ploy for this new ticketing scheme, the government embrace the gambling aspect of this and call it 'mykino'. That would appeal to a good number of people in this state and might get us somewhere.

It might actually get some money back, because we have already as a state lost over \$1.3 billion down the drain on this scheme with the promise of more to come. We do not know, we have no idea, how much more this government is going to lose. Will it be \$2 billion? Will it be \$3 billion?

If we have gone through nine years and we have got to \$1.3 billion, perhaps we might see an acceleration and more losses as we speed through this wonderful new ticketing process.

What a disaster it is. It would be a joke if it were not the hardworking taxpayers of Victoria who are being slugged for this monstrosity of a so-called ticketing system that at this point will not get us down Bourke Street. If I had a myki ticket in my pocket and I got on the tram out the front of Parliament House, it would not get me down Bourke Street. After our spending \$1.3 billion the ticketing system will not get us down a major street in the city of Melbourne.

It raises the question of what we could get for \$1.3 billion if this government knew what it was doing.

If this government were responsible enough to care about the taxpayers money in this state, what could we get for the \$1.3 billion that has been blown on the ticketing system that cannot get us down Bourke Street? How about a decent train system? How about putting in the infrastructure that is necessary for trains to run on time? How about fixing up the North Melbourne railway station so the trains from north of Melbourne and west of Melbourne and the rest of Victoria, I should say, could actually get through what is now an enormous bottleneck? How about that money going towards solving the problem of the North Melbourne railway station? That might be good.

How about putting some infrastructure in place to ensure that whenever the temperature reaches more than 35 degrees the system does

not start falling to pieces? I might be a lot older than I used to be, but it seems to me that when I was a lad it was very hot as well and the train system did not grind to a halt every time it reached 35 or 36 degrees.

These days that seems to be par for the course, so how about the government put money it may have left after the myki disaster into infrastructure to stop that from happening?

If we had not blown the \$1.3 billion, perhaps we could have put some money into the Laverton railway level crossing. I was told by a constituent that last week the gates were closed for 18 minutes. My constituent sat at the level crossing at Laverton for 18 minutes waiting for trains to pass before he could go on. At Hoppers Crossing, a little bit further out, there is exactly the same problem. On a number of occasions I have seen near misses as a result of conditions at this level crossing, and I have also seen the real thing — that is, car coming into contact with car — as a result of conditions at this particular level crossing. If the government had not blown \$1.3 billion on its non-existent ticketing system, we could have got some value for money — a concept not known to the Labor Party in this state. We could have got some value for money.

There is much I could speak about on this subject because it is a huge one. It is a subject that goes to the very core of the credibility of this government. The people of Victoria are looking at what has happened with myki and they are saying, 'If that is the best the Brumby government can do, it is about time government members got on their bikes and went out'. They want the Brumby government right out of town. On Saturday week the people of Altona will get their opportunity to tell the Brumby government what they think of it, and in November this year we will all have the opportunity to return this state to responsible, good, hardworking government — something we have not had for a little over 10 years now, and it is about time we went back to it.

As I have said, I strongly support Mr Koch's motion. I hope that as a result of this motion we see some improvement in the Brumby government's performance on transport, but I will not be holding my breath.

## Western Health: investments

**Mr FINN** (Western Metropolitan) — My question is to the Treasurer. I refer the Treasurer to questions put to him about Lehman Brothers and subprime investments by the board of Western Health in 2007 and 2008. Can the Treasurer confirm that he received advice from Western Health board member, Ms Jill Hennessy, about these investments, and will the Treasurer now reveal the true value of those investments, what impact the losses had on hospital finances and whether Treasury had to fill the gap?

**Mr LENDERS** (Treasurer) — I thank Mr Finn for his question.

I am very disappointed at the opposition's vote of no confidence in the spokesperson in this way; Mr Rich-Phillips at least does not get into grubby, gutter tactics during a by-election and besmirch individuals while dishing out big doses of sanctimonious tripe as the opposition tends to like to do in this sort of environment. In response to Mr Finn's question dealing with a very complicated interface of governance, the global financial crisis and this state responding to it, I have not communicated at all with the said member of the Western Health board.

### *Supplementary question*

**Mr FINN** (Western Metropolitan) — Will the Treasurer release the advice he has received from his department about the state of finances of Western Health after its subprime fiasco and about potential breaches of the Financial Management Act by the board of Western Health?

**Mr LENDERS** (Treasurer) — Mr Finn, for the first time to my knowledge in his time in this Parliament, is showing at least the slightest interest in Western Health. I have stood in question time in this Parliament probably 170 times since the last election. We have probably had 170 adjournment debates since the last election and we have had an equal number of opportunities for members statements. Unless I missed it, Mr Finn has been remarkably mute —

**Mrs Peulich** — On a point of order, President, the standing order says that a minister should not use a question without notice as an opportunity to attack the opposition.

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! Mrs Peulich is correct in her view of the standing order, but it is actually about overtly attacking the opposition or a

## Western Health: investments...

member in their question. I do not consider the response to date to be overtly critical.

Mrs Peulich — On the point of order, President, you cannot be half correct.

The PRESIDENT — Order! In fact Mrs Peulich can be half correct on this issue.

Mr LENDERS — In concluding my answer, we have an interesting form of behaviour when by-elections or federal elections come into the sphere. I am pleased Mr Finn has asked the question, because at least he can pronounce the names of the suburbs correctly. During the Kororoit by-election Mr Davis called it 'Koroit'; during an earlier by-election Mr Philip Davis called Reservoir 'Reservoir'. At least Mr Finn can pronounce the suburb's name, which is a significant difference from those in the opposition who show interest in the northern and western suburbs when there are by-elections but at no other time.

## COUNCIL | Members Statements 3 February 2010

### Public transport: myki ticketing system

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I was preparing this morning to say a few words about my experience on Monday night when I heard Christopher Lord Monckton at his address in Melbourne expose the total myth of man-made climate change when I received information about another scam which is probably almost as bad. It is a text message that reads:

So I tried to use myki this morning for the first time. It ate my \$10, told me I had zero balance. I call them: they say they will investigate but can't guarantee the return of my money. They also said it would be two business days at least to hear from someone. So now I am out \$10 and missed two trains. Great morning so far.

But that is not all.

The next message, which I received a couple of minutes later, has another bit of information:

After I inserted the \$10 I asked for a receipt. The machine shut down totally and had a black screen. That is when I called them. Those machines must be totally shoddy.

Totally shoddy indeed.

Can I suggest to the Minister for Public Transport and the government that they are marketing this myki ticketing scheme the wrong way?

This is not a ticketing system, this is a gambling system. You put your money on the card and sometimes you win, as we found out on the weekend, but mostly you lose. As Victorian taxpayers we are losing almost \$1.4 billion every day. This government is a disgrace.

## COUNCIL | Adjournment 4 February 2010

### 20th Man Fund: Back to School program

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Education. It follows an event that I attended last Friday, the 21st anniversary celebration of Les Twentyman's Back to School program. In the past 21 years the program has helped some 11 000 children get to school. Those are mainly children who might not otherwise have received a proper education. I think every member of this house will join in congratulating 'Sir' Les on an outstanding contribution not just to the young people in his area but to the economic and social health of the entire western suburbs.

The gathering last Friday morning was at Whitten Oval. It included child safety commissioner Bernie Geary. Doug Hawkins was there, as was comedian Elliot Goblet. We heard consultant psychologist Michael Carr-Gregg give a powerful address. He pointed out strong linkages between a low education level and criminal activity. He said that this is arguably one of the most vulnerable generations in the history of Australia and that there are four compelling reasons that the Back to School initiative is so important and should be expanded across Australia. He said completing year 12 provides a significant buffer against unemployment and that early school leaving costs Australia \$2.6 billion a year.

He said unemployment has a devastating effect on the psychological and social development of young people and increases the risk of homelessness, involvement in crime, failure to develop a work ethic, self-harm and youth suicide. In short, it is false economy to not proactively address this issue.

Dr Carr-Gregg pointed out that studies show that young males who are not in the labour force have a mortality rate 8.6 times higher than their working or studying counterparts and that youth unemployment

truncates their future through low wages, underemployment and unemployment, which is a one-way passport to lifelong poverty. He concluded by saying that in the olden days we used to send our early school leavers into the trenches. He said the modern equivalent seems to be unemployment or work-for-the-dole queues, the pub, the clubs or the broken-down old cars, after which either we bury them or patch up their broken limbs, give them Prozac or Ritalin and send them on their way.

He said also that we need to applaud, support and expand this Back to School program because if we think education is expensive, we should try ignorance.

What I ask the minister tonight is to provide Les Twentyman and the 20th Man Fund with a degree of funding because for 21 years Les has done his work without any government funding at all. It is about time the government came to the party. I ask the minister to provide the necessary funding to support and expand the 20th Man Fund's Back to School program.

## COUNCIL | Questions without Notice 4 February 2010

### Planning: urban growth boundary

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I direct a question to the Minister for Planning. I note that the Transforming Australian Cities report, co-funded by the Victorian government, outlines the construction of over 20 000 new dwellings for over 40 000 new residents of the city of Hobsons Bay, and I ask: can the minister advise the house whether the government plans to move the urban growth boundary in this municipality, and if not, what activity centres have been identified to cope with this massive population increase?

Hon. J. M. MADDEN (Minister for Planning) — I welcome the question from the opposition deputy spokesperson for planning in this place, who is obviously Mr Finn. I thank Mr David Davis for passing the question on to Mr Finn so he could ask it.

I would have liked to have received the question from Mr Guy, but he cannot be here for his moment in the sun, so Mr Finn gets the chance to ask the question, and I welcome that fact.

As we have already heard, we have seen enormous growth, and we will continue to see enormous growth in housing for the next 20 years or so. As a government we released Melbourne@5

## Planning: urban growth boundary...

Million, and what we identified in that was that we see the need, based on evidence, for an additional 600 000 dwellings in Melbourne in the next 20 years or so. It may be sooner, it may be later; it just depends on the circumstances of partly population growth but also household formation.

I qualify that very closely, because we hear a lot of rhetoric from people about population growth putting a lot of pressure on housing. It is not necessarily just population growth, it is not necessarily the baby boom, it is also the fact that we form our households differently. People live in smaller household units in terms of the number of people for a longer period of their lives, and people are living longer so it is likely that the people who are living longer will live alone for longer as well, so we need more dwellings. We need higher numbers of smaller dwellings for that reason, and we have seen the industry move in that direction.

Mr Finn makes the point about the urban growth boundary and changes to the urban growth boundary. All you have to do is go out west and see the enormous number of dwellings that are rapidly being developed by the cottage building industry and the volume building industry, and how rapidly housing can be produced. You cannot help but be left with the impression of how, in a sense, efficient the building industry is and how important it is in terms of the local economy.

What is important, though, is that we know people want choice in terms of housing.

If you have got a larger family and you want to find the right price point, then more often than not you might go to the outer suburbs. If you have got a smaller household and you want the right price point, you might be located towards the middle or inner ring suburbs. The important thing is that we provide the housing choice, the housing size, the housing scale and the housing numbers — the volume.

I would welcome the opposition's view in relation to this, other than the rhetoric Mr Finn yells from the other side of the chamber. I would welcome its view because to this point in time the legislation that has been before the house, the growth areas infrastructure contribution legislation, has been, in a sense, a flagging of what our intentions are in terms of putting infrastructure into these new suburbs. At this point in time no-one is any the wiser as to the opposition's position in relation to what it wants to do about infrastructure in these new growth suburbs.

It is not a question, but I make that statement on the basis that we have a plan, we have made that plan very clear and we have put it out there for public debate and consultation. If the opposition has an alternative view, we would welcome hearing that, but at this point in time we can only suspect that the position of the opposition is that it is happy to expand the urban growth boundary but it is not prepared to have the infrastructure paid for by developers. What does that mean?

Mr Drum interjected.

Hon. J. M. MADDEN — So the opposition's plan, and it is a very useful one for Mr Drum to question because he should ask his own people — —

Mr Drum interjected.

Hon. J. M. MADDEN — I will tell Mr Drum. What that means is that there is either a shortfall in infrastructure, so the opposition would not build the infrastructure — —

Mr Finn interjected.

Hon. J. M. MADDEN — The opposition, Mr Finn, would not commit to the infrastructure, would not spend the money. Alternatively what is likely to happen from the opposition's point of view is that it would leave all that expenditure to local government. You would get significant infrastructure shortfall or a rate increase. What Mr Finn may not realise is that the position the opposition is taking — —

The PRESIDENT — Order! I remind the minister of the issue of debating.

Hon. J. M. MADDEN — That alternative view is one where, through the policies of others — or the lack of policies of others — we would see significant rate increases in the likes of the west and the likes of Hobsons Bay. So I say that unless those others can come up with an alternative view that does justice, then we know what their plan is, which is to see local government increase rates substantially to pay for the shortfall in infrastructure, and what I say to those others is: shame, shame, shame on you!

### *Supplementary question*

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — While I consider what all that was about, I note that the Department of Planning-funded SGS report into residential intensification along tram and secondary routes found that residential supply could be increased up to 19 times existing levels, accompanied by the removal of third-party appeal rights for complying developments, and I ask: now that the government has had some time to consider the report, can the minister inform the house if the government

intends to implement its findings and can he confirm that secondary routes include routes like Millers Road, Altona?

Hon. J. M. MADDEN (Minister for Planning) — I welcome Mr Finn's interest in these matters.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

Hon. J. M. MADDEN — I take up the interjections from both sides of the chamber. I am surprised that 'Altona' can actually come out of the mouth of Mr Finn. I was not sure he could even spell the word. But can I say that the question from Mr Finn is ironic.

Mr Tee interjected.

Hon. J. M. MADDEN — That is exactly right. It is the question proposed to me by the opposition, asked by Mr Finn, as opposed to being Mr Finn's question; there is a slight difference there, and Mr Finn might take some time to work that out. What I would say is that this is very typical of what we see time and again in the themes that come out of the opposition on planning matters.

Mr D. Davis — On a point of order, President, as you know, this is question time.

Questions are asked by the opposition and others, and ministers should answer questions rather than debate the issue or attack the opposition. The minister has had a lot of latitude on that first question and on the supplementary question; he should simply answer the question.

The PRESIDENT — Order! Mr Davis does not get to debate it either. The Leader of the Opposition is correct: I have already said that there is to be no debate. Even though question time tends to be a bit of a debate, there is none in terms of the answers, and they must be relevant. With regard to attacking the opposition, it is about overt criticism, not a slap on the wrist of the sort that is being received at the minute. I ask the minister to be relevant and to respond without debate.

Hon. J. M. MADDEN — Mr Finn's question asked specifically about Millers Road, Altona, so Mr Finn is trying to say that I want particular buildings in Millers Road, Altona, in an effort to scaremonger in the local electorate. That is what he is saying.

First of all I make this point: I do not build the buildings and I do not make the applications. Proponents make the applications, and in all these circumstances, in all these locations currently, there are third-party appeal rights.

Mr Finn interjected.

The PRESIDENT — Order! Mr Finn is not helping.

## Planning: urban growth boundary...

Hon. J. M. MADDEN — We do not believe there should be any change to these third-party appeal rights, so it is up to a proponent to come up with a good plan and to consult broadly or for locals to oppose the proposal through the system we have. There is no intention at all to adjust those settings in relation to Millers Road, Altona. I make that point.

The other point I make in relation to Mr Finn's question is this, and I will start a bit broader but I will narrow it so we get a bit more specific and so it is a direct answer to Mr Finn: you cannot be a group of people that take the position to oppose changes to the urban growth boundary or stall or try to not support changes to the urban growth boundary and then say, 'We don't want infill development.' You cannot say that.

Mr D. Davis — On a point of order, President, you were very clear in your ruling that the minister needs to be relevant to the question.

This is quite a specific question about densification of areas of development along Millers Road, Altona, in particular, and the minister seems to refuse to —

The PRESIDENT — Order! I understand Mr Davis's point of order, and again it is correct, but we have to accept that ministers do have licence. We cannot tell them exactly what they can and cannot say in their answers, as long as it is relevant and not argumentative or critical et cetera or debating. I would suggest to the minister that he is starting to get close to debating.

Hon. J. M. MADDEN — I will start off a little bit broadly but will narrow it down specifically to Millers Road, Altona, as I get over the preamble. What I am saying is that you cannot say that you do not want to support development on the urban growth boundary and you do not want this intensity and at the same time —

Mrs Peulich — On a point of order, President, the minister is flouting your ruling about not debating the question.

The PRESIDENT — Order! I thank Mrs Peulich for her assistance, but I will be the judge as to whether or not the minister is flouting my ruling. Rest assured, if I feel he is, he will know about it.

Hon. J. M. MADDEN — The initial question before the supplementary question related to changes to the urban growth boundary. The supplementary question related to density and intensity in Millers Road, so I am trying to bring those together in my answer, which is that you cannot oppose expansion of the urban growth boundary and at the same time oppose

densification whilst also at the same time saying, 'We want more housing.' You cannot have that.

You have to provide options for housing somewhere, and our plan, as we have suggested through Melbourne@5 Million is very clear, and that is to provide a significant number of houses out on the fringes, but also, where opportunity provides, through consultation with community and with council, to provide housing in the right locations. We would leave it to local government, work with local government and consult with them.

I completely reinforce that the opposition would love to scare people about housing, but we need housing. We all need housing, and of course what is important here is that we have a plan, and our plan is very clear about where we want to locate housing. Mr Finn may wish me to say something about Millers Road, and I will, which is basically that we have no plans for increased densification in Millers Road. We have no plans to build any houses. We do not build the housing, Mr Finn. Some proponent might come up with it, and that has to go through the local planning process and be considered accordingly.

**COUNCIL | Adjournment  
23 February 2010**

## Seniors: home and community care

**Mr FINN** (Western Metropolitan) — I am not sure whether the matter I wish to raise on the adjournment tonight should be addressed to the Minister for Health, Mr Andrews, or the Minister for Community Services who is also the Minister for Senior Victorians, Ms Neville. I will direct it to Minister Neville and ask that if it ought be addressed to Minister Andrews, that it be redirected to him. It concerns a phone call I received from a constituent telling me about his 90-year-old mother, who is recovering from a fall, is blind in one eye and is vision impaired in her other eye. She receives the Hume City Council service for cleaning and for shopping. The cleaning service is 11/2 hours per week and the shopping service is a fortnightly service. Due to funding cuts by the Department of Human Services the Hume City Council has needed to cut back the cleaning service to a fortnightly basis.

This woman's vision impairment means that she cannot see hazards in

her home that require cleaning, such as food scraps, which can obviously be very dangerous to any of us, but certainly would be dangerous to someone who is 90 years of age. The cleaning service also forms an important part of the social interaction of my constituent's mother, as she lives independently and alone. Additionally, the cleaning staff assist his mother by picking up perishables such as bread and milk for her if necessary.

I have to say I was appalled and deeply distressed to hear that the support for a 90-year-old lady, who lives in my electorate and has various disabilities, has been subject to cuts. I ask the minister to provide the necessary funding to allow the elderly to live the remaining years of their lives in safety and dignity. It is the very least we can do as a civilised society. It is not fair or reasonable in any way for people of this lady's age to have to worry about funding cuts such as those she has been subject to. It concerns me enormously.

The funding cuts are obviously not just confined to the Hume City Council, they are widespread. I know the workers of the Hume City Council have been very upset by these cuts and have expressed a desire for those services to be restored. Given there are more and more elderly people with us in the community, I ask that the minister provide the necessary funding for the services to which I have referred.

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23 February 2010**

## Transport Integration Bill

**Mr FINN** (Western Metropolitan) — One has to say that when we consider the state of transport in Victoria in the year 2010, we yearn for the good old days when Alan Brown was the Minister for Public Transport because he was somebody who actually knew his portfolio. He was somebody who cared about his portfolio, knew about transport and knew what the people of Victoria needed in the area of public transport, or indeed private transport.

The same cannot be said under any circumstances about the present government. When we talk about public transport in this state I cannot help but think of the monumental mess-up that was created at Craigieburn. There might not be too many members of the house who are aware of what happened at Craigieburn, so I think it is important

## Transport Integration Bill...

that I inform the house of occurrences there.

Prior to the 1999 election — in fact prior to the 1996 election, I think — there was a Labor Party promise to electrify the Broadmeadows line all the way to Craigieburn. The Labor Party regurgitated that promise in 1999, 2002 and 2006, and it got good value for money. It can get value for money because it recycles its promises quite a bit. That is the only way in which you can get value for money from this particular government.

The government finally got around to electrifying the railway line to Craigieburn at a cost of many millions of dollars — all taxpayers money of course. But when it finished the project it realised it had not quite got it right, so it had to start again. It dug up around the railway station and put all sorts of new equipment and new gadgetry in and around there at a cost of many millions of dollars — taxpayers dollars of course. As far as this government is concerned that does not matter. But then the government realised it had stuffed it up again, and so in it went again with the taxpayers dollars. Here we had a situation where something as simple as the electrification of a rail line and the redevelopment of a railway station was blown out of the budgetary park by a government that just cannot seem to get anything right. I cannot understand why. Some things are so simple, so straightforward, but the government still stuffs it up. This government has turned it into an art form.

I use the Craigieburn railway station and the electrification of the line as an example of what this government is capable of doing. Of course we could go into details about many other things. We should talk about myki; we could talk about the \$1.35 billion —

Mrs Peulich — Down the gurgler.

Mr FINN — It is \$1.35 billion, and counting, down the gurgler, as Mrs Peulich says.

Mrs Peulich — Not quite as bad as the pink batts.

Mr FINN — Not quite as bad as the pink batts, but let us not get into that, please. It is \$1.35 billion, thank you very much, down the drain, and counting.

I have to ask at this point: when is the government actually going to come to the point and say, 'Righto, let's cut our losses'. Is it going to push ahead with this fanciful new myki ticketing system?

Mrs Peulich — Inner metro only.

Mr FINN — Inner metro only, you have heard?

Mrs Peulich — Apparently.

Mr FINN — Apparently. Fair enough. Members heard it here first!

When is the government actually going to cut its losses; or are we going to go past the \$2 billion mark or even the \$3 billion mark? Are people's egos going to be bigger than the budgetary blow-out, if that is at all possible?

It is extraordinary that any government can claim to have any sense of responsibility and carry on in the way that it does. Just using the myki money, the money that has been lost to this point, the \$1.35 billion —

Mrs Peulich — What could it have paid for?

Mr FINN — A very good question, Mrs Peulich, and one that I was just going to pose myself.

Mrs Peulich — I thought so.

Mr FINN — Yes, you did; you are a mind reader. You should have a towel on your head and a crystal ball, because I was going to ask what that money could be used for. It could be used for a hell of a lot out in my electorate in the western suburbs.

There are huge portions of the western suburbs which have extremely poor, even appalling public transport. There are huge sections of the western suburbs where from about midday on a Saturday until about 6 o'clock on a Monday morning there is no public transport at all. We have housing estates in many parts of the western suburbs that are like prisons. Come lunchtime on Saturday the gates are shut and they are opened again at about 6 o'clock on Monday morning when people can once again travel to and from their homes via public transport.

Of course the social problems that situation is creating are quite extraordinary, because there are a lot of young people and a lot of kids on these estates. They want to go out. They want to go to the movies, they want to go to the footy and they want to go to local festivals or whatever may be on. But because of the appalling public transport and the alleged services in these estates, they just cannot get there and they have to find ways of amusing themselves.

This is not necessarily what we hope these young people would do because it creates a crime problem, street gangs and so forth, and on it goes.

We have a problem which needs to be addressed but is not in any way, shape or form being addressed by this government. Places like Point Cook, Truganina and Caroline Springs are in desperate need of better public transport, but you would never, ever see this government providing it. All you get from the government in a place

like Caroline Springs, for example, is abuse from Minister Madden. That is all he has done.

Mrs Peulich — The Minister for the Respect Agenda.

Mr FINN — The Minister for the Respect Agenda indeed! What a joke, making him Minister for the Respect Agenda. That is like making me minister for soccer. It is absolutely ludicrous.

Of course it is frustrating to hear and to see members of this government talk about their love of the western suburbs when we know that the only word that is used in reference to the western suburbs as far as they are concerned is neglect. That is the big word, 'neglect'. They are very happy to build new subdivisions. They are very happy to put suburbs in place. You just have to look at the Altona electorate which voted during the by-election a couple of weeks ago. Half the people who voted at the recent by-election were not even there when the 2006 election took place. They did not yet live there. Housing estates at places like Point Cook were not there. Shopping centres and schools were just not there two years ago.

I have to say that the public transport is not there either to a very large degree, yet the government will take the stamp duty attached to land sales. The Treasurer is sitting on the other side of the chamber. He will rub his hands together with glee.

He will very cheerfully grab the homeowners and hold them up by their feet and shake them until every coin drops from their pockets. He will take their money and he will put it away and keep it. But do you reckon he will spend it on the people he has taken it from? Not on your nelly. That is not going to happen. You will not find any minister from this government doing that sort of thing. That is just not on as far as they are concerned.

I could talk about the Laverton railway station. Earlier today we heard the Minister for Public Transport talking about the new development at the Laverton station, but the government even stuffed that up.

The Laverton station used to have the most magnificent ramp and people who were running late for a train could belt down there at a great rate of knots, and 9 times out of 10 — and I have witnessed this myself — they could almost leap onto the train as the doors were flung open.

This ramp has been replaced; it is no more.

Mr Koch interjected.

Mr FINN — Steps — that is exactly right, Mr Koch. Apart from the effect

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it has on people with disabilities, watching people run for the train now has an added element of danger, to say the least. Watching people run for the train is almost a blood sport at Laverton, because they can no longer get their speed up as they are heading down the ramp for the train. The ramp is not there anymore so people have to negotiate the stairs, which are very steep. I have seen a number of people fall as they have tried to do what they have always done, but that is something the government will have to negotiate. I am relatively confident that in times to come there will probably be legal suits brought against the government on behalf of those injured on the stairs at Laverton station.

I suggest to the government that it might like to do a Craigieburn — to go in there with taxpayers money and fix that problem before the lawyers get their greedy mitts on it.

Public transport is obviously a major issue in the western suburbs, but it is not just public transport that is an issue. As I have pointed out in this house time and again, traffic congestion is a major issue not just on major roads but on a lot of roads in and around the western suburbs. The closer you get to the city, the worse the congestion is, but it has to be said that around Hoppers Crossing, for example, the congestion at peak hour is horrific — and that is way out of town. Of course the biggest problem we have in the western suburbs is a thing called the West Gate Freeway. What we need in the western suburbs is — —

Mrs Peulich — Fairy lights.

Mr FINN — We do not need fairy lights. Mr Pallas, the Minister for Roads and Ports, has given us fairy lights and a couple of flags, and I presume pretty soon he is going to go down the rows of cars — —

An honourable member — Icy poles.

Mr FINN — No, he will go to the rows and rows of cars queued up in peak hour every morning with popcorn — perhaps it will be caramel popcorn — just to keep people happy.

What the western suburbs need more than anything else regarding transport is a second Yarra crossing. At the moment reinforcement work is being carried out on the West Gate Bridge. I am informed, and I believe reliably so, that the building of a second Yarra crossing would in fact be cheaper than the reinforcement work that is currently being carried out on the West Gate Bridge.

Where is the sense in that? If you could get a second Yarra crossing for less than the cost of the reinforcement work on the bridge, why would you not do that? I cannot understand or

explain it; I can only put it down to the mystery that is the Minister for Roads and Ports in this state. He had a pretty good start, but he is slipping in a fairly big way.

We have a major problem with the West Gate Freeway and the West Gate Bridge. Anyone who is a regular user of the West Gate would know that it is frequently blocked, as I said in this house earlier today, and traffic is frequently banked back well towards Geelong. This is not just an issue for the western suburbs of Melbourne but for Geelong, for people in western Victoria and particularly for Ballarat, because a lot of people from Ballarat travel to Melbourne via the Deer Park bypass — thanks to the great legacy the Howard federal government left the people of the western suburbs — and onto the West Gate and become stuck there.

It is a major problem for the great majority of the west of Victoria, not just the western suburbs. However, as always, the government just does not seem to care. It does not want to do anything about it; it does not want to know anything about it. The Brumby government just does not care. It could not care less.

I turn to the Tullamarine interchange. A couple of years ago it was heralded as the greatest thing Melbourne has seen since the last Richmond Football Club premiership. It was a marvellous thing that would solve all the problems of people travelling into the city from the north-west. I travel from the north-west pretty much on a daily basis, and I can say it has not worked.

There is still congestion, and it is pretty bad. It is appalling at times. It is almost as if that interchange work — and it cost a lot of money — did not happen at all. You have to wonder what the government's plan is with regard to transport.

Mrs Peulich interjected.

Mr FINN — I am sure there will be a lot more, Mrs Peulich, before the government is finished. You have to wonder what its priorities are and what its logic is. There does not seem to be a great deal at all.

The problem is that when it comes to transport, as I said earlier, the name of the game for the Brumby Labor government is 'neglect'. It is a big word that looms over the western suburbs of Melbourne like a beacon — neglect. Labor just does not want to know what is going on in the western suburbs.

It is neglectful of these suburbs in the extreme. I know that when the people of the western suburbs go to vote on 27 November, just as they did two weeks ago in Altona, they will remember that

when it comes to the western suburbs Labor just does not care.

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23 February 2010

## Planning And Environment Amendment (Growth Areas Infrastructure Contribution) Bill

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan)

— I have said it before, and it is worth repeating: we have one mighty miserable government in Victoria. It is a miserable government in the true sense of the word. It is miserable in that it creates misery. I have spoken to many people over the last couple of years who have stared this growth areas infrastructure contribution (GAIC) down, who have sat in their homes and wondered if they will be able to stay in those homes, wondered what will happen to their nest egg and wondered as the years have passed how they will cope as they age.

If there is ever any proof needed that this government loves a good tax, or any tax for that matter, this is it. The Brumby government is devoted to taxes. I have said it before, and I will say it again: this government's basic policy is tax, tax, tax — and when it has finished taxing, it slaps on another tax! That is what it is attempting to do, but as a result of the actions of the Liberal-National party coalition, in league with some of our colleagues in the upper house, I am delighted that that will not be the case here. Those people who have been living in terror for the past couple of years can rest easy that this government will not be able to destroy the rest of their lives, and that has to be a very good thing. I often wonder why we have a government that is so committed to taxing. It is because it is committed to spending; it is your classic big spending, big taxing government. That is what it lives for. If you take away its ability to tax and its ability to spend, you take away its reason for existence, and come November this year we might see that happen as well, which is not a bad thing!

The GAIC proposal reminds me of what the government tried to do to community clubs last year. I am

## Planning And Environment Amendment (Growth Areas Infrastructure Contribution) Bill (Second Reading)...

sure every member in this chamber would remember when the Brumby government tried to slap a grossly unfair tax on poker machines in community clubs. This action would have forced many clubs out of business; many hardworking voluntary committee members would have thrown away the effort and time they had put into their clubs.

Mr Viney interjected.

Mr FINN — And those clubs would have gone down the drain, Mr Viney; they would have gone down the drain! This government cared little about that proposal. When I think about the GAIC and what this tax threatens to do to so many people, particularly to people living on the outer fringes of Melbourne, including in the Western Metropolitan Region, I cannot help but compare it with the government's proposed tax on community clubs last year. There would be the same result. There would be total abject misery and suffering caused by a government that thrives on creating misery and suffering for people.

Does this government have any idea at all how much those people have suffered? Does this government have any idea at all how much grief it has created for so many? Does this government care about that at all?

The fact that the Minister for Planning, Minister McMadden, has turned his back on the debate indicates what his view of the world is. He does not care. The government does not care, because if it did care, it would not have proposed this bill. If it did care, it would not have created so much misery. It would not have put, in many cases, ageing people in a position where they faced losing the lot.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Vogels) — Order! I ask Mr Finn to withdraw his reference to the minister as 'Minister McMadden' and address the minister by his proper title.

Mr FINN — I am happy to do that, but if I were to refer to him in the way that he is referred to in the electorate, I would be thrown out of the house. They hate him. They know what he is.

Hon. J. M. Madden — On a point of order, Acting President, the member is obviously speaking in defiance of your warning, flouting your instructions, and I would expect that the Acting President would suspend him from the chamber for a period of time.

Mr FINN — On the point of order, Acting President, I am not sure the minister has the first idea what he is talking about. I certainly do not.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Vogels) — Order! I ask Mr Finn to withdraw his earlier remark.

Mr FINN — I am happy to withdraw on the hour every hour, if you like. I go back to the time when the term 'McMansion' was first coined.

That was when Mr Madden as the minister showed enormous contempt for some of his constituents, the people of Caroline Springs, because they had the audacity to have big homes — because they had the audacity to use the money they had worked for to buy the homes they wanted. We remember the 'McMansion' remark from the minister. It just goes to show how far back the contempt goes, and this legislation continues it.

Minister Madden has absolute contempt for the people of the outer fringes of Melbourne, particularly for those in the outer western suburbs of Melbourne, when he is supposed to represent them; that is what he is paid to do as a member of this place. He was put in to represent the western suburbs of Melbourne, and this is how he treats them! This is the contempt in which he holds his own constituents. The minister may hold the electorate in contempt, but that is nothing compared with the contempt in which the electorate holds him.

If we get the sort of result in November that we got in Altona a couple of weeks ago, these will be his last few months in the Parliament, and that would be a very good thing for Victoria, and it is exactly what he deserves.

The pain and suffering that has been caused by this legislation is a sure sign the Brumby government just does not care. The only thing the Brumby government cares about is being re-elected. I have seen the Premier about the place in recent weeks, and it is written on his face: he does not care about anything except his own job. We heard during question time today the Treasurer talking about the number of jobs that have allegedly been created in Victoria — no doubt installing insulation! He was talking about those jobs, but in reality the only job that matters to a government member is their own; there are no two ways about that.

This bill has nothing to do with infrastructure. This government does not care about infrastructure; we have seen that. If he goes out to the western suburbs, Point Cook, Sanctuary Lakes, Hoppers Crossing, Truganina —

Mr Guy — He can't!

Mr FINN — He can't, that is right, Mr Guy. Minister Madden cannot go to those places because he does not hang around with those sorts of people. He would not want to mix with those sorts of people. He is much happier in his family compound in the inner suburbs.

For the last decade the outer suburbs have suffered from a complete lack of infrastructure.

During the recent Altona by-election campaign I was up very early in the morning — and I do mean very early in the morning — on my way to railway stations to campaign, and it struck me again that so many people have to structure their lives around the lack of infrastructure that we see in the outer west of Melbourne. The West Gate Freeway, for example, is bad enough on an ordinary day, but if you get a slip-up, a prang, somebody making a left turn where they should do a right turn, the whole thing goes to hell in a handcart. You can see the traffic banked back from the West Gate Bridge way back past Point Cook Road and quite often way back past Werribee. This is a fact of life that people in the outer west have to contend with. It is something that this government does not care about. All this government worries about is how it is going to be re-elected, and that is what this legislation is about.

This legislation is about raising the dollars so that the government can make the sorts of promises that it needs to make to get re-elected in November.

Mr Koch — That it will not deliver.

Mr FINN — Mr Koch, this government never delivers anything. The only thing that this government has delivered in recent times is legislation like this which creates misery and grief for the many people — and they are vulnerable people, too — I have spoken about. I say to the minister and other members of the government that they should not come in here and point the finger at the opposition about this because this is a deeply flawed and deeply appalling piece of legislation, and the government knows that. That is why it would not sit down with the opposition and have meaningful negotiations about how this legislation might be passed. It knows that this legislation is bad; we all know it is. The government knows that. From day one what hope did this legislation have with the opposition when the government knew that it stank to high heaven, when the government knew that it was a shocker?

Why would Minister Madden come in here and expect us to support a piece of legislation that has thousands of people around the outer fringes of Melbourne in total uproar?

I am putting money down that Mr Madden has not been to any public meetings to discuss this.

Mr Elasmarr — Do not put much!

Mr FINN — I am putting down any

## Planning And Environment Amendment (Growth Areas Infrastructure Contribution) Bill (Second Reading)...

amount of money that you like, Mr Elasmarr, that Mr Madden has not gone to the same public meetings that I have been to, that Mr Koch has been to and that Mr Guy has certainly been to; he has probably been to more than his fair share over recent times, I would suggest. They have been public meetings of real people who are suffering real grief and real fear. Minister Madden is not interested in them: they are real people.

Real people are not something that this government concerns itself with. We have seen that time and again, and this legislation is, most certainly, the greatest example that we have seen of that to date. And of course we have not finished yet — we have still got until November for the government to come up with something which can rip off the people more, and, given its record to date, you would have to say it probably will.

When it comes to the traditions of Victoria, as long as we have John Brumby as Premier of this state and as long as we have a Labor government in Victoria, Ned Kelly is alive and well. Government members will rob you, they will fleece you, they will take you down for every cent you have got. That is what they exist for, that is what they are on about, and that is why they are here. What they do with it, God only knows. I have been asking about this for 10 years. This government has taxed like no other government.

On top of the GST, which is the greatest revenue flow that any state government has ever received in the history of Victoria, it has taxed like there is no tomorrow. Yet we still find ourselves in a situation where we do not have the sort of infrastructure or the things needed for people in the outer west and other parts of Melbourne.

I continue to ask the question: where has the money gone? If Minister Madden wants to get up and explain to the house where the government has spent the billions — and I do mean the billions of dollars; that is with a 'b' — of dollars that have gone into the government coffers, I would be all ears. I am keen to hear where that money has gone.

This sort of legislation just should not be necessary. This sort of proposal should not be on the table; it should not be up for consideration. If the government were perhaps a bit more careful with our money, if it were not throwing away \$1.3 billion to \$1.4 billion — God knows how much more! — on things like the myki ticketing system, then perhaps this sort of proposal would not be up for

consideration, but it is, and it has created enormous fear and enormous pain for so many people.

I am standing here today with two messages. Firstly, as a result of actions of members on this side of the house, the GAIC is dead.

Mr Guy — It was never alive.

Mr FINN — In the mind of the government it was alive. I am not sure if there is too much life in the mind of the government, but certainly in this situation in the mind of the government GAIC was very much a live proposal.

But let me assure you that — as a result of the actions of members on this side of this house — GAIC as of today is dead. It is over. It is finished with. The government will have to come up with something else to rob the people with.

Mr Guy — It will.

Mr FINN — It will; I am sure it will. It only has seven months, but when it comes to fleecing people, the government is very innovative. There are no two ways about that.

The other message I want to give the people of Victoria is that this legislation, dead as it may be, is a signal to the world. I hope everybody takes note. This legislation is a signal to the world that the Brumby government just does not care. It does not care about hardworking Victorians. It does not care about aged Victorians.

It does not care about people who have worked and saved all their lives to look after themselves in their old age. The Brumby government does not care about them. Anybody and everybody can see that this legislation is screaming that message.

I will be very enthusiastically opposing this bill, as will everybody, I understand, on this side of the house. I look forward to the bill being defeated. I hope that, come 27 November this year, everybody in Victoria will remember this bill and will remember that John Brumby just does not care about Victorians.

**COUNCIL**  
**24 February 2010**

## Government: Performance

**Mr FINN** (Western Metropolitan) — I listened to the comments of my friend and colleague Mr Atkinson with considerable interest, because I have similar concerns about the Minister for Planning.

If there is any particular instance that indicates just how much this government has lost touch with the community, if there is one instance which indicates how much this government just refuses to listen to people, it is a development in my region at the Sunshine RSL. The Sunshine RSL is developing a social housing project, a halfway house to a degree, a place for women in distress and in need, and such a place is needed — I have absolutely no doubt about that — but it should not be not attached to a licensed premises. The last thing a lot of these women need is to be stuck next to the pokies and, in effect, a pub. That is not what they need.

Many people in the Sunshine community have raised these concerns. They have certainly raised them with me, and as members of this house are aware I have raised them in here, in the hope that the Minister for Planning might listen.

Many phone calls have been made to the Minister for Planning, many letters have been written to the Minister for Planning, many attempts have been made to meet with the Minister for Planning on this issue. How many has he responded to?

Mr Dalla-Riva — How many?

Mr FINN — Nilch! None; not one did he respond to. Such is the arrogance of Justin Madden, the Minister for Planning in this state. He takes himself far too seriously and unfortunately does not take his portfolio responsibilities seriously enough. That is the simple fact of the matter. It is a joke that the Premier of this state would appoint him Minister for the Respect Agenda. If the Premier really wanted the community to take this whole respect portfolio seriously, the last person he would appoint as minister is Justin Madden. He has got no respect for anyone, and he shows it on a daily basis. Go to any suburb in Melbourne, go to any country area and they will tell you the same thing.

They cannot get any sense out of Justin Madden, they do not understand how his mind works, they cannot even talk to the man. That is our planning minister in 2010, and he is the man who is telling us all that we have to respect each other. A bit of leading by example would not go astray I would suggest.

All Justin Madden is interested in is keeping his job. He does not care about his planning portfolio; he does not care about his responsibilities. He does not care about communities; he has not got the first interest in communities. He is just interested in keeping his job. Like so many in this Labor

## Government: Performance...

government, he does not care about the people who put him there.

I have to say as a fellow member representing Western Metropolitan Region that in the almost three and a half years that I have represented the region in this place I have been to many functions in the electorate — community functions, ethnic functions, you name it; I have been to every dogfight that is going. I have never seen Justin Madden at one, not at one.

Mr Barber — You should carry a camera with you. It would be like the Loch Ness monster!

Mr FINN — Let me tell you, Mr Barber, you would have a far greater chance of getting a shot of the Loch Ness monster than you would of Justin Madden in his electorate; that is the truth of the matter. In almost three and a half years I have yet to see him once in his electorate. I am sorry; that may be a small error in that I did see him one night. I was walking into a function and I saw him driving home. That is the only time I have seen him in the electorate in almost three and a half years.

He is not just a minister who does not care about his portfolio and does not take his responsibilities seriously; he does not give a damn about his electorate or the people who live in it, and he is the minister for respect. This is the Labor Party's definition of respect.

That tells us all. That tells us all about this government, where this government is leading us and where this government is going. It just does not care. In Victoria in 2010 Labor does not care.

Members would be very much aware that I have spoken at some length — —

Mr Jennings — And often.

Mr FINN — And often as well, Minister, on the subject of policing and law and order, particularly in the western suburbs. It is understandable.

I am sure Mr Eideh will agree with me that we have a real policing problem, a policing crisis in fact, in the western suburbs.

Mr Eideh — We're putting more on.

Mr Dalla-Riva — They're putting more on.

Mr FINN — They are putting more on? He's a moron!

We have a real policing crisis in the western suburbs. Long-suffering western suburbs residents have to put up with an enormous lack of police. The Police Association is telling us that in some stations we are down by 60 or more police. That is an intolerable situation. We are aware, for example, that in Werribee the shortage has been

going on for a decade.

For the 10 years that the Labor Party has been in government in this state the police shortage has been a matter of fact in Werribee. Has the government done anything about it? No. Does the government care about it? You would have to say no.

However, the government is, as we speak, building a police station at Tarneit, one of the newly developed areas just outside of Werribee. It is building a new police station in Tarneit just in time to open it before the state election. Is that not a coincidence?

While this new police station might be fine and dandy to look at and it will be a sensational opening — I am sure there will be scones, cups of tea and perhaps some McDonald's cordial — that will be on the front page of the newspaper the next week just in time for the election. There is one problem: there will not be enough police to man the station.

This great building in Tarneit will house only a 16-hour police station. Perhaps police should letterbox the general area advising the local crooks to commit crimes only between about 7.00 a.m. and 11.00 a.m., when the police station is open. It is ludicrous, it is ridiculous, but it is so typical of what we have come to expect from this government. Again it shows, as it always does, that the government just does not care.

I suggest that members go to Sunshine. If you can get through the door of the Sunshine police station, good luck to you. It is horrific that police have to put up with the conditions they are faced with every day at Sunshine. They are so undermanned, overworked and stressed that there is no way they can possibly keep up with the demands of the crime wave that is increasingly hitting Sunshine and surrounding areas. Sunshine — the Brimbank area generally, but Sunshine in particular — is suffering enormously as a result of this government's refusal to accept that the people of the area need proper policing.

The government again shows that Labor just does not care.

Footscray needed some new police, so the government closed the Williamstown police station overnight and put the police in Footscray. Of course the people of Williamstown do not need policing overnight; they do not get robbed or bashed! Too right they do, and at a far higher level now that they have no police at night.

When Labor ministers come in here saying that the government has put so many extra police on, that they are on the ground and are doing a marvellous

job, members should not believe them. We have a real policing crisis and a real crime crisis in this state, and it is a direct result of the fact that when it comes to law and order — particularly in the western suburbs, but it has to be said right throughout the state of Victoria — this Labor government just does not care.

A good indication of how little it cares and how it refuses to listen is the fact that Bob Cameron is still the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. Has there ever been a more incompetent police minister anywhere in the history of Australia than the bloke we have now?

Mr P. Davis — Possibly, but I do not know who it was.

Mr FINN — Mr Davis, if you can name him, I will buy you a slab, because Bob Cameron has to be the most pathetic, insipid police minister that the state has ever seen — —

Mr P. Davis — I know — Andre Haermeyer!

Mr FINN — No, Andre Haermeyer was an absolute champion compared — —

Mr Atkinson — I saw him last week. He sent his regards.

Mr FINN — I am sure he is enjoying life. I have no doubt of that. Andre Haermeyer was a champion of the people compared to the dill we have now. People are constantly telling the Premier, 'Get rid of him. He is no good, he does not know what he is doing and he cannot string more than two words together.'

I remember about a month ago just after the Liberal Party had announced that it would remove suspended sentencing if elected in November the government rolled out Bob Cameron to refute our argument on 3AW. He botched it so badly that within the hour the Premier was on the same radio program saying the same things, except he was saying them a lot better.

Here we have a police minister who does not have a clue about what he is doing, who is continuing the destruction of policing in the state and who does not seem to have any interest in law and order or in protecting the general community — —

Mr Atkinson — He is a good media performer!

Mr FINN — And his media skills are zilch. I have seen monkeys at Taronga Zoo who could perform better on television than Bob Cameron does. However, the minister stays despite the calls by many from one end of Victoria to the other. So many are calling on the Premier to get rid of this bloke, but he is still there. For the life of me I cannot work it out, I have to say. It just goes

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to show once again that John Brumby is not listening. Quite frankly, he does not care.

I have spoken out strongly on the issue of gangs, particularly in the western suburbs. I first raised my concern about gangs in the western suburbs about two and half years ago. I was told by the Premier, the police minister and the Chief Commissioner of Police, 'There are no gangs in the western suburbs.' That is what they said.

Clearly none of them had ever been to the western suburbs, because I have seen the gangs there. All you have to do is drive through certain suburbs and briefly pause on a street corner, and the gangs will gather around you. They are like flies, and they will be attracted to you.

Ms Hartland interjected.

Mr FINN — You come with me!

Ms Hartland — I have been there for 25 years.

Mr FINN — Come down to the Sunshine station, Ms Hartland. It is a bit after 9 o'clock now and it is dark. All the gangs will be down there now. I have seen them. It is a dangerous place to be. However, when I raised this issue the government did not want to know. It was not interested.

Ms Hartland interjected.

Mr FINN — I have this magpie sitting on the fence over there — I wish somebody would shoot it down!

On the issue of knives, I recall raising this issue years ago, and I raised it again when I returned to this Parliament. The issue of knives is a very real one. I know Les Twentyman has been raising it for a long time. I remember him telling me a decade ago that this grave concern about knives really had to be addressed. The government was told time and again that knives were becoming a real danger not just in the western suburbs but right throughout Melbourne. It has been told for a decade that knives and gang culture were a major concern. What did the Labor government do? It did absolutely nothing until it saw the chance for a photo opportunity the other day. Then it decided to do something.

Again the government shows that it will not listen, and Labor just does not care; it could not care less.

I remember many years ago when I was working at a radio station that has now gone — the late, lamented 3DB.

Mr Dalla-Riva — You are going back a long way.

Mr FINN — It is going way back, Mr Dalla-Riva. There was a jingle. I will not sing it for the benefit of the members, but the wording was, 'West gateway

to tomorrow, the West Gate Bridge will be a symbol of our city for all the world to see.' That was about 25 years or maybe even 30 or more years ago. How prophetic was that? Yes, the West Gate Bridge and the West Gate Freeway have become symbols of our city for all the world to see, because you will see the same congestion on the Tulla, the Monash Freeway and the Eastern Freeway as you see on the West Gate. Wherever people try to get into the city, you will see traffic jams. You will see these car parks gathered for miles and miles. What has the government done about this?

Mr Vogels — A congestion tax.

Mr FINN — It has not even got to that point, Mr Vogels; it has done absolutely nothing. I often wonder how many hours — —

Mr Atkinson interjected.

Mr FINN — No, let us not talk about that. The government has done absolutely nothing about this. Over the past decade the congestion on Melbourne's roads has got to the point where it is obscene. You have to wonder just how many man-hours are wasted every day by people sitting in traffic jams. You see car after car — every car obviously has at least one person in it — and you have to wonder. If you were to add all those up, how many hours are wasted by people stuck in traffic jams, trying to get into town? What does the Labor Party do about this? The Labor Party continues to do nothing. Why does the Labor Party continue to do nothing? It is because John Brumby and the Labor Party do not care. Labor just does not care. It is another example of the way it refuses to listen and it refuses to care.

Public transport is no better. I have to ask the question: who was Labor listening to when it came up with the idea of myki? It must have been a late-night session — that is all I can say. At the last count \$1.35 billion has been spent, and we still have not got a ticketing system. I cannot walk out of this Parliament tonight, walk across the road to the tram stop, get on a tram and travel down Bourke Street using myki.

After \$1.35 billion has been wasted by this government, I cannot get a myki tram ticket down Bourke Street.

How much is it going to cost before we have a system that actually works? It is a total mystery to me, because I can go to Sydney, I can go to Brisbane, I can go to Perth, I am told that I can go to London, I can go to all sorts of places around the world and I can buy a ticket and I can use public transport. But I cannot do it in Melbourne. This new public transport myki ticketing system is going to come in as one of

the greatest white elephants that this country, if not the world, has ever seen. What an extraordinary effort!

As I asked the other night: when will this government draw a line in the sand? When will it stop throwing good money after bad on this and realise that it is a total, unmitigated waste of money. Will we get to \$2 billion? Will we get to \$3 billion, maybe \$4 billion?

We have heard of Sale of the Century; this could be the auction of the century, as far as this government is concerned. But again, it is only taxpayers money. It is only funded by the people who go out and work every day and pay their taxes. John Brumby does not care. Why would he? It is not his money. That is what socialists like doing — they love spending other people's money — and he is a classic example of that.

I have to wonder, coming up to November of this year, if John Brumby will be starting to listen just a little bit more. Last Saturday week the people of Altona spoke for the people of the western suburbs when they sent a very loud and clear message to John Brumby that they are sick to death of being neglected. They are sick to death of being used and abused by the Labor Party in the way they have been for decades. I was staggered to wake up on the morning after the election to see John Brumby on the television and to read John Brumby in the newspapers telling everybody what a great result it was.

It was nearly a 13 per cent swing against Labor. Labor held a seat that had a little over 20 per cent margin. That seat now is held by a margin of a little over 7 per cent. If that is a great result, I am member of the Collingwood cheer squad — and I can assure members I am not and never would be.

Could this Premier be any more out of touch with what is happening in our community than to look at a 13 per cent swing in a by-election and crow about what a great result it is for the Labor Party?

Mr P. Davis — Wasn't he talking about the Liberal Party?

Mr FINN — It was a great result for the Liberal Party; there are no two ways about that at all. It is interesting because the comments on by-election night by the Premier pretty much backed up what I had heard time and again as I went around doorknocking in Altona in the lead-up to that by-election.

As I knocked on doors and pounded the footpaths campaigning for Mark Rose — an outstanding candidate, it has to be said — people were telling me, 'We don't like Brumby.' Some of

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them were telling me in harsher terms than that. They were saying, 'We don't like Brumby. He is arrogant, he is out of touch and he has to go.'

There were a lot of lifelong Labor voters in the Altona electorate who broke the habit of a lifetime — and it is a very bad habit to vote Labor every time you go to a polling booth — and voted Liberal. For them to do that, as they did in such large numbers, things have got to be crook, and people know things are crook. They know things are crook in the western suburbs, and they know things are crook right throughout the state of Victoria. But who does not know? Mr Brumby does not know things are crook. Why does he not know? Because he is not listening. He refuses to listen because he is too arrogant. In the old days some would have said in a crass way he could be regarded as being up himself. That is what some people would say. I would never use those terms, but that is a term that people openly use about our Premier.

We have got to the stage now that Victorians are suffering and Victoria is suffering across the board on a whole range of issues, and the Altona by-election is indicative of what is coming the way of this government on 27 November this year. I stand up in this Parliament tonight and say to Mr Brumby and this Labor government: listen, listen well or get out.

**COUNCIL**  
24 February 2010

# Anticorruption Commission: Establishment

Debate on the motion of Mr O'DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria):

That this house calls on the Victorian government to introduce an independent broadbased anticorruption commission in Victoria.

**Mr FINN** (Western Metropolitan) — It is fascinating to see the reaction of the Premier, Mr Brumby, whenever this subject is raised.

It is fascinating to see him go into a bit of a frenzy whenever a suggestion is made that we should have an independent anticorruption commission. It is interesting to see how his top lip starts to quiver a bit, and the beads of sweat start to gather at his brow.

One has to wonder why that is the case. Last Sunday morning I woke up at a ridiculously early hour, I have to say. I turned the radio on, and there

was the Premier telling all who cared to listen that having an independent anticorruption commission in this state would be an enormous waste of money. It would employ lawyers. It would not do any good and it would not help anybody; it would just be an employer of lawyers.

Later that very morning I went — I was going anyway — to the anticorruption commission conference. I had the opportunity of asking the incoming Attorney-General of New South Wales, Greg Smith, SC, what is his view of the anticorruption commission. Having explained to him what our Premier had said about an anticorruption commission being just an employer of lawyers, a very expensive waste of money and really not doing too much at all, I asked Greg Smith what his response to that was. Greg Smith is a former DPP (Director of Public Prosecutions) of New South Wales. He has had extensive experience with the anticorruption commission in New South Wales and, as I recall, has worked with it on a number of occasions. His response was a very simple one.

He said to me and the substantial gathering at the conference on Sunday that he just does not understand what Mr Brumby is on about, because his view of an independent anticorruption commission is that there would be very few lawyers indeed because most of those on the payroll, if I can use that term, would be made up of investigators — that is, the people actually investigating corruption and finding out if there is corruption.

I thought about it on my way home that day. It is true that an ICAC (independent commission against corruption) does not need lawyers. The people charged under an ICAC need lawyers, so what is the Premier of Victoria worried about? Perhaps he is thinking about his own legal bills, if an ICAC ever comes in. Perhaps that is what he is worried about because, having contemplated that question — —

**Mr Viney** — On a point of order, President, that was a fairly ordinary implication on the Premier of Victoria to suggest that if there were an ICAC, the Premier would need lawyers. I think the member should be called to order for saying something grubby like that and should withdraw it.

**Mr FINN** — On the point of order, President, I did not state that the Premier would need lawyers if an ICAC came in. I said perhaps if; I think there were about three 'ifs' in the whole sentence, so it is a fairly long bow for Mr Viney to be drawing in saying I have made an implication or accusation of

the kind he is suggesting.

Hon. T. C. Theophanous interjected.

The PRESIDENT — Order! It has been suggested to me that I should make a political judgement here, but I do not have that luxury.

However, I will say that what was said is at the margins and given that it was about the Premier and given also the status of the Premier, Mr Finn might like to rephrase what he said. There is a clear implication there, in my view, and I think most people who read that would have the same feeling as I have about the implication.

**Mr FINN** — President, I am trying to think how I would rephrase it in such a way that would meet with your approval. I am just suggesting why the Premier gets so nervous whenever the suggestion of an ICAC is proposed. Perhaps I will just leave it to other people to draw their own conclusions on that.

There is one area where a number of people, including the Premier, would have reason to be very nervous if an ICAC ever came to Victoria. If we had had an independent anticorruption commission over the past 12 months, we would have seen the truth come out about the Brimbank City Council.

We would not have seen the cover-up by this government that we have witnessed over the past 12 months, because the depth of corruption and the shenanigans that went on and perhaps continue to go on in certain quarters in Brimbank are things that I believe deserve to be exposed to the full light of scrutiny, and they have not received the full light of scrutiny.

Hon. T. C. Theophanous — Certainly not from you.

**Mr FINN** — I will get to Mr Theophanous in a minute; he should not worry. The Ombudsman's report made it very clear that something did not smell right in the city of Brimbank, and the Ombudsman's report was correct. Given the short time that the Ombudsman had to investigate the Brimbank City Council, there is no way on this earth that he or anybody else could have fathomed the depths to which the corruption in Brimbank had permeated the entire system.

We saw in that Ombudsman's report a number of what I suppose might be called small-time operators caught, named and exposed. We saw a number of local councillors named for doing various things and accusations of various things that were not, you would have to say, necessarily hanging offences. They were hung anyway, by the way, but I will get to that in a minute. We saw, for example, Hakki Suleyman, a small-time factional operator in the Australian Labor

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Party, hung out to dry. He was using, it is alleged and I understand it to be true, an office of a local member of Parliament, the Minister for Planning, the Honourable Justin Madden, to run his empire. That empire had seen his daughter, Natalie, elected as mayor of the City of Brimbank, a position which she used with significant and considerable ruthlessness, I have to say, and I have witnessed it myself.

Hakki and Natalie Suleyman are not the most delightful of individuals, but they may not be exactly at the top of the tree either. I do not think anybody who knows either of those people could say that they would have the brains to be behind the outrages committed against the people of Brimbank by some people in and around the Brimbank City Council. We will never know, because we do not have an independent commission to investigate these matters. We do not have a chance to dig deeper to find out who did what to whom and how many times.

Then we have Justin Madden, a member of this house.

I am acutely aware, President, that I cannot suggest too strongly some of the things he may have been involved in, but I think we can say quite conclusively from the Ombudsman's report that a lot of the carry-on that we saw in Brimbank was coming from his office. Whether the minister had any idea that was happening or not, again, we do not know. That is the problem about not having an independent commission — we can never find out. We will never know what Justin Madden knew and did not know. That is the problem we face. We need to find out. We need to get to the truth, and we cannot because we do not have a commission the likes of which we are talking about here this afternoon.

Then there are Mr Theophanous and his brother, Andrew, who are referred to with much affection in the north-western suburbs as the Theophani. They were mentioned in less than glowing terms, it has to be said, in the Ombudsman's report. Mr Theophanous has had his fair whack at the Ombudsman as a result of that, and I do not want to start all that again.

Hon. T. C. Theophanous — Why not?

Mr FINN — You only have one day left, so let us not waste it on Brimbank. I would like to know exactly what was going on, because I have heard allegations of what Mr Theophanous is supposed to have done. I do not know whether he did those things or not — I am not going to repeat those allegations — but I have heard those allegations.

Ms Huppert — That is very

forbearing of you.

Mr FINN — I would have thought so. I have heard those allegations, and I would like to know as a legislator and as a representative of the people of Brimbank if those allegations are true, and if they are not true, I would like the name of Mr Theophanous cleared completely.

I would like to be able to say to my constituents who come to me with these stories about Mr Theophanous, 'That is not true. He did not do that. He would not do that. He is a man of honour', but I cannot do that because we do not have a commission to investigate the sorts of allegations that were made. I cannot say the same thing about Mr Theophanous's brother, Andrew.

When people come to me with allegations about what Andrew Theophanous and Sam David did with the mayoralty I have absolutely no idea who offered what to whom and so forth, if indeed any of that sort of thing happened at all. I have no idea, and why do I have no idea? Why can I not get up and say, 'That is not true'? I cannot do that because we have not got a commission to investigate it, and that is what we need. That is what this motion is about today. It is about clearing people's names and about catching crooks who need to be caught.

I have mentioned a few of the names mentioned in the Ombudsman's report, and it has to be said that we have glossed over that report to a very large degree, but what we have missed out on as a result of not having an independent anticrime commission is finding out the truth about those who were not mentioned in the Ombudsman's report. These are people who were involved and are still involved in the internal politics of the Australian Labor Party in and around the City of Brimbank and who may have played a role in the corruption and the chicanery that went on in the Brimbank council. We will never know what the Deputy Premier knew. We have to remember that the Deputy Premier's electorate is the Assembly seat of Niddrie. The Niddrie electorate extends right into Keilor village, so he represents Brimbank. In fact Justin Madden's office is in the Niddrie Assembly electorate.

When all of this was exposed the Deputy Premier went on television and he was shocked; he was supposedly horrified.

He tried to tell us he did not know any of this was going on. I have to say to the house that I found and still find that extremely difficult to believe; in fact I find it impossible to

believe. If we had an independent commission which could investigate what the Deputy Premier knew, we could investigate the Deputy Premier's involvement.

Hon. T. C. Theophanous — What about your involvement?

Mr FINN — I am very happy to talk about my involvement — absolutely; any time, Mr Theophanous — but let us talk about what Mr Hulls knew. If we had an independent commission, we could find out. We could find out the role that the Premier played. You have to remember that when the Premier of the state came into the Victorian Parliament he came in via a by-election in the former Doutta Galla province. Where is Doutta Galla based? It is based in Brimbank. He was put into Parliament by the very people we are talking about and have been talking about — people who were in the Ombudsman's report and those who were not in the Ombudsman's report and perhaps should have been. If we had an independent commission to investigate these matters, we could find out the role of the Premier of this state and what he knew and what he did not know. Again, he denied all knowledge of what had been going on in Brimbank.

Hon. T. C. Theophanous interjected.

Mr FINN — Mr Theophanous knows exactly what was going on in Brimbank, I know what is going on in Brimbank and the Premier tries to tell us that he does not.

Mr Lenders — On a point of order, President, I take offence at the implications cast on the Premier and the Deputy Premier by Mr Finn. He is by his words accusing them of corruption, and I ask him to withdraw his inferences about the Premier and Deputy Premier and their involvement.

Mr FINN — On the point of order, President, on any reading of this there is no way that anybody could suggest that I am accusing either the Premier or the Deputy Premier of corruption. In fact the word was not used — not at all. All I said was that an independent commission would be able to investigate what certain people knew, including the Premier and the Deputy Premier. Therefore I believe that no withdrawal and no apology are necessary.

Mr O'Donohue — Further on the point of order, President, Mr Finn in his contribution said that an anticorruption commission would give members of Parliament and others the opportunity to clear their names completely.

The PRESIDENT — Order! I advise Mr O'Donohue that that is not on the point of order.

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In response to the point of order taken by the Leader of the Government regarding Mr Finn's inference that the Premier and/or Deputy Premier are corrupt, I find that the member is entitled to take offence on behalf of another member who is either not in the chamber or is in the other place. Because deep down I think I, like everyone else here, would read that Mr Finn is inferring just that, I ask him to withdraw the inference that both the Premier and the Deputy Premier are corrupt and that in some way an independent commission against corruption would expose that.

Mr FINN — President, I withdraw, but the cover-up continues even into this Parliament, which is a great pity. Perhaps we have another name we can add to the list.

An independent commission against corruption could expose — —

Hon. T. C. Theophanous interjected.

Mr FINN — No, I will not use the word 'expose'; I will say 'investigate.' Mr Theophanous is very touchy about that, as is Mr Lenders. I did not know that Mr Lenders had such a keen interest in what was going on in Brimbank, but perhaps he has his fingers in the pie as well. Perhaps that is another reason we need an independent commission: to investigate Mr Lenders. What does he know? What is he covering up? What has he been sitting on all these years? That is exactly why we need an independent commission: to investigate some of the shenanigans that have been going on in this state for far too long.

We need an independent commission to investigate why the Minister for Local Government, Richard Wynne, sat on his hands for as long as he did when everybody was telling him exactly what was going on in Brimbank. Everybody! People in this Parliament, people in the community and people at the council level were telling Richard Wynne, 'This is going on in Brimbank' — and he sat on his hands! If the Ombudsman had not investigated and if Mrs Powell, the member for Shepparton in the other house, had not written to the Ombudsman requesting an investigation, the minister would still be sitting on his hands. It would seem that the last thing the Minister for Local Government wanted to do was something — he is pretty good at that! The last thing he wanted to do was to act on the reports he had been receiving. An independent commission could investigate why the Minister for Local Government failed to do his job. An independent commission could investigate why the Minister for Local Government let the

people of Brimbank down.

A number of others perhaps could be brought out in an investigation by an independent commission — people like Bill Shorten, the federal member for Maribyrnong. It is well known that Bill Shorten is a factional head kicker. He will more than kick your head, as a number of people in this chamber could attest, and given half a chance he will kick it off! What role did he play? I too have heard rumours about Bill Shorten's role in this. I have heard stories about Bill Shorten's involvement with various people at and around Brimbank council. I would like to know if they are true. Without an investigation and an independent commission we cannot find out. Here we have a man who is destined, so he will tell us, to be Prime Minister of Australia, but we cannot find out the truth about him because we do not have an independent commission.

The same applies to a bloke called Senator Stephen Conroy — another bloke out there pulling the strings in Brimbank. We cannot find out exactly what he did or what he was up to; we cannot find out because we do not have an independent commission to ask the questions. We do not have an independent commission to investigate what was going on with Stephen Conroy. The same applies with Brendan O'Connor, the federal member for Gorton, who is out there playing games and all sorts of funny tricks — I cleaned that up!

There is no way that we can find out exactly what Brendan O'Connor was up to — if anything — because we do not have an independent commission.

The only thing we can be absolutely sure of is that the Brimbank council and its predecessors in Sunshine and Keilor have been crooked for years, and that is a direct result of control by the local branches, the war lords and the factions of the Australian Labor Party. We cannot get to the bottom of it; we cannot find out the truth — and surely that is what we should be aiming for — without an independent commission to investigate and find out what that truth is.

What was the government's response? It was to sack the council and forget the whole thing ever happened. That was a nonsensical approach, because the issue was, and continues to be, far deeper than can be resolved by the dismissal of a council. The government just shut down the whole thing and began one of the better cover-ups that I have seen of recent times.

There may be some people listening to this debate who will come to

the conclusion that that cover-up is continuing into this house this afternoon.

There is much reason for an independent anticrime commission in Victoria. I have given only one example. I could discuss the independent police office and investigations that are going on there. I could refer to a number of areas. However, I want to stick with the motion, because my great concern is what George Seitz, the member for Keilor in the other house, did. When I have raised this matter in this chamber over the past few years, all I have wanted is justice for the people of Brimbank. All I wanted was a fair go for the people of Brimbank and for the truth to come out. That has not happened. The truth has been buried by a government scared of the truth and terrified that the truth will come out.

If we had an independent anticrime commission, we could find out the truth and find out exactly what happened in Brimbank. We could bring those who had done the wrong thing to heel and clear the names of those who had been wrongly accused. However, we cannot because the Premier of this state will not institute an independent anticrime commission. He knows why he will not do that. At some stage he might like to share his reasons, because the reasons he gave just last Sunday do not wash. They do not hold water; they make no sense at all.

I commend Mr O'Donohue for moving this motion before the house. This is an extremely important matter which goes to the very integrity of government. It goes to whether people in the street — taxpayers, voters; call them what you will — can trust their government, their elected officials, whether they be in state, federal or local government. That is very important.

For too long we have heard — you, President, have heard it, no doubt — people say, 'We can't trust you lot; you are all crooks.' They have said it to me, and I have no doubt they have said it to you, President. I am sure they have. We want to clean up the image of politicians in this country. We want to clean up the image of elected legislators in this state and in this country. An independent anticrime commission will do just that. For that reason and that reason alone we should adopt that course immediately, and we should most certainly support Mr O'Donohue's motion here this afternoon.

## Liberal Party: Altona by- election

**Mr FINN** (Western Metropolitan) — I have spoken before in this house about the roar that is coming from Melbourne's west. We heard a little of that roar on Saturday, 13 February, when the people of the western suburbs started to vent their anger on a government that has treated them so badly. With close to a 13 per cent swing against the Brumby government on what Labor so arrogantly calls its own turf; it was a message from the people of Altona that they have run out of patience. They were speaking on behalf of all the people of the western suburbs, because the people of the west have had enough. We are sick of being ignored. We are sick of being neglected. We are sick of the blow-ins from out of town who are dumped on us by the Labor Party. The people of the west are now turning on Labor in the way that Labor long ago turned on them.

My congratulations go to Mark Rose, who was an outstanding candidate and would have made a great member of Parliament, but he did not quite get there on this occasion; Andrew Elsbury, who was instrumental in putting the campaign together; and all the Liberals of the western suburbs who should be very proud of the outstanding campaign in the lead-up to the Altona by-election. If it were not for Labor's best friends, the Greens, Mark Rose would now be a member of Parliament. That is a sad fact for the people of the western suburbs. I urge them to hang in there, because I know the best is yet to come.

## Caroline Springs College: disability funding

**Mr FINN** (Western Metropolitan) — I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Education. I am sure everybody in this house knows the story of Tyler Fyshlock, a seven-year-old little boy who lost his remaining eye to cancer two or three years ago and is now completely without eyesight. I am sure everybody in this house admires his bravery and the

bravery of his parents. I cannot help but think how extraordinarily difficult it must have been for his parents to decide to sacrifice his eyesight in order to save his life. As I said, I have admired both Tyler and his parents for quite some time, so I have been most distressed to read in recent times that he was bullied at his school, Caroline Springs College, which is in Western Metropolitan Region. That bullying, though, is nothing compared to what he now faces.

Tyler currently receives funding for a teaching aide for just 17 hours per week, and that is hardly sensational or anything to get excited about. But he needs a new piece of equipment at the school. The school says that it cannot afford that piece of equipment and that it will be paid for out of the budget allocated for his aide, which means there will be severe cuts to the time allowed for an aide. Now we are talking here about a seven-year-old little boy who has no sight at all; he is completely blind. Very recently he was found wandering around the front of the school, totally disorientated, when he was left without an aide for a relatively brief period of time.

This afternoon I have spoken to Tyler's mother, Georgette, who as one can understand is in quite a state about what is happening to her son. She has told me that unless things change dramatically very soon, homeschooling is the only option for her and for Tyler. It just staggers me that this could happen in any school in Victoria in 2010.

Unfortunately those of us who have children with disabilities know just how hard we have to fight for anything that we can get for our children. I ask the minister as a matter of urgency — and I emphasise that word 'urgency' — to convene a meeting of Tyler's parents, the school authorities and her office. I believe it is imperative we ensure that Tyler's life is not made even more difficult. He must be able to continue his schooling. I ask that the minister put those priorities into place, and I believe that a priority worth looking after is Tyler Fyshlock.

## Migrant Resource Centre North West Region: membership

**Mr FINN** (Western Metropolitan) — I raise a matter for the attention of the Premier in his capacity as the Minister for Multicultural Affairs. The matter concerns the Migrant Resource Centre North West Region (MRCNW), the website of which says:

... is a not-for-profit, community-based organisation governed by a voluntary committee of management. The organisation was established in 1989 to provide support for refugees and migrants and support those who work with this target group.

Our goal is to assist clients and community groups to improve their ability to access participation in the life of the Australian community while respecting and supporting people to maintain their individual culture and heritage.

MRC North West provides settlement services in the cities of Brimbank, Hume, Moonee Valley, Maribyrnong, Hobsons Bay and the shire of Melton. Our aged and disability services operate across the western region of Melbourne.

I would like to draw the attention of the house, and particularly the attention of the Premier, to a section on the website that refers to membership. The section reads:

Membership of the MRCNW is open to individuals who support the aims and work of the Migrant Resource Centre North West Region and costs \$5 per year.

Each year the members of the MRC elect 11 representatives to the committee of management. The committee of management then governs the organisation on behalf of the members of the Migrant Resource Centre North West Region.

As a member you are not only showing your support for the work of the Migrant Resource Centre North West Region but you are also eligible to stand for election to the committee of management after 12 months of membership and you are eligible to vote in annual elections.

This will probably come as a bit of a surprise to some people, because I am informed that the executive officer of MRCNW, Anthony Abate, a former Brimbank councillor named

## Migrant Resource Centre North West Region: membership...

in the Ombudsman's report on the Brimbank council, has been denying membership to those who do not meet his approval.

MRCNW first came to my attention way back in 1996 when I attended there with the then Minister Assisting the Premier on Multicultural Affairs, Phil Honeywood, to give a bus to the centre. The next time I saw that centre was on television when that bus was full of voters for a Labor preselection.

Rumours persist that the MRCNW involves itself in the internal politics and machinations of the ALP, which is not surprising when you consider that the chair is Hakki Suleyman, who is well known to us and the Minister for Planning. MRCNW is indeed the last remaining bastion of the Suleyman empire.

I ask the Premier to hold a full ministerial investigation to ensure that the results of the investigation are made public and to clear, or otherwise, this particular group.

**COUNCIL**  
10 March 2010

## Minister For Planning: Want Of Confidence

**Mr FINN** (Western Metropolitan) — It is a wonderful thing to be in this Parliament today and to be the beneficiary of the all-knowing guidance of the Minister for Public Transport. It is something for which, when I kneel down beside my bed to say my prayers tonight, I will be giving thanks — for the gift of Mr Pakula's knowledge.

Mrs Peulich — And enlightenment.

Mr FINN — And enlightenment, Mrs Peulich. It is a word you do not usually associate with Mr Pakula, but on this occasion we are going to have to.

The trouble is that despite all the arrogance and the don't know, don't care attitude that has just been displayed by Mr Pakula, one thing was missing. In the almost 20 minutes the minister spoke one thing was missing: he did not defend his colleague the Minister for Planning. He did not defend Justin Madden. He did not defend the government on what it has done and what it has been caught doing. He went into process, into attacking committees, into an explanation of the Westminster system and around and around, but he did not actually defend Justin Madden.

Why? Because Mr Madden cannot be defended. What he has done and what he has been caught doing is indefensible.

If Yogi Berra was with us today, he would say that this is a little bit 'like deja vu all over again', because there is a certain sameness about what we have heard from the Minister for Planning on this scandal and what we heard from him on the scandal regarding Brimbank City Council last year. Members will recall that last year we had the extraordinary episode of Hakki Suleyman, who was recently mentioned in despatches in another area, who was running the Brimbank City Council from Mr Madden's electorate office — the Suleyman empire was being run from the electorate office of Mr Madden. It was the centre of corruption of local government in Victoria.

When this was discovered, or when the minister finally accepted that this was going on — because people had been telling him about it for years — what was his defence? It was, 'I did not know'. Why did he not know? As I said, people had been telling him for years. I personally had been telling him for some 12 or 18 months, but he stuck to his line that he did not know. Now we have a total corruption of the planning process of this state, as exposed in the document that was sent to the ABC. This is a deep-seated and orchestrated corruption of an important process in this state. When this was pointed out to the Minister for Planning he said, 'I did not know'. It was exactly the same as the response he gave on another matter in June last year.

Last June he said he did not know what was going on in his electorate office; now he says he does not know what is going on in his ministerial office. If he does not know what is going on in his electorate office or in his ministerial office, why is he in the job at all? Does he know what is going on anywhere?

He tells us he does not know. Personally I find that very hard to believe. I am sure there would be many who would be very tempted to believe Mr Madden walks around in a haze.

Mrs Peulich — Head in the clouds.

Mr FINN — With his head in the clouds, indeed, Mrs Peulich. They would be very tempted to accept his explanation that he is too stupid to know what is going on around him. I am not sure I accept that explanation.

Mrs Peulich interjected.

Mr FINN — It is very tempting, Mrs Peulich, I can assure you, but I cannot accept that any minister of the Crown of any government is that stupid. I cannot believe that that is the case.

I should mention before I go any further that of course, going back to the *deja vu* theme, the responses from the minister last year and now are very similar, and the government gave a similar response. Last year the government sacked the council with no real explanation being given; then it moved its members along to get them out of the way. This year the minister's media adviser has been moved along. We are not sure where she has been moved along to, but we are told she has been 'moved along' — anything to get her out of the way. That is how this government operates. Once government members are caught with their fingers in the till, they claim innocence and then try anything to get the situation, which they have created, out of the way.

There is a certain irony that we are talking not only of the Minister for Planning but also of the Minister for the Respect Agenda, because this minister has a distinct pattern of total disrespect in a whole range of areas — for example, in his electorate of Western Metropolitan Region, which I share with him. As I said to the house not so long ago, in the three and a half years that I have represented that area I have yet to see Mr Madden at a local community gathering; not once has he attended one. I have been to probably thousands over the last three and a half years, but I have yet to see him at just one. That is an example of the disrespect shown to even his electorate — his local community.

I quoted in the past the situation with the Sunshine RSL, where the local community was totally ignored. They were very organised, because they were up in arms about what was being done, but this minister who is supposedly the minister for respect would not even speak to them.

That is the degree of respect that he shows. Now we see a total disregard, as displayed by the exposure of this document, for the planning system in this state. That is the simple fact of the matter: his actions are a total disregard for the planning scheme in Victoria.

As Mr Hall pointed out, the minister has spent very little time in the chamber today, and I note he is about to head for the door again right now. I would be tempted to say that most people in the situation that the minister finds himself in would be in this chamber to defend themselves, but not him. Even now he shows the Parliament and this house total disrespect as he puts his tail between his legs and heads for the door, as he does so often. If he does anything well, he does that well — I give him credit for that.

## Minister For Planning: Want Of Confidence...

Last year this house passed a motion of no confidence in the minister, which is the strongest possible resolution; it does not happen every day. Many years have passed since the last one occurred. Minister Madden showed no respect for this house; had he, he would not be here, he would not be a minister. In fact he raised his middle finger to every single member of this house, and he refused to resign.

In the final couple of minutes available to me I have to ask: where does this leave the planning scheme in Victoria? The minister, through his actions and the actions of his personal office, has created a situation where a black mark hangs over his every decision. People must ask, 'Has this or that decision been made on merit? Have they been made because the community has been properly consulted or have they been made on some other criteria that the minister obviously uses from time to time?'

There are big black question marks hanging over these decisions, and it has to be said that from this point on, now that the actions of this minister have been made public, every future decision that he makes will be compromised. On every future decision this minister makes people will be entitled to ask exactly the same question: is this fair dinkum; is this done through a public consultation process, or is this based on some secret criteria the minister might have?

I know that this minister will be held in contempt by many in the community for what he did last year in Brimbank, but what he has done now is leave the planning system in this state in tatters. Nobody can have total confidence any more about what is going on in the planning system in this state so long as Mr Madden is the planning minister.

As I said earlier, Mr Madden would have us believe that he is in imbecile.

He would have us believe that he does not know what is going on around him — that he walks around with his eyes and ears closed, and does not know what is going on in his electorate or ministerial offices. I do not believe that. What we have seen here is the continuation of a cover-up — or perhaps there is a new cover-up. We saw the first cover-up last year with Brimbank, and we are seeing the second cover-up here today on this particular issue.

This is appalling by any standards, and as elected members of Parliament, elected representatives of the people of this state, we have a responsibility to hold those ministers accountable. This minister, Justin Madden, is not fit to hold the position of minister of the

Crown. He covered up last year, he is covering up now and he has to go. I urge the house to support this motion.

**COUNCIL | Adjournment**  
11 March 2010

## Public transport: myki ticketing system

**Mr FINN** (Western Metropolitan) — I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Public Transport, and I am delighted to see that he is the minister on duty this evening. He may remember that some weeks ago I raised in this house the matter of a young lady, Sarah, who had approached me having placed \$10 on her myki card as something of an experiment, I suppose; I am assuming we are very much into the experimental stage of myki. The myki card ate her \$10 and when she went to use it she was informed that there was no money at all on her card. She was obviously somewhat distressed to discover that the \$10 she had previously placed on the card was just not there at all. She contacted myki, quite understandably, after contacting me and received the following response:

Thank you for contacting myki.

As per your conversation with the resolutions manager on 10.02.10, your \$10 has been reimbursed to your myki as myki money.

I am not going to speculate on what the exchange rate might be on myki money, but she has got her \$10 back at least. This next bit is a killer:

Should you now require a refund, the attached refund and reimbursement form will need to be completed and returned with your myki. Please note, an administration fee of \$9.80 will apply.

A \$9.80 administration fee for a \$10 refund! The email concludes:

If you need further information, please visit [myki.com.au](http://myki.com.au) or call 13 6954 (13 myki).

myki — it's your key.

That is the slogan at the end of the letter. I wonder how much that little slogan cost.

Regards

myki customer care team

In anybody's language this is a blatant rip-off. I ask the minister to perhaps counsel those who are in control of myki, if indeed anybody is in control of myki just at the minute, and to ensure that refunds such as the

one that Sarah is seeking for her \$10 that disappeared be provided without outrageous fees and charges such as the one I have described. To charge a \$9.80 administration fee for a \$10 refund surely beats even the banks.

It is a disgrace; it is something that we should not tolerate in this Parliament or in this state.

Mr D. Davis — A 25-cent phone call would take care of it.

Mr FINN — Indeed you could not even afford the phone call: 20 cents does not get you far these days. I ask the minister to take action that will fix this problem forever.

**COUNCIL | Members Statements**  
11 March 2010

## Minister for Planning: performance

**Mr FINN** (Western Metropolitan) — I am very honoured to be a member of this Parliament. I take very seriously the role the people of Melbourne's west have elected me to play in this house. Sadly, the same cannot be said for the Minister for Planning. Last night his performance in this house was laden with arrogance and contempt, not just for this house but for his constituents as well.

I have a responsibility to serve the best interests of my constituents. As such, today I pledge to this house that I will communicate Justin Madden's attitude towards being a member of Parliament to the people of Essendon well before they vote in November this year. I will inform the people of Essendon of the minister's do not know, do not care attitude and his arrogant contempt for them and their needs.

Justin Madden has come to personify everything that is wrong with the Brumby government. He showed it last year when he was caught out in Brimbank; he showed it again this year in his office with the Hotel Windsor planning scandal; he showed it again for all the world to see last night in this house.

I care about the people of Essendon. I have a duty to tell them exactly what the ALP has dumped on them. Unlike Justin Madden and the Brumby government, I know, I care and I will accept my responsibilities.

## City of Brimbank: vermin control

**Mr FINN** (Western Metropolitan) — I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Health concerning rats in Brimbank, something the minister may be aware of. This time I have to report to the house that it is the four-legged variety I am referring to, and to my knowledge they are not members of the ALP. During recent weeks a number of sightings of rats in the streets of Sunshine have been reported to me and there have been reports in the local newspapers about rats in the streets around food and rubbish that has not been collected by the Brimbank council. In fact I received an email last night that says:

I would like to bring to your attention a very horrible situation in Sunshine area. We have a small family business in this area not too far from your office.

I refer to a problem in Devon Lane, first right off Hampshire Road, down Devonshire Road. It is being treated as a dumping ground for food scraps and all sorts of rubbish. I called the council two weeks ago and was told that an inspector would look at the area. Nothing has been done so today my daughter called the council again to say nothing had been done -- vermin everywhere, health issues et cetera. She was informed that we need to identify the responsible shops or owners.

Surely in this day and age we can do better than live like a Third World country. I visited India a few years ago and saw the same kind of thing. We were robbed of all our computers last week with no hope of recovery and my husband has a brain tumour and he is very sick. I cannot believe that the council expect me to find who is responsible. I am at my wits end trying to live, never mind worrying that rats will enter our office and finish us off completely.

This is a very serious matter. As I said, these rats are not far from my own office. Although I have yet to see those vermin, I am told they are quite prominent in the Sunshine area. Whilst I am not suggesting to this house that we are about to see an outbreak of bubonic plague, this is something that is of enormous concern to those who travel around the Sunshine area, particularly on foot, and I have been known to do that myself from time to time.

I ask the Minister for Health, given that the state government-appointed administrators of the Brimbank council do not care about what

happens in the streets of Sunshine, as a matter of urgency to dispatch state health inspectors who can see for themselves the problems in the streets of Sunshine and to do something about it before we have major public health problems in the Sunshine area. This is a serious problem. The people of Sunshine deserve better.

## Housing: Sunshine development

**Mr FINN** (Western Metropolitan) — My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Planning — and for the information of the minister, this is not a trick question. I refer the minister to the failed social housing project associated with the Sunshine RSL in Dickson Street, Sunshine. I further refer the minister to his response to my adjournment speech on this matter, which was received by me on Thursday, 11 March, of this year, and which concludes with the minister saying:

This proposal is currently under assessment and my decision will take into account the comments of Brimbank council.

I ask how the minister reconciles that statement with a media release he issued on 22 December 2009, almost three months earlier, announcing:

The Brumby Labor government has cleared the path for a \$10 million social housing development in Dickson Street, Sunshine ... planning minister Justin Madden has approved the housing development, saying it would be of great benefit to the community.

Will the minister inform the house which of his statements on this development is correct?

The PRESIDENT — Order! Did Mr Finn say that he had asked that question in December?

Mr FINN — No.

The PRESIDENT — Order! So the question has not been asked previously.

Mr Viney — On a point of order, President, my understanding is that this is a matter Mr Finn raised on the adjournment; he indicated that in his preamble. I seek your guidance as to whether that makes this question in order.

The PRESIDENT — Order! Raising a matter on adjournment does not affect a member's capacity to raise the matter

as a formal question without notice.

Hon. J. M. MADDEN (Minister for Planning) — I welcome Mr Finn's interest. Given that he has basically asked this question on the adjournment and no doubt will get a response, the fact that he is interested in asking the same question again obviously means that in his file he has a limited number of questions he can ask at any one time. I welcome Mr Finn's interest in this matter. I am also interested in Mr Finn's support of this project or lack thereof.

I note with interest —

Mr D. Davis — On a point of order, President, the minister well knows his job in question time is to answer questions put to him, not to attack the opposition. He would do well to get on and answer the question.

The PRESIDENT — Order! I find the point of order to be correct. It is not appropriate to criticise members who are asking questions. Whilst I am reasonably lenient in question time on criticism et cetera, I think some of the comments made by the minister fall into the questionable category.

Hon. J. M. MADDEN — I welcome Mr Finn's interest in social housing projects. I welcome it because in recent days there has no doubt been a lot of interest in social housing projects and the status of those projects.

Mr Finn interjected.

The PRESIDENT — Order! Mr Finn is not helping.

Hon. J. M. MADDEN — I note that a number of projects have been raised here by individual members in regard to the status of these projects and the degree of consultation around those projects. I welcome that interest, if it is a legitimate interest in proceeding with social housing and supporting that social housing project but with further consultation. But I do get concerned from time to time about comments made by members in this chamber under the veil of making out they support a project when they are looking for a reason to criticise a project. I take that into account in answering this question.

No doubt I have made a response to Mr Finn in relation to these matters and no doubt he will receive that response.

In relation to the response that he got some time after announcements had been made, it sounds to me as if —

Mr Finn — On the last sitting day — that's when I got it.

Hon. J. M. MADDEN — I am glad you eventually got it, Mr Finn, because eventually you will get a lot of things.

Mr Finn interjected.

## Housing: Sunshine development...

Mr Atkinson — On a point of order, President, the minister seems to be fairly keen to carry on a conversation with the member across the chamber rather than addressing the matter through the Chair.

The PRESIDENT — Order!

I thank the Deputy President for his assistance, but in fact it is clearly not a point of order. I remind the minister and Mr Finn, who asked the question, that if Mr Finn wants to hear the answer he should allow the minister to continue.

Hon. J. M. MADDEN — It would appear to me that the response Mr Finn got was held up in the system for some time. Because it was held up in the system, no doubt Mr Finn has had his question answered prior to the response he got through the press release that was issued at the end of last year.

### Supplementary question

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I thank the minister for his extraordinary attempted answer. Now that the Sunshine RSL has withdrawn its support for this development, is the minister in a position to inform the house of his current view on the Dickson Street project or does he need to run it past his media adviser first?

Hon. J. M. MADDEN (Minister for Planning) — On a point of order, President, I am not sure Mr Finn asked me for a view or actually asked me a question. I am not sure a view is what should be asked of a minister; ministers should be asked for a specific response in relation to their portfolio responsibilities.

The PRESIDENT — Order! I think Mr Finn is actually asking a supplementary question, but in the event that he was not and the minister is right, that he was asking for a view, Mr Finn can actually do that.

Hon. J. M. MADDEN — As long I am not offering an opinion? Is that right, President?

I am just concerned about the difference between an opinion and a view. I am happy to give both. I am happy to give Mr Finn an opinion of himself, and I am happy to give a view in relation to the project.

In relation to my opinion of Mr Finn, it is better that I say nothing at all. But in relation to my view of this project, if a project is withdrawn, there is no project. If Mr Finn is supporting a project — if he is advocating strongly for a project and actively endorsing a project — or if he is not endorsing a project, he should put that on the record. If Mr Finn feels strongly about these social housing projects — as Ms Lovell and other members of this

chamber do — or any other project, he should make a submission to either the minister or to the independent panel. We have some very squeaky wheels on the other side of the chamber, but when it actually comes to the good oil, doing the hard work —

Mr Finn — Midnight oil!

Hon. J. M. MADDEN — It is burning the midnight oil, Mr Finn, in order to represent a particular view about these projects. Those opposite are relatively silent unless it relates to trying to stall a project. I compliment Mr Dalla-Riva because he seems to be the only person on the crossbenches who is prepared to stand up for something. I am not sure the opposition is prepared to stand up for the development industry or the particular community group or even the construction industry.

If the opposition had its way, there would be virtually no construction in this state. It has already done that through the growth areas infrastructure contribution, it tried to do it through the DAC development assessment committees, and now it is trying to do it through social housing.

If it has a position on construction, it should be put it down as policy, recorded in this place, and then we can debate it accordingly.

*Ordered that answer be considered next day on motion of Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan).*

## COUNCIL | Members Statements 24 March 2010

### Western Bulldogs: NAB Cup premiers

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — The house has heard me speak from time to time about the crimes committed by the Labor Party against the people of the western suburbs. Labor's neglect of Melbourne's west is quite legendary. Labor's use and abuse of the west has had a deleterious psychological effect on many people throughout the western suburbs. People are shattered as a result of the way they have been treated by the Labor Party over an extended period, so it is good to be able to stand up in this house and deliver some good news for a change.

Over the last week and a half there has been a real spring in the step of most, if not all, people in the western suburbs. From Williamstown to Werribee, from Altona to Albion,

people are happy, they are excited again, and it is all because the Western Bulldogs won the NAB Cup last Saturday week.

I am not jumping on the bandwagon. This house, if not everybody in Victoria, knows I am a Tiger supporter, but it is very hard not to get excited about the way the Western Bulldogs are shaping up for this year. One cannot help but be caught up in the Bulldog excitement. The Chinese tell us that it is the year of the tiger. I have my doubts, sadly, and in the absence of a Richmond flag I sincerely hope that the cup can come to the Whitten Oval in 2010. I urge everyone in the western suburbs to get behind the Doggies and see what we can all do to support the team throughout the 2010 season.

## COUNCIL | Adjournment 25 March 2010

### City of Brimbank: councillor conduct

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Local Government, and it follows a great deal of concern in the Brimbank area. It is fair to say that the concerns held in Brimbank are rampant, and the cynicism has been fed by government inaction about a whole range of Brimbank City Council-related issues going back a number of years. As we know the Ombudsman's report last year merely skimmed the surface. No charges have been laid as a result of that report, and it seems that no further action has been taken since the council was summarily dismissed — even though it was the new council and not the old council that was the subject of the report to begin with.

The situation is that the Brimbank community is extremely concerned and cynical and strongly believes there has been a cover-up.

There is a very strong view in the Brimbank community that all this government wants to do is to get this issue out of the way this side of the election and that it does not particularly care what happens —

Mrs Peulich — A bit of unfinished business.

Mr FINN — Unfinished business indeed. What we need is justice for the people of Brimbank, because there is a great deal of concern in that community, but up to this point justice has not been a consideration at all. There is real anger at the neglect and the fact that the community has been

## City of Brimbank: councillor conduct...

ignored to this point.

As an example I bring to the house's attention a complaint that I particularly wish to raise with the minister. The former deputy mayor of Brimbank, Tran Siu, has been subject to a complaint that on election day in November 2008 he was handing out unregistered how-to-vote cards.

That complaint was laid with the Victorian Electoral Commission in November 2008 and handed to the department of local government, which sat on it for 12 months. It was then passed to the Local Government Investigations and Compliance Inspectorate and has not been seen since.

This is a very serious matter, and a lot of people in the Brimbank area are asking why you would bother having laws if you do not bother upholding them or at least investigating complaints about them. I believe this matter must be investigated. It is important that justice not just be done but be seen to be done. There does not seem to have been a lot of that in the Brimbank area over the last 18 months or so. I ask the minister as a matter of urgency to ensure that this matter is properly investigated and that charges are laid if necessary.

**COUNCIL | Adjournment  
13 April 2010**

## Racial and religious tolerance: offensive advertising

**Mr FINN** (Western Metropolitan) — I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Attorney-General. For Christians throughout the world Easter is the most joyous time of the year. Without giving religious instruction, which I can assure the house I am most certainly not qualified to do, the Easter season is the very basis of Christianity. Without the events of Easter, Christianity is without purpose. The days leading up to Easter are the most solemn and sacred of any given year, and they include Good Friday when Christians commemorate the death of Jesus Christ.

Keeping this in mind, I ask the house to consider the horror felt by many when they saw an image of a crucified Christ being used to promote a rave party at the La Di Da nightclub in

Melbourne's CBD. I was sickened and angered by the advertisements when they were pointed out to me.

One does not have to be some sort of religious fanatic to share the revulsion that I felt when confronted by these appalling advertisements and the promotion of this dance party.

I ask the Attorney-General to launch an investigation into this promotion with a view to establishing whether there has been a breach of the Racial and Religious Vilification Act. I must say to you, President, I am disappointed that I have to raise this matter. I cannot help but think that if images of Buddha or Mohammed had been used in a similar manner, the Attorney-General's political correctness police would have already taken the necessary action. It disappoints me enormously to have to raise this. Just because people are in a majority does not mean they cannot be subject to vilification. This is an extraordinarily important matter for a lot of people. I have spoken to a good number of people over the last week or two who have been revolted — —

Mrs Coote — Outraged.

**Mr FINN** — And outraged indeed by what has occurred on this occasion. I ask the Attorney-General to take the necessary action to establish whether there has been a breach of the Racial and Religious Vilification Act with regard to this promotion and these advertisements and ensure that Christians in our community are afforded proper protection from the vilification that I believe this promotion clearly presents.

**COUNCIL  
13 April 2010**

## Government decision-making, consultation and approval processes

**Mr FINN** (Western Metropolitan) — Like Mr Atkinson, I am not a member of the committee but again like Mr Atkinson I regard this as an extremely important matter not just to those who have a direct interest but to everybody across the state of Victoria, because this matter goes to the very integrity of the planning system in this state. Indeed it goes to the integrity of government in Victoria, and that is something that I believe we should all concern ourselves with.

It distresses me to see the government of the state and certain ministers, including the Minister for Planning and the Attorney-General, who is the Deputy Premier, attempting to turn the committee into a three-ring circus. That is in itself holding the Parliament in contempt.

My particular concerns are about the interference of the Attorney-General in this matter. We know how arrogant he can be. The house has had read to it letters from him that use language which is intemperate to say the very least. One is almost tempted to compare him to a demented Roman emperor. I suppose if Christine Nixon has been compared to Nero over the last week or so, some might compare Mr Hulls to Caligula, and we can only hope he does not have a horse.

Mr Hulls thrives on his reputation of being a headkicker, a bully and a political thug. He has lived off that reputation for many years, and he is carrying through in this particular instance what comes naturally to him. Mr Kavanagh and a couple of other speakers have referred to something that really almost took my breath away.

Mr Hulls has been seen on television over the last couple of nights or so saying he does not believe a 25-year-old woman who is an employee of this government — who was employed as a spin doctor, a media adviser — has the capacity to front this committee to answer questions because she is a young woman. Yes, she is a young woman. Should that matter?

This bloke, the Attorney-General, was a champion of equal opportunity in this state. This bloke has such an ego about equal opportunity that he is rewriting the entire act in his own image. This extraordinary individual, this bloke who will pursue equal opportunity to all sorts of lengths, has said a staffer is not up to facing this committee because she is a woman. That is clearly nonsense, and anybody who considers that for even a brief period of time will accept that it is nonsense.

Presumably Peta Duke was hired on her merits. I have no evidence to suggest otherwise, and I would not suggest otherwise. Given that she has been hired on her merits and she has a very responsible position within the government — we saw what her responsibilities included when she pressed the wrong button and sent that particular memo to the ABC — presumably she is capable of telling us if there is or has been a corruption perpetrated by the Minister for Planning's office. I do not think that is a difficult question for anybody.

If she has been involved in activities

## Government decision-making, consultation and approval processes...

which, let us say, lead the public of Victoria to have some doubt as to the integrity of the minister or his office or his ability to carry through his duties, then I think it is a fair and reasonable thing that we give her the opportunity to say that. If she has not been involved in those activities, we should give her the opportunity to say so.

The Attorney-General says, 'No, you can't speak to her; you can't have her appear before the committee, because she is a woman.' This is 2010. Where has this man been? While he has been ranting and raving about equal opportunity it seems that perhaps deep down the feelings do not exactly meet the rhetoric that the Attorney-General likes us to be subjected to.

The other main issue that Mr David Davis mentioned just a few minutes ago is the importance of the authority of the Parliament over the executive.

Mr Hulls, the Attorney-General, is the chief law officer of this state as distinct from the chief law-maker, as Mr Madden told us; he would have us believe this Parliament is somehow a lesser body than the executive. He is saying to this Parliament, 'Suffer in your jocks.' That is what we are being subjected to by this Attorney-General. He is saying that the powers of the executive, the ministry, are above and beyond this Parliament. We all know what a nonsense that is. That statement is a total contempt of Parliament.

Mrs Peulich — He thinks he can get away with it.

Mr FINN — He does think he can get away with it, but we cannot let him; it is as simple as that. We, as members of Parliament, have a responsibility to ensure that the authority of this Parliament comes first. We have an obligation to ensure that no minister, much less the Attorney-General, can get away with what he is attempting to do at the moment.

We know Labor is in trouble. I apologise to Mr Kavanagh; it is the ALP, because as is historically and legally correct, there is in fact only one Labor member in this Parliament — and that is, Mr Kavanagh. The ALP is in panic mode, so we will hear more and more of the sort of lunacy that we heard from Mr Hulls over the last week or so. Whether it be attacking people like Mr Rich-Phillips or some other sort of nonsense, I am afraid it is something we are going to have to prepare ourselves for in the months ahead, as the election looms ever closer.

In conclusion I say just one thing to the Attorney-General: pull your head in and let us get on with the job

of establishing the facts. There is too much at risk and too much at stake on this very important issue.

**COUNCIL**  
14 April 2010

## City Of Hobsons Bay: Planning Scheme Amendment

**Mr FINN** (Western Metropolitan) — I have to report to the house, as I think has been suggested by Ms Hartland, that there is very real anger in Williamstown. If I were the Minister for Planning I would not be planning a visit to Williamstown any time soon, because he would not be welcome.

I do not think that his party will be welcome either for a whole lot longer. Just going on the number of emails that I have received over the last week, taking away the letters about the Equal Opportunity Bill, there is only one issue in this state — that is, this issue in Williamstown.

Given Minister Madden's record in planning, it is not at all surprising that people are very angry. Consultation is not in his vocabulary. He does not know how to talk to people. He does not know how to listen to people. He does not want to know how to listen to people. This is something that has been grating over the last three and a half years and is reaching a crescendo in many parts of Victoria, and Williamstown is most certainly one of those.

The minister has made a rod for his own back in places such as Sunshine, where he approved a now failed development at the Sunshine RSL, a social housing project next to a licensed gaming facility, against the wishes of the local community. The local community was up in arms — in fact, it still is very much up in arms — about that project. Look at what has happened in Camberwell. The people in Camberwell have been fighting the development of their railway station for many a long year and thought they were having some pretty strong success — until Minister Madden came along and knocked that on the head.

It is happening right across the state, so it is not surprising that when we see leaked memos suggesting we have fake consultation processes people are angry. They have every right to be angry; in fact they should be angry that we have a minister here who is clearly taking us all for a ride. I would

like the minister to get up in this house this afternoon and tell us candidly — bringing us into his confidence — what his real agenda is.

I would like to know, and the people of Williamstown would very much like to know, exactly what is going on in his mind.

There is one message, and it is clear, from Sunshine, from Camberwell, from Williamstown, from Warrnambool — as Mr Guy has pointed out — and from wherever this minister intervenes. Wherever this minister sticks his beak in where it is not wanted he is more than happy to shaft the local community, wherever it is in the state. He does not have a problem with that. That is his policy. He is more than happy to shaft every local community in the state. It has most certainly happened in this instance in Williamstown. It is important that we ask the question: who will be next? There is some suggestion that it is about to happen in Moonee Valley. There are suggestions from many municipalities around the state that Minister Madden is about to do his little trick and do a number on the local communities of a variety of municipalities across the state.

I have a big question to ask. Where is Wade Noonan, the member for Williamstown, in all of this? He has apparently made it clear that he opposes the project that Minister Madden clearly supports, but he seems to have gone to ground very recently. I think that as a local representative of the Williamstown community it is important that he stand up, if need be with his predecessors Steve Bracks and Joan Kirner, make his views known on this and stand against the government if necessary in support of the people who elected him. I think that is something Wade Noonan should be having a long, thoughtful wonder about.

I do not know how long it has been since you have been to Williamstown, President, but it is a delightful place, truly a beautiful place. If you ever get the opportunity to go there again — and that is a fairly big if — can I suggest that you visit after dark? Before dark also but particularly after dark it has the best view of Melbourne in the metropolitan area.

Mr Barber — You would be out in the streets after dark?

Mr FINN — In some places, Mr Barber, I certainly would not be, but Williamstown is not one of them. I feel quite safe in Williamstown, although Dr Mukesh Haikerwal was not feeling too safe there about 18 months ago when he was bashed in a park in Williamstown while just going for

## City Of Hobsons Bay: Planning Scheme Amendment...

a walk, as I understand. But that is another issue altogether, which we will get to later in the day if I am not wrong; I do not want to bring on a debate prematurely.

The village atmosphere of Williamstown is an absolute delight, and I always enjoy going there. Indeed I dearly wish I could afford to live there. It is a sensational place indeed. It is an area that has a strong cross-section of all sorts of people, including people who have been there a long time, perhaps since before one had to have a fair whack in the bank to have a chance of buying a property there. It is just a great place to live and a great place to visit. It has a great deal going for it.

In this instance as I suppose in every instance — in any planning process — what we must take into consideration first and foremost are the views of the locals. That has not happened — again — in this instance. My view on this is very clear and very consistent: no decision should be made unless the Hobsons Bay council and locals are given the ultimate say. I think that is a position that is totally sustainable.

It is one I have held from day one in relation to not just this instance but a number of other planning processes that have taken place throughout the western suburbs in the time I have been representing the western metropolitan area. However, in this particular instance I think it is important that Hobsons Bay council and locals be given the final say on what is built on this particular property and how it is developed.

If this motion did that, I would vote for it even if my party told me otherwise. If this motion did that, I would support it, but it does not. This motion will not — I emphasise ‘not’ — give the final say on any development of this site to locals. In fact this motion will take away from the locals as much as Minister Madden does. We have the minister taking power away from the locals quite arbitrarily, and this motion will do much the same sort of thing. That is a great pity.

This is a house of Parliament; it is not a planning authority, and nor should it be. Do we really want people from Ballarat, Bendigo —

An honourable member — Timboon.

Mr FINN — Timboon, Geelong, Torquay or Shepparton — do we really want people from across Victoria all having a say in a place that many of them may never have visited? They have missed out there, but many of them may never have visited those areas. I do not think that that is

appropriate at all. What we need is a process where the Hobsons Bay City Council and the local community are allowed to have the final say. I can say without hesitation that had Ms Hartland moved a motion which allowed that to happen, I most certainly would have supported it.

We need, as much as is humanly possible, decisions to be made by local people at the coalface. Minister Madden is clearly wrong — not for the first time — but also so is this motion. It will not achieve what some people believe it sets out to achieve, and that is the simple fact of the matter. I have received emails over the last few days, saying, ‘Support this motion because we as local people deserve to have the final say.’ This motion will not do that. I wish it did, but it does not, and that is the important point to make here.

I remind the people of Williamstown that Minister Madden is a member of a government that was elected on Greens preferences. The Greens come into the chamber and see the Labor Party on the other side; there follows a fair bit of back and forth, and they take a bash at each other, but members should remember that at the end of the day they both jump into bed with each other. That is the bottom line.

There never has been and I suggest there never will be a Liberal member of Parliament elected on Greens preferences. Members will have seen the dreadful untruths that have been told by the Greens and the Labor Party in Tasmania recently; we know what will happen down there.

Before the 2002 election I remember how Melbourne 2030 was cobbled together by the Labor Party in the hope of, I suppose, being an enticement to invite the Greens along to their political bedroom, and the Greens were very keen on the idea; in fact there was a massive landslide to this government on the back of Greens preferences; that happened again in 2006.

Will people fall for it a third time? Will people such as those in Williamstown vote for candidates who want them to have a say, or will they play these games that the Labor Party and the Greens have been involved in now for some years?

There is only one way that the people of Williamstown or of any other municipality in this state can have a say or can ensure they have a say and that is by voting Liberal this November. That is the clear-cut fact of the matter; there is no way around it. If you vote for the Greens, you are going to get Labor. If you vote for Labor, you are going to get Labor. Either way you are going to get a minister who is going to

tell you what you should be doing, who will not listen to you, and who will not want to listen to you. I suggest that the definition of insanity that I often quote is true — that is, those who do the same thing the same way over and over again and expect a different result are indeed insane.

What we need here is a major change, but not in this chamber today; we need it in November. Today’s motion will not change anything. The only way the people of Williamstown can ensure that they have a say in what is happening in their own community is to vote for their local Liberal candidate — and, might I say, their upper house candidates as well — at November’s state election.

I do believe in power to the people, but I believe it is very sad that this motion does not or will not achieve that. I wish it would; then I would support it. But it does not, so I cannot support it.

COUNCIL | Members Statements  
14 April 2010

## Health: federal government plan

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I have watched with increasing incredulity over recent times as Prime Minister Rudd has continued his quest to hijack Australia’s health services and centralise them in Canberra. This surely cannot be the same Prime Minister whose government planted time bombs in the roofs of thousands of homes throughout Australia. It surely cannot be the same Prime Minister whose government has squandered billions of dollars on grossly inflated and often unnecessary school building projects, which is an obscenity in itself. It cannot perhaps be the same Prime Minister who told the world that Australia is now open for business for people smugglers to ply their evil trade.

We all know that state Labor governments have almost destroyed proper health care in Australia, but it does not make any sense at all to take our health systems from incompetent state Labor governments and give them to an incompetent federal government. A solution to this health crisis will present itself in November this year when Victorians will dispatch the Brumby government to the scrap heap of history right next to Kevin Rudd and his motley crew.

## Parks Victoria: Point Cook Homestead

**Mr FINN** (Western Metropolitan) — I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Environment and Climate Change. It concerns Point Cook Homestead, a much-loved landmark in the western suburbs of Melbourne. I am sure members of the house who have visited the homestead will agree with me that it is truly a delight.

For some time the homestead has been under the stewardship of Emma Sutcliffe, but due to, I suppose, family pressures and a need to spend a bit more time with her husband and children she has decided that on 30 June this year she will give up the role she has had at the Point Cook Homestead for quite some time.

A public tender process has taken place.

Emma, who, as I said, has done a great job, has been supporting a particular bidder, but recently Parks Victoria told this bidder that they had not been successful. After five months and five stages of the process the bidder was told they had not been successful and that their bid was unsatisfactory. However, they were also told that they could renegotiate with Parks Victoria. The trouble is they were not told what was wrong with their bid, which I would have thought leaves them at somewhat of a disadvantage.

The main concern at this stage is that, should negotiations fall through with all the parties that are currently involved in talks, I am informed that the fallback position would be for the Point Cook Coastal Park rangers to open the property as a walk-through attraction without the cafe or bed and breakfast businesses operating. Should that happen, and with no-one on site at night, there is considerable concern that the property would very quickly fall into disrepair and be vandalised. That is a totally unsatisfactory situation.

This property is one of the gems of the west. It is something that has to be seen to be believed, and for it to fall into the sort of disrepair that people are speculating about would be a tragedy for the western suburbs of Melbourne.

I ask the minister to take whatever action is necessary to ensure that the Point Cook Homestead remains in its

current form — that is, a gem of the west, open to all on a regular basis. I ask him to ensure that the homestead remains something people from the western suburbs and indeed from the rest of Melbourne and Victoria can enjoy for many years to come.

## Equal Opportunity Bill

**Mr FINN** (Western Metropolitan) — I join Mrs Peulich in vehemently opposing this legislation. I strongly believe equal opportunity should be just that — equal. There should be opportunity and equality for all, but unfortunately under this Hulls rewriting of the equal opportunity legislation that is just not going to happen; it is quite the opposite. Nobody likes unfair discrimination. It flies in the face of the basic ethos of being an Australian: the fair go.

Everybody I know wants to give people a fair go, but this legislation does not allow that. It is a major concern.

This legislation undermines the basic freedoms that we as Australians enjoy and have enjoyed since 1901. This is a savage attack on the freedom of religion in this state. Freedom of religion, freedom to worship and believe, is a fundamental right. It is interesting that under the totalitarian administrations we have seen overseas the very first right that is always attacked is the right to freedom of religion, because that is something which threatens dictators and those who would seek to harm their own people. It is pretty clear to me that we could be going down that path now in Victoria. It seems to me that we have a situation where this Labor government has declared open season on people of faith, and it is not just in this legislation; this has been going on for quite some time now. It is about time that people who perhaps may have been browbeaten into silence up to this point, perhaps some church leaders, got a bit of spine about them, that they stood up, defended what they believe in and came out fighting.

It is all very well for church leaders to say, 'We have to work with these people,' but at some point you have to draw the line and say, 'No more.'

If under this proposed act we have a situation where the right to religious freedom is under attack and church leaders do not come out and criticise this legislation and defend our right

to religious freedom, you have to ask yourself what they are doing and what role they play in the public life of this state. It is something that concerns me a great deal.

This basic right that I speak of, the right to freedom of religion, is something that is worth fighting for. The Attorney-General, Rob Hulls, and his comrades know it is something that is worth undermining, something that is worth destroying if they possibly can. We on this side of the house believe it is something worth defending, because this is a free nation. Men and women have died in wars to keep this a free nation. Too much has happened over such a long period of time; too much suffering and too much death have occurred in wars to allow somebody like Rob Hulls to take away our basic freedoms. It cannot be allowed to happen.

I appeal to the Greens to take that into consideration. I know the Greens do not like religion. That is a given. But I appeal to the Greens on the basis that this is an attack on a freedom that many people hold dear. It is a very important part of this nation and of being an Australian to be able to believe what you want. If you cannot, then a very important part of Australia is out the window. That is something I think we should all be extremely concerned about today.

Here we are late on a Thursday afternoon as we move towards the end of the sitting week, and I am sure that the average person on the street, whether it be Bourke Street, Collins Street or any other street, would not be aware that this legislation was under debate here today. They would not be aware that this legislation actually exists. The Attorney-General has a vested interest in ensuring that that does not occur.

The Attorney-General has quite a significant record in bringing to this house and to this Parliament legislation that not too many people know about until it is too late. There is an agenda at work here, and I will make some reference to that in a little while.

Apart from the attack on the freedom of religion in this state, this legislation provides a basic change in premise of the Equal Opportunity Act. Up to this point the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission could investigate a complaint if one was brought to that commission. Under this legislation there is no need for a complaint to be received; the commission can now institute an investigation based on whatever it likes. If it thinks somebody might be in breach of the act, it can sic the

## Equal Opportunity Bill...

dogs onto them. That is something that concerns me enormously, because I have to say that from my own experience the equal opportunity commission is a body that I do not trust.

I had some dealings with the equal opportunity commission some years ago. I will relate this particular story to the house. I was doing breakfast radio on 3AK at that time, and I can assure you that getting up at 2.30 every morning is not a great deal of fun. Nonetheless I was for my sins doing that five days week. I think I was there for four or five months. During the course of that time the station had a change of ownership, and into the management of that radio station came a chap called John Jost who, as some people would be aware, is an extreme left-wing journalist — 'journalist' in very loose terms — and commentator who has worked for the ABC and the Age. A left-winger at the ABC and the Age — gee, that is a surprise!

John Jost took over the management of the radio station, and from the very first day, when we had our first meeting, he abused me in the vilest of terms — in terms that I could not possibly use in this house — over my political views.

He did not like my political views; he made that extremely clear in front of a whole range of people. Every time that I spoke with him, every time that I met him and every time that we had discussions about the program or whatever he made his position very clear — he did not like my politics. It was not long before stories started to circulate in some of the papers throughout Melbourne that my days on the air were numbered because this particular chap was pretty much out to get me.

A week after we had had a ratings survey and I and Robert Hicks, who was my partner on air, had received a letter congratulating us for lifting the station's rating from 0.9 to 4.4 over just a brief period of time, I was sacked — for poor ratings, according to the management. But everybody in that building knew why I had been sacked. I had been sacked because John Jost did not like my politics. I thought that was, to say the very least, unfair, and I got lawyers on board. They prepared a case, and we went to the equal opportunity commission. Surprise, surprise. The equal opportunity commission refused point blank to even entertain the case that we had prepared.

Mr Tee interjected.

Mr FINN — The commission had the power, Mr Tee. It could have stitched this bloke up who had sacked me

because he did not like my politics. That is why I was sacked, and the equal opportunity commission could have done something about that. It had the power then; it has the power now — if it wanted to do that.

I cannot help but think that if the boot had been on the other foot and this chap had sacked me because he thought I was a left-winger, all hell might have broken loose. I think people would have been marching in the streets in support of my right to have my political views — but not the equal opportunity commission.

I cannot help but say the equal opportunity commission has its own agenda. It is a politically driven agenda. It is one that I do not support. I believe it is one that the majority of Victorians do not support. The concept of equal opportunity is quite the opposite of what the equal opportunity commission is pursuing. The commission is pushing its political barrow, and to give it the power to start investigating people on a whim quite frankly terrifies me.

It should terrify every employer, it should terrify every community club, for example, and it should terrify every church that these people would be allowed to become Rob Hulls's storm-troopers in their quest for political correctness in this state.

If this legislation is carried today, this day will be remembered by a lot of people for a very, very long time. It will be a day that people will regret for a very, very long time, because there will be a lot of people doing a lot of suffering as a result of the actions of the equal opportunity commission with the expanded powers that this legislation will give it. Quite frankly it terrifies me that we are even talking about this. Of course it is all a part of the agenda of Rob Hulls, the Attorney-General. I have said this in the Parliament before and I will say it again now: in my view he is the most dangerous politician in Australia. When he is gone — in November of this year, one would hope — his legacy will unfortunately survive him.

It will take us years to clean up the legacy that he has left us.

Mr Scheffer said in his contribution that this bill is not about social engineering.

Mr Guy interjected.

Mr FINN — That is what Mr Scheffer said, Mr Guy. Then he gave a sterling defence of the sort of social engineering that he claims does not exist. But we all know that it does. That is exactly what this bill is about. It is exactly what the Attorney-General is about. It is exactly what the social agenda of this government is about. It

is about social engineering. It is about trying to create a society in the image of the Attorney-General and those like him in the government. It has to stop. No more! The people of Victoria have had enough. They have had more than enough, and this has to stop.

We have to do something about it.

I say to those people who have written to me in very large numbers — I am sure we have all received a deluge of emails and correspondence over this legislation; I have not received even one that supports it, so I am not sure where the Attorney-General can say the public support for this legislation comes from, because I certainly cannot see it — it is not the coalition that is providing the support for this legislation. This is Labor's attack on our freedom. This is Labor's attack on our right to believe and on our right to religious freedom. This is what the Labor Party is delivering to the people of Victoria. I say to those people who have written to me, who have rung me and who have visited me, that if this legislation is carried today, and it appears it probably will be, this is Labor's gift to Victoria. This is Labor's attack on the freedom of every Victorian.

There is something that those people can do about it: they can wait until 27 November this year and then vote Liberal. They can turf this government out, because I can assure members that once this government has gone, the opposition in government will repeal this legislation. This legislation will be repealed and I, personally, will make sure it is; I give the house my guarantee.

Finally I appeal to those on the other side of the house — those who care about freedom, whether they be Labor or Greens, those people who care about the rights of individuals — to vote against and defeat this legislation. Too much is at stake; our freedom, under this legislation, is very much at risk.

**COUNCIL | Statements on Reports  
15 April 2010**

## Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission: interim report

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — This morning I wish to speak on the interim report of the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission. I think those who lived through Black

## Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission: interim report...

Saturday have all been affected by it in some way. Whether we lost property, whether we lost loved ones or whether we just experienced the dreadful day itself, that particular day will forever be in our psyche. I remember as a small child my father going out to fight the fires in Cressy which, from memory, was in the late 1960s. He was a Country Fire Authority volunteer with I think the Warrion brigade, not far from Colac. As a very young child I remember him going out to fight the fires and my mother delivering sandwiches, cakes and so forth to feed the troops on the front line. That is something that will stay in my memory.

Of course we also had Ash Wednesday in 1983.

I remember that extremely well, too, because I was running for federal Parliament at that time as a 21-year-old Liberal candidate for Burke. The Burke electorate was pretty much devastated by Ash Wednesday in Macedon and right through that area. I remember driving up to Mount Macedon the day after the fires and the trees were still burning on both sides of the road. I thought to myself, 'What a horrific site it must have been for those men and women who had faced this inferno the day before.' I remember that as vividly as if it had happened yesterday. Those who have been through Black Saturday of 2009 will certainly carry that with them for the rest of their lives.

It is important to remember that this royal commission has a very important job to do. I am hopeful that the many, many questions that surround the events of Black Saturday will be answered, because we owe a lot of people the truth. That is important. I remember the day of 7 February last year. I was outside the house with a couple of my kids and had been outside for most of the morning.

I recall that extraordinarily at about 12.15 p.m. it was as if somebody upstairs decided that they were going to turn up the switch. I would guess that the temperature lifted about 10 degrees as if by the flick of a switch. I knew then that we were in a fair bit of trouble.

Of course we had been told in the lead-up to Black Saturday that it was going to be a shocker. We had been told by the Premier; we had been told by everybody that this was going to be one of the worst days in Victoria's history. Everybody should have been aware of it; everybody should have been prepared for Black Saturday. It was, however, something that I think caught a lot of people by surprise. Going by the number of people who died on that day, it is clear it caught

a lot of people by surprise — very tragically.

However, of those who did know, of those who had been warning us in the lead-up to the day, you have to ask where they got to. Where was the leadership on that day?

We already know from the interim report that the chief fire officer of the CFA (Country Fire Authority), Russell Rees, did not have a clue what was going on. He did not have much idea at all, yet he was reappointed just a short time later. That remains one of the great mysteries of our time.

We have discovered that when faced with the hard decisions, the then Chief Commissioner of Police, who was the head of Displan, went out to dinner. When her men and women — the men and women of the Victorian police force — and those of the CFA and of a whole range of bodies were out risking their lives, the Chief Commissioner of Police went out to dinner. She deserted her post. I can only add my voice to those who are calling for her to be dismissed from her current position with the bushfire reconstruction authority. I believe she should be sacked — and sacked now.

I could go on about the role of the Premier and that of the police minister in all of this, but none of us quite knows. I believe it is absolutely imperative that we call both the Premier and the police minister before the royal commission so they can deliver at least some of the answers we so desperately need.

COUNCIL | Adjournment  
5 May 2010

## Rail: Craigieburn accident

**Mr FINN** (Western Metropolitan) — I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Public Transport. It concerns the train crash at Craigieburn last night. I am sure all members were horrified to hear that news on the radio this morning when they awoke, as I was. I understand the minister was at the scene of that incident until midnight. I commend the minister for that. I am pleased that somebody in this government is taking their responsibility seriously.

I understand there is an inquiry under way — at least one but perhaps even two or three inquiries are under way — as to how this could happen and presumably to make sure that it never happens again. My concern this evening is particularly with those who were injured. My understanding via

media reports is that five or six people were taken to hospital and at least two or three of them had serious injuries. I certainly wish them a speedy recovery and wish them well. I imagine that the immediate medical expenses of those people who were injured in this incident will be looked after by the government; I imagine that would be automatic. But I have a worry about the long-term treatment or therapy that these people will need in the months or perhaps even years ahead. These treatments can be expensive. I do not believe anybody who was injured on that train as a result of the crash last night should be out of pocket. It is equally as important — and we have heard some horror stories in the past about people who have lost their homes and businesses as a result of injuries suffered in similar accidents — that the loss of wages or earnings as a result of the crash is not an issue because after all it was a government service.

I ask the minister to guarantee victims of the Craigieburn crash last night will be properly supported by the government to ensure that they suffer no financial loss as a result of the injuries that they have had inflicted upon them due to the dreadful collision last night. These people have suffered enough. Unfortunately many of them will still be suffering for quite some time to come. The government owes them at the least some peace of mind that they will have some financial security in the months and years ahead.

COUNCIL  
5 May 2010

## Government: Service Delivery

**Mr FINN** (Western Metropolitan) — As members of this house would be aware — in fact I think most people in Victoria would also be aware — the western suburbs is an area that has suffered enormous neglect under this government and under the previous Bracks government. There is a saying out in the west that we just have to cop it, but I am of the view that we no longer just have to cop it. We have been neglected for years. Labor has used and abused the western suburbs for generations. Labor has dragged the western suburbs into the pits and has kept the western suburbs there, and it is about time that changed. Unfortunately at this point it has not, and it comes down to the basic fact that Labor just does not care. The only time that you get Labor caring about

## Government: Service Delivery...

anything is when its parliamentary majority is being challenged. We have seen that with police. The only time we could actually get this government to do anything about the police was when the opposition came out with a policy about which the Victorian public said, 'Hey, that works! I like that.' It made John Brumby and the Labor Party sit back and take notice.

We have a situation in the western suburbs that has been going on for a long time. Earlier today I spoke about the problems with police throughout the western suburbs. I spoke about the officers at Sunshine, who work under extraordinarily difficult circumstances — appalling circumstances, and circumstances under which most members of this house would arc up and refuse to continue. In Werribee there has been a huge degree of understaffing of police for a long time. At Williamstown police were pulled out of their 24-hour station. It is no longer a 24-hour station, and those police were sent to Footscray where there was a shortage. We have problems in Keilor Downs, where the station is up against it as well, and of course at Craigieburn we have had problems over recent years — and I have reported on that to the house. Police have had to come from Broadmeadows and other places because the Craigieburn police station was either not open or just did not have the manpower to do the job they were required to do at that time of the night.

People in Craigieburn have suffered some vicious assaults. They have been the victims of some pretty heinous crimes, and those victims were unable to reach the services of the police because the police at that time were just too far away. That is not good enough at all. When you talk about Sunshine, Werribee, Williamstown, Keilor Downs and Craigieburn — right across the western suburbs — it is the same old story: Labor just does not care. Labor does not care about the west, and it never has cared about it because, as I have explained to many people throughout the western suburbs over the last four years, Labor takes the western suburbs for granted. It is only going to change when the people of the western suburbs change their habits. It is only going to change when the people of the western suburbs get a few marginal seats out there.

We in the west look at the eastern suburbs, and sometimes we drool. When we see the schools, the hospitals and all the marvellous resources that are provided to people in the eastern suburbs we are green with envy, because we do not get any of that. We

just do not get any of it, because the Labor Party says, 'Why should we give anything to the people of the western suburbs; they are going to vote for us anyway,' and as a result the west gets nothing. That situation has got to change.

A classic example of what I am talking about is the Western Hospital in Footscray. You would have to say that that hospital is pretty close to being of Third World standard. When I speak to such people as Les Twentyman, who had a very serious injury about 18 months or two years ago, I hear that he waited on a trolley for nearly three days before some friends rallied and got him into a private hospital. It makes us realise just how bad the situation is at some of these health facilities, not just in the western suburbs but particularly in the western suburbs, and it is not good enough. I do not see why people in the western suburbs should have to put up with this. I do not see why the people in the western suburbs should have to put with substandard health services as we do at the moment.

I have to say that I did not quite realise just how bad our health system was until I backed the Premier of Victoria on an issue, and that was the issue of standing up to Kevin Rudd's takeover of the Victorian health system — of all the states health systems in fact. As a result of discovering how bad our health service was, we had a situation where our Premier went to Canberra a brumby and came back a gelding. That is the tragedy of the matter. Jellyback Jack went to Canberra and caved in at the first sign of pressure from the Prime Minister.

Our Premier is probably the only one who pays any attention to the Prime Minister these days. The Prime Minister is not going to be there very much longer, so it is probably something that we do not have to worry about. However, it is a great pity that the Premier of Victoria, who had the support of this side of the house in his standing up to the Prime Minister on protecting the health service, as substandard as it is, from takeover by Canberra, let his own side down. He let us down and he let Victorians down.

That is something that will be his political epitaph. He will carry that around on his back like a giant rock for the rest of his political life, because what we have now in Victoria is not a good health system. It is a very bad health system that is poorly run. But how is that going to be made better by it being transferred to the control of faceless bureaucrats in Canberra? Nothing is improved by the transfer of the health system to Canberra.

Over recent months what we have

seen with regard to the health systems is not about whether the states should control their health systems and hospitals. What it is saying is that Labor governments around this country — every state up until Western Australia relatively recently — totally and miserably failed to administer properly the health services in their states. We see that in New South Wales, we see it in Queensland in particular and we see it here in Victoria.

As I said, Jellyback Jack went to Canberra and caved in, and now we have a situation where, if by some extraordinary circumstance Kevin Rudd happens to be re-elected in the next few months, our health services are going to be run from some building in the back blocks of Canberra. If people think that getting some notice and attention is difficult now, wait until it is administered from Canberra. Canberra knows bureaucracy. Canberra is bureaucracy. Once that transfer of power goes to Canberra we are in a great deal of trouble.

Every Victorian should be aware that this is the Premier's fault. The Premier did this; he was all hairy-chested. He went up there, beating his chest, telling us all how tough he was. Within days he was a crumbling mess on the ground. That is a very sad reflection of the sort of leadership — if that is what you want to call it — that we have in this state in 2010.

In 2011 it will be very different.

There will be very different leadership in this state. The majority of Victorians are waking up to exactly what we have in this state, and come November of this year out it will go.

I have spoken at length about the problems associated with some of the roads, and transport and traffic issues in the western suburbs. We see a fair bit of money spent and splashed around in the eastern suburbs. We do not see much of it in the west and, as I have explained to members of the house, we know why. We have a massive problem in the western suburbs called the West Gate Freeway. The government does not seem to be prepared or interested to do anything about it. This is a daily nightmare for the people of the western suburbs, and not just those from the western suburbs. I am sure Mr Koch will back me up when I say it is also a daily nightmare for the people of Geelong and Ballarat as they try to wend their way into the city of Melbourne.

On the West Gate Freeway we have a daily nightmare of epic proportions. As a result of that nightmare, as a result of probably the millions of hours of manpower tied up every day stuck in traffic, the Brumby government has

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been very generous and thoughtful. It has planned ahead. It is giving us some blue lights on the side. I am sure that is going to make a huge difference! What else could you expect from this government? When you have a major problem, the government will not face it. It will throw you some bread and hope that you find a circus for yourself.

Mr Koch — Crumbs!

Mr FINN — Indeed crumbs, Mr Koch! The people of the western suburbs have had enough of the traffic congestion. They have had enough of this — I can assure you the West Gate Freeway is more than a nuisance — and come November they will make their views known at the ballot box. I can tell the house that after November nobody will ever again take the western suburbs for granted. If you do not believe me, have a talk to the people of Altona, because they spoke not so long ago. The Minister for Planning is in the chamber. He was out there in the lead-up to the by-election, at least for half an hour — he did a good job — and he knows. I saw a few people chewing his ear because I happened to be on the prepoll booth with him for a period of time. He knows exactly what the people of Altona were saying when they delivered a close to 13 per cent swing to the Liberal Party earlier this year.

Mr Koch — How many?

Mr FINN — Close to 13 per cent, Mr Koch. It was an outstanding effort. Having been in Altona and doorknocking just about every day of that by-election campaign, I can tell the house that the people of Altona, who it would be safe to say are not natural Liberal voters, do not like the Premier. They expressed that to me in good old-fashioned western suburbs terminology, some of which I cannot relate to the house. They let those views be known to me very clearly: they do not like John Brumby, they do not like his government, and they cannot wait for November of this year to vote against him again. They think 2010 is a great year because they get to vote against the Labor Party twice! That is something probably pretty special to them; that is something they are celebrating. They have had the opportunity to vote against Labor once. They have delivered, as I said, a close to 13 per cent swing against the ALP in the by-election, and they cannot wait — they are lining up already — for November to vote against the Labor Party again.

It is not just in Altona. Last week I was speaking to a group in Footscray that is organising a 'put Labor last' campaign. This is the Asian community and the business community; this is

a wide range of people right through Footscray. Who would have thought it possible that this would be happening in Footscray? The Labor Party thought it had the keys to Footscray. Not any more! It is all changing. The people of Sunshine are doing the same thing. 'Put Labor last' is the campaign they are preparing for November this year.

The Labor Party better snap out of it. The Labor Party better wake up. The Labor Party better realise that we in the western suburbs have had more than enough. The policy that the ALP has and the policy that John Brumby has of not caring about the west better change, and it better change very soon, because the government is running out of time. What is coming in November is unheard of; it is something we would not even have dreamt of in years gone by. As I said, the western suburbs have been treated very shabbily and badly by this government.

We will no longer tolerate that; we will no longer put up with that. I say to the government that in the few remaining months it has, it should get its act together, get a few things into the western suburbs, get its presence and activity rate up throughout the western suburbs, or come November it will suffer the consequences.

**COUNCIL**  
**5 May 2010**

## Crime: Government Performance

**Mr FINN** (Western Metropolitan) — As members of this house would be aware, I have raised issues relating to policing in the western suburbs on a number of occasions over the past three and a half years because the problems with regard to our police in the western suburbs have been going on for a decade.

At this point I would like to pay tribute to a woman by the name of Lori McLean. She has done a tremendous amount of work. Many members would be aware of the work Lori has done at Wyndham and in the Werribee area to bring to light the issues surrounding the lack of police and law and orders matters.

She has been battling away for a very long time without any support at all from the government, but that has not deterred her — in fact I think it has probably spurred her on to even greater heights. We certainly need in our community more people like Lori McLean, who is prepared to take on

a government that just does not care — and that is the bottom line: when it comes to the real problems and real people in Victoria, the Brumby Labor government just does not care.

Having mentioned the problems in Werribee — the lack of police in Werribee; the enormous understaffing of police in Werribee — I should also mention the men and women of the Sunshine police station. They have my enormous admiration. They are working in extraordinary circumstances. They are very much understaffed and working under the pump on a daily basis. I do not know how they get up and go to work every day. It is a tribute to their commitment, it is a tribute to their professionalism and it is a tribute to them as outstanding members of Victoria Police. I commend them for the work they do in protecting us on a daily basis.

Last Wednesday afternoon — unfortunately I had to miss it — at about 2 o'clock there was the opening of a new police station in Tarneit. The Chief Commissioner of Police was there. I was particularly looking forward to having a chat with the chief commissioner, but unfortunately I was urgently called away on another matter, so I missed the opportunity. What the minister did not tell us at the opening, before the opening or indeed after the opening is that whilst there is a new police station in Tarneit we do not have the police to man it. We do not have the police required to make this station what we need to protect the people of Tarneit.

The Minister for Public Transport, Mr Pakula, may have heard of Tarneit; it is in the Western Metropolitan Region and it is growing at an extraordinarily rapid rate. Just about every time I go down there, which is regularly, I see that a new subdivision has been created. Literally thousands of people are establishing their homes and starting their families down there, and they are very much in need of protection from the police. They would look at that police station and say, 'Oh gee, the Brumby government is doing a marvellous job'. I have news for them: the Brumby government is not doing a marvellous job. The Brumby government has built a police station in Tarneit but does not have the police to man it properly.

That reminds me of an episode of Yes, Minister which many in the house would be aware of. The minister, Jim Hacker, visited the best hospital in Britain; the most efficient hospital in Britain. It was the most efficient hospital in Britain because it did not have any patients! We have a similar

## Crime: Government Performance...

situation in Tarnet with this police station. We have a brand-spanking-new police station — and it is very impressive — but we do not have the number of police that should be there to open it.

We have a situation in the Western Metropolitan Region where serious crime is up, and non-serious crime is probably up also, but the figures do not necessarily bear that out because there are a lot of people, not just in the west but right across Melbourne and across Victoria, who have given up calling the police to report what they regard as non-serious crimes because they believe doing so is a waste of time. Too many times we have heard from police those magical words: 'There is nothing we can do about it.'

Unfortunately that has resonated with a lot of people in Victoria, and they have given up reporting what we might describe as non-serious crime.

Crime is up in this state; there is no doubt about it. Serious crime is up — we are talking about bashings, muggings and robberies. In Moonee Valley — just pulling figures from memory — the homicide rate is up by 300 per cent. That is from the latest figures to be released. We do have a serious crime problem, but we do not have the police to tackle the problem. The government has been telling us for some years now that everything is fine. The government has been telling us that it has spent X amount of dollars on police; that it has extra police here and extra police there and that it has done a marvellous job. It has asked, 'What is the opposition on about? What is the Police Association on about?'. People like Lori McLean in Wyndham complain they are not properly protected because there are not enough police, but the government says, 'What are these people on about?'

It said that up until about last week, then all of a sudden it did an Ernie Sighley and said, 'We're only jokin'!'

That situation has completely turned around. We have an election looming on the horizon and the polls showing that it is becoming very close indeed, and the government is now saying, 'Maybe we do have a problem.' The government has said, 'Yes, we probably should do something about it,' and it has. With an election on the horizon the government has pinched the opposition's policy — to an extent I have to say because the opposition's policy will trump the government's policy hands down. With the new protective services officers and the transit police, as well as the extra police that we have committed ourselves to providing if we win the November election, there will be an

extra 2640 police on the beat by the end of our first term in government. That is something we on this side of the house are particularly proud of because we take law and order very seriously, which is something that cannot be said for the government.

It is not just the issue of police numbers that has let the government down on law and order; we have also had the Attorney-General, Rob Hulls, working furiously to undermine the authority of the police in this state for the past 11 years. He is a major threat to law and order in this state. If there is anybody who has worked harder than the current Minister for Police and Emergency Services to shatter the morale of the Victorian police force, it would have to be the Attorney-General. The history of Victoria Police under Labor over the last 11 years has not been a happy one. We have not just Rob Hulls, Premier Brumby or those who have had authority in political circles over the past 11 years — such as former Premier Bracks and others — to blame, because really the nightmare that Victoria Police is going through began with the appointment by the Bracks government of a little-known academic with practically no operational experience and from possibly the most corrupt police force in Australia to the position of Chief Commissioner of Police some 10 years ago.

We remember only too well that the new Chief Commissioner of Police, Christine Nixon, at what I believe was her first press conference, said that Victoria Police was no less or no more corrupt than the police force in New South Wales. This was an outrageous statement to make and an outrageous slander against every Victorian policeman and policewoman. It was, to my way of thinking, an insult to those men and women who protect us — officers who put on their uniforms and go out there and put their lives on the line to protect us. They were slandered by their new boss. I have to wonder exactly how they must have felt when they heard the new chief commissioner utter those words. What hope did they have? With a start like that, what hope did the Victoria Police have under the new chief commissioner?

What ensued was an era of spite, of payback and factional warfare which I suppose became a culture of persecution in this state. God help anyone whom Chief Commissioner Nixon perceived was an enemy or who she believed had said or done the wrong thing because she would go after them. In fact she created, with the help of this government, a group

within the police force called the Office of Police Integrity. The OPI became well known, the length and breadth of this state, as Christine Nixon's own personal police force within the police force. It has a great deal to answer for.

Unfortunately this culture of persecution created by Christine Nixon has continued under the new chief commissioner, Simon Overland, and that is tragic for Victoria Police. Over the past decade police command has become a branch of the executive arm of government in this state. The lines between Labor and police command have blurred to the point where they are indistinguishable. We do not know where police command finishes and the Labor Party starts, and that has not changed under the new chief commissioner, Son of Christine, as he is known throughout Victoria.

That is deeply tragic for Victorians and for the police force in Victoria. Only a couple of weeks ago Mrs Petrovich commented on a release issued by the Chief Commissioner of Police on the intranet, within the Victoria police force, backing the Brumby government's announcement of new police and saying that this was what he had been after all along. He said the government was listening and that it was doing a great job.

If you are a Labor appointee, and if you are dependent upon the patronage of the Labor Party to retain your job, of course you are going to say that. I suppose it is reasonable, in a situation where the police force has been totally politicised in this state, that you would expect the Chief Commissioner of Police to say that. But again it is a tragedy for Victorians and a tragedy for the police force that we have a Chief Commissioner of Police involving himself in party politics to the extent that both the current chief commissioner and his predecessor have done.

I hope we will see the day — and that that day is not too far away — when we will have a chief commissioner who will distance himself or herself from the political process and run the police force in an independent way, caring for the police force first and foremost. I think that is something we all have to aim for.

The greatest tragedy of all over the past 11 years is that the public of Victoria has lost confidence in the Victoria police force. I remember as a lad that I looked up to every policeman and policewoman. I had a great deal of confidence in the police and I think we all had a great deal of confidence in our police, and if there is one legacy that this government will leave when it goes in November, it is the lack of

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confidence shown in the police by the public.

What has happened to Victoria Police? Some people in the government will be pretty happy about this, but what they have done is to destroy the credibility of the Victoria Police and undermine the confidence of the Victoria Police by the general community. This will be forever to the shame of the Labor Party in this state, and forever to the shame of the Bracks and Brumby governments, and when they go into the history books on 27 November this year, that is something for which they should forever hang their heads in shame.

**COUNCIL | Members Statements  
5 May 2010**

## Members: residential addresses

**Mr FINN** (Western Metropolitan) — It has often been said that the Labor Party likes to claim the west as its own, and I think it is only fair and reasonable that we examine that statement to discover just where Western Metropolitan Region members actually live. To look at the list of some of the members of Parliament that I have discovered of recent times is a fascinating thing indeed — for example, The Minister for Public Transport, Mr Pakula, who I understand is going to be no. 1 on the ALP ticket in the Western Metropolitan Region at the next election, lives so far away from the west that he needs a cut lunch and a sleeping bag to get there. He lives down in a beachside suburb somewhere.

The member for Derrimut in the other place lives in the southern leafy suburbs by the bay. I understand that Labor Party members are very keen on beach houses.

The Minister for Roads and Ports, who is also the member for Tarneit in the other place, lives nowhere near Tarneit. He lives in Williamstown, which again is by the bay. It is lovely to have a beach house on the bay. The member for Altona in the other place, who has recently been elected, does not live in Altona. Of course the Attorney-General, who is also the member for Niddrie in the other place, would not be seen in Niddrie in a pink fit. As for the member for Pascoe Vale in the other place, not on your nelly would she be seen living in Pascoe Vale. I am not quite sure, but I have a feeling that Mr Eideh is just a little bit

out of his electorate as well.

We might have a situation where at the next election none of the nos 1, 2 and 3 position holders for the ALP in Western Metropolitan Region will live in the western suburbs. None will be able to vote for themselves, and I cannot blame them: I would not vote for them either!

**COUNCIL | Adjournment  
6 May 2010**

## Werribee Park tourism precinct: access

**Mr FINN** (Western Metropolitan) — I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Roads and Ports. It concerns the access to the Werribee Park tourism precinct on K Road in Werribee. I am sure members will be aware of this particular precinct. It contains the Werribee Open Range Zoo, which is truly one of the gems of the west, if not Victoria generally. I was there just recently, and it really is a delight to visit. There is the rose garden next door; the Werribee Mansion, which is world-famous now; the Werribee Park National Equestrian Centre; and just down the road a little bit the Werribee Park Golf Club, which, as I have mentioned to the house before, is certainly one of the most picturesque golf clubs in Melbourne and possibly around Australia.

Those who wish to visit this particular area and come from Melbourne have no problem, because they just exit the Princes Freeway at Duncans Road and there is no issue, but access from Geelong and particularly from Avalon Airport does present real problems, because those who wish to go to the Werribee Park tourism precinct have to exit the Princes Freeway and do a tour which would do the Leyland brothers proud. Those people have to travel many kilometres through Werribee, down to Duncans Road, back up through Duncans Road and over the freeway -- a trip that I suggest would take 10 to 15 minutes on a good day, so it is a real problem. To get to one of these wonderful attractions is not easy; travellers really have to be committed to the task at hand if they are coming from Geelong or indeed from Avalon Airport, which I suggest is going to be a major part of the tourism industry for many years to come.

I ask the minister to take into consideration the points that I have made with regard to this issue.

He will hopefully be aware of the issues I have raised, given that this area is within his electorate. I ask him to provide funding for the building of a ramp off the inbound lane of the Princes Freeway directly onto Duncans Road. This would provide a much more direct and easier link for those who wish to get onto K Road and visit any of those marvellous places that I have mentioned. I ask the minister to provide that funding as soon as is humanly practical. This will be a major boon for Werribee, a major boon for tourism in Victoria and indeed a major boon for the western suburbs of Melbourne.

**COUNCIL | Statements on Reports  
6 May 2010**

## Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission: interim report

**Mr FINN** (Western Metropolitan) — It is fair to say that the royal commission into the Victorian bushfires of 2009 has already had an impact. The royal commission is clearly ongoing, but I believe as a direct result of his appearance at that royal commission, the chief fire officer of the Country Fire Authority, Mr Russell Rees, is leaving his position at the CFA next month. Despite the fact that Mr Rees has fallen on his sword, we have to ask some very serious questions about who else should follow. I believe that the Premier and the Minister for Police and Emergency Services have much to answer for on the matter of Black Saturday and events surrounding that day. I believe they must appear at the royal commission.

The role of the former Chief Commissioner of Police is a matter of extreme public interest at this point as well.

She has appeared twice and has given varying accounts of her activities on that day, which leads to the question of whether she has perjured herself on either or both occasions. In this situation it is important to consider what we know about the events of Black Saturday and the days leading up to that day, particularly in light of the front-page story in the Sunday Age of 2 May.

We all know that we were warned in the lead-up to Black Saturday that it would be the most dangerous day Victoria had ever experienced. I recall the Premier speaking about

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that two, three and four days before 7 February 2009. In spite of that, the Chief Commissioner of Police — the head of Displan in this state — decided on this particularly dangerous day for Victorians that she would head off to the hairdresser. Also on that particularly dangerous day she had a meeting with her biographer.

After finally getting around to attending the emergency centre, after a couple of hours she decided that she was off to the pub for a feed. Public outrage at her activities on that day has been deflected by her claim that the reconstruction effort needs her. Despite the fact that she was touting for support, as I understand it, we now have on the front page of that newspaper a headline which reads 'Bushfire rebuilding — a mess — Philanthropists slam — slow — reconstruction effort'. The story begins by saying:

The reconstruction of Marysville is being blocked by bureaucratic delays and an obsession with process, according to four philanthropists who donated millions of dollars in goods and services — as well as time and money — to help rebuild the town.

Mining magnate Andrew 'Twiggy' Forrest, Linfox managing director, Andrew Fox, and property entrepreneur Max Beck have slammed authorities for acting too slowly to construct commercial projects to kick-start the economy in the bushfire-ravaged town, 15 months after Black Saturday. Actor Russell Crowe's Melbourne representative has also expressed frustration.

...

Mr Fox said the 'whole structure' of the reconstruction process had failed the people of Marysville.

He is quoted as having said:

'There should be a leader to say, —This has got to happen—. They needed a Peter Cosgrove from day one.

He's a ramrod that would cut through the red tape.'

Max Beck —

who I think is known and respected by a good many people throughout Australia —

founder of the construction company Becton, said he had been helping the Victorian Bushfire Reconstruction and Recovery Authority, but withdrew five months ago because he 'was disappointed with the speed of the way things were happening.'

'I thought we could have had more businesses on the ground there in much less time. We haven't got anything up and running, or even

looking like up and running,' Mr Beck said.

This is an appalling situation. The article further says that Mr Forrest:

... became alarmed at the slow progress last year, when he spent four months working regularly in the town —

of Marysville —

'We really need the government leaders to show action ... by actually achieving rather than slavish adherence to process,' he said.

These people are not the only ones who have complained about that. This is a major issue that must be addressed. The question must be asked: if Christine Nixon failed in her responsibilities on Black Saturday, if she was guilty of dereliction of duty on Black Saturday and she has failed in her duty as leader of the reconstruction authority, why is she still in the job?

What ties does the Premier have to Christine Nixon?

Surely it is time for the truth to triumph and for Christine Nixon to go.

**COUNCIL | Questions without Notice  
25 May 2010**

## Australian Labor Party: conduct

**Mr FINN** (Western Metropolitan) — I wish to address a question without notice to the minister for respect. On 2 February 2010 the minister outlined in this house his responsibilities as minister for respect, including, and I quote:

The sixth issue is encouraging community participation and civic responsibility, particularly in areas of volunteering.

I note the explosive allegations made publicly by Costas Socratous last week that assert widespread corruption within the Victorian Labor Party at the direction of parliamentary secretary Telmo Languiller, the member for Derrimut in the Assembly, and I ask: can the minister explain to the house how the misappropriation of ALP funds, corruption and intimidation of elected voluntary officials are the best way to promote civic responsibility in Victoria, including within the Labor Party, and therefore what steps he will take as the minister responsible for the respect agenda to ensure that community participation and volunteering are encouraged through putting an end to corrupt internal ALP activity, as pointed to by Mr Socratous, in his electorate?

Mr Viney — On a point of order, President, there are two elements to

my point of order. Firstly, the member should be required to use the correct title, which is Minister for the Respect Agenda.

Secondly, clearly the issues Mr Finn referred to have no connection whatsoever to the minister's administrative responsibilities in that portfolio.

Mr Finn — On the point of order, President, I clearly quoted the minister as having said:

The sixth issue is encouraging community participation and civic responsibility, particularly in areas of volunteering.

Clearly the ALP is a voluntary organisation. This goes to the heart of the minister's responsibilities.

The PRESIDENT — Order! On the original point of order that Mr Viney took, there is a very real question as to whether the question asked has anything to do with the direct responsibilities of the minister.

I am a little confused, I suppose like a lot of people, as to the actual parameters of the minister's respect agenda portfolio because it can be extrapolated out to encompass almost anything.

In terms of Mr Finn's point of order, it is drawing an extremely long bow to suggest that in some way Mr Socratous's comments had anything to do with the minister in almost any capacity in his portfolio, and I am not sure the description of the ALP as a voluntary organisation is entirely accurate. For that reason I do not believe that the link is clearly demonstrated and that the question is connected to the minister's portfolio, so I am ruling it out.

Mr Finn — On a point of clarification, President, does your ruling make it clear, for future reference, that political parties are exempt from the respect agenda in this state?

The PRESIDENT — Order! I cannot rule on that. I can only adjudicate on a genuine point of order, which that was not.

Mr D. Davis — On a further point of clarification, President, it has been a longstanding tradition in this chamber —

The PRESIDENT — Order! I have made this point to Mr Davis in particular on numerous occasions: there is no requirement for me to clarify a ruling. Mr Davis's seeking clarification is therefore out of order. If he has a point of view to make, he can make it, but he cannot seek clarification.

Mrs Peulich — On a point of order, President, standing order 8.01,

## Australian Labor Party: conduct...

'Questions to ministers or other members,' says:

(1) Questions may be put to —

1(a) Ministers of the Crown relating to public affairs with which the minister is connected or to any matter of administration for which the minister is responsible.

Clearly this falls within the parameters of the minister's responsibility, so he ought to be allowed the opportunity of answering the question.

Honourable members interjecting.

The PRESIDENT — Order! This is not going to go on forever.

The fact is the minister is not responsible for the administration of the ALP, and that is the end of it.

**COUNCIL | Adjournment**  
26 May 2010

## Rail: Laverton station

**Mr FINN** (Western Metropolitan) — I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Public Transport. It concerns the new Laverton station, the one that was opened just in time for the Altona by-election earlier this year. The house might recall that I spoke earlier this year about ramps being replaced with shiny new lifts, forcing those who cannot wait for the lift to belt down the stairs and run the risk of coming to grief in a crumpled heap at the bottom of those stairs. However, the real problems start when the lifts break down, and this is becoming an all-too-common occurrence. It happens so often, in fact, that some commuters have taken to calling the station ahead to check if the lifts are working and if they are doing what they should be doing.

Members can imagine that people in wheelchairs, mums with prams, the elderly and the frail, faced with the prospect of not being able to access the platforms, are in real strife. It is a bit hard to catch the train if you cannot get onto the platform.

It is hard enough for those trying to get to town, but what happens when the lift servicing platforms 2 and 3 turns up its toes? Those people coming from the city then cannot get off the platform! In that situation commuters are advised to wait for the next train, to catch it to Aircraft station, to wait for the next train coming the other way, get on that train and get off when the train reaches Laverton — where, hopefully, the lift will be working on platform 1. At best this is a 40-minute-plus round trip, and if the lift is not

working, the travellers are in for a very long and cold night. This is a farcical and totally unsatisfactory situation and something that thousands of commuters who travel through Laverton every day are rapidly becoming sick of.

It seems only fair that if the government is prepared to take credit for a new station during the vote-gathering season, it should take some responsibility for the station's shortcomings out of election time.

I ask the minister to ensure that lifts are properly maintained at the Laverton station or, if he cannot do that, to bring back the ramps, which would allow those with mobility problems to get to the trains without having to worry about getting down some rather steep stairs. At this time locals in the Laverton area and those who use the Laverton station — who, as I say, constitute quite a number — need certainty. They need to know if they can get to the train, and they need to know if they can get home after a long day at the office.

**COUNCIL**  
26 May 2010

## Drugs, Poisons And Controlled Substances Amendment (Prohibition Of Display And Sale Of Bong) Bill

**Mr FINN** (Western Metropolitan) — I can assure the house that I do not own a bong, and unlike Mrs Peulich I am not in possession of a hookah either. I only have one point to make on this particular bill. I agree very strongly with Mrs Peulich that some of the opponents of this bill may well have ulterior motives for their opposition. All may not be as it seems, because we know there are many within the Labor government who are soft on drugs. There are many within the government who would like to see marijuana legalised. There are some in the Labor Party who would like to see harder drugs legalised. It should not be surprising that they are opposed to the bill Mr Kavanagh has put before this house today.

Of course the Greens are well-known supporters of the legalisation of drugs,

including hard drugs, and have put such policies out in the past. I am not sure what their current policy is on this, but certainly in the past they have gone to various elections with a policy of legalising heroin.

I would expect that if you are a supporter of legalising heroin, you are not really going to be concerned about a few bongos — whether it be a few or a few thousand — in windows of shops around the city or indeed around this state.

It should be pointed out that we now know a lot more about cannabis and its dangers than we did when we had a similar debate back in the 1990s. When I was a member of the Kennett government, with Mrs Peulich, there was a concerted push from within the government to legalise marijuana. I know those who were behind that push at that time have since admitted they were wrong and that if we had legalised marijuana back in the 1990s under the Kennett government, it would have been a very grave mistake indeed.

It is very important to make the point that cannabis is an extraordinarily dangerous substance.

There are still those who will testify they have been smoking marijuana for 30 or 40 years or however long it may be and it has never harmed them. The truth of the matter is that if that is the case — and rarely is it the case — they are very lucky because the carcinogenic effect of marijuana is in many cases many times stronger than that of tobacco.

The effect of marijuana on people's mental capacity is well known. I have spoken to doctors and people working with the mentally ill in the western and north-western suburbs of Melbourne who have told me straight out that the epidemic of mental illness we are currently suffering in society is directly related to the use of illegal drugs. That is something that has to be taken into consideration as well.

There is no doubt that the use of marijuana is widespread and has been for a very long time. We are now suffering the results of that widespread use.

I know of one individual I worked for a few years ago. He was formerly a well-known newspaper and television journalist in this town but now is a psychotic mess. He is a paranoid, schizophrenic mess because he has been heavily using marijuana for some 35 or perhaps even 40 years. I have seen firsthand the effects of marijuana on people.

What we are debating today is a measure to ensure that the illegal use of drugs is not advertised, because that is what this is. Every time we walk

## Drugs, Poisons And Controlled Substances Amendment (Prohibition Of Display And Sale Of Bongs) Bill...

down the street or into a shopping centre and see bongs in windows, that in fact is advertising the illegal use of drugs. It is advertising the illicit use of marijuana. It is advertising an illegal act, and that is something this bill brings to the fore. I think it is very important.

The Brunswick Street brigade would have us believe that tobacco is worse than marijuana. As I mentioned before, that is not the case.

That really has to be pushed home. You go down to Brunswick Street and they are all sipping their lattes and God knows what else. If you light up a cigarette, you are likely to be taken out the back and shot. But if you have a 3-foot reefer, there is not a problem in the world. The double standards are just extraordinary.

I have to say to members opposite — members who may be thinking that a reefer is fine but do not have a tobacco cigarette or you will be in more strife than the early settlers — that they really have to rethink their attitudes to these things. These bongs that Mr Kavanagh is proposing to ban the sale and display of really only have one purpose — that is, to facilitate the breaking of the law. Whatever the law may be, in this situation the bong is the instrument whereby the law is broken. We are talking here about the use of cannabis, and that is something that is to the fore in this particular debate.

The mere fact that something is openly on display and there for the specific purpose of somebody breaking the law troubles me. All you have to do is walk down the steps of this building and down Bourke Street a couple of blocks and you will see one particular shop, which I am sure many members and others would be well aware of, which has hundreds of bongs openly on display, a kilometre from this building. As you go into shopping centres around the state you will see that repeated. A number of shops — usually selling cigarettes, I might say — have displays of bongs for sale.

It just makes no sense at all to me. I ask those who oppose this bill to think about why you can have these instruments — whose only purpose is to facilitate the breaking of the law — on display for sale quite openly, whereas if you are actually using them, you could be arrested. It makes no sense at all to me.

I commend Mr Kavanagh for his efforts in introducing this bill to the house. I will most certainly be supporting it, as indeed the opposition will be. I ask those who have indicated that they will be opposing this bill before they vote to have a good,

hard think about exactly why they are opposing it. Whilst this is not the answer to the problem, this is a step in the right direction. Surely, given the problems that illicit drug use is causing in this state across the board in so many areas, what we need more than anything else is a push in the right direction. This bill is certainly doing that. I commend Mr Kavanagh and urge members of this house to support this bill.

**COUNCIL**  
26 May 2010

## Gaming: Licences

**Mr FINN** (Western Metropolitan) — It has often been said that if you live long enough, you are likely to see anything. On this occasion I am fortunate to have lived long enough to see something introduced by a Labor government in Victoria come in under budget. Unfortunately it is not something we would want.

We have seen, of course, the blow-outs in the regional fast rail project. Everybody will recall that before the 1999 election the then opposition told us they would be able to put in a fast rail network throughout Victoria for \$80 million. In the end that project came in at a grand total of over \$1 billion.

We have seen what has happened with myki, with an extraordinary blow-out of somewhere between \$1.3 billion and \$1.5 billion to this point — and we still cannot get a tram ticket to go down Bourke Street! That is an extraordinary and appalling effort if anybody ever saw one. We have now moved on to the smart meter, which we have discovered is not so smart at all and is going to cost us all a lot more than anybody had ever possibly thought. In fact it could be right up there with myki in being a disaster for the taxpayer.

It is quite extraordinary when something comes in under budget under this government. As is the way with this government, this is not as it was supposed to be. There is a lot that we could do with \$1 billion. I am not about to recite that ever-lengthening list today but I think it is fair to say that the people of Victoria can feel let down and disappointed and that they have been ripped off by a government that has mishandled this whole process from day one.

Speaking of day one, it is perhaps time to just cast our minds back. Earlier I heard Mr Barber talking about the evils of poker machines and so forth. It is worth going back to consider

who introduced the poker machines to Victoria and why they were introduced. It was Joan Kirner, the then Premier of Victoria, who introduced poker machines to this state. The only reason that Joan Kirner introduced pokies to Victoria was because this state was broke. If Victoria in 1990-91 had been a company, it would have been in receivership and the state cabinet would have been locked up. Some would suggest that probably should have happened anyway.

We should keep in mind why we have pokies in this state. We have pokies in this state because Joan Kirner and former Premier John Cain sent Victoria broke and then tried to gamble their way out of it. That is why we have pokies in this state. Let us not hear from anybody who is trying to point the finger at Jeff Kennett or Alan Stockdale or anybody else.

If you want to point the finger at somebody, if you want to say that this particular individual is responsible for poker machines being introduced in Victoria, you cannot go past Joan Kirner. She failed in a number of very important areas. In fact it would be fair to say that if Victoria had a position of public enemy no. 1, I would be very keen to nominate her for that.

Mr Hall interjected.

Mr FINN — There are a few other competitors, Mr Hall. They are coming from nowhere at the minute, but she has been a front-runner for quite some time, I have to say, and she is holding her head up well at this point.

We have heard a great deal in this debate about Woolworths and we have heard a great deal, not just in the debate today, but in the debate generally, about the poker machines and the debacle that has surrounded the auction process.

We have heard a good deal about Woolworths and a good deal about a bloke called Bruce Mathieson, who is often described — in fact, is invariably described and I think he may well change his name by deed poll — as the 'pokies king'. I have to say to this house that if Bruce Mathieson, as a businessman, sees an opportunity that is legal and ethical, he would be a fool if he did not take it. It is not his fault that he has got a bargain. It is not his fault that he is laughing all the way to the bank. It is the fault of this government. The government stuffed this up, not Bruce Mathieson and not Woolworths. They saw a business opportunity and they jumped at it. We would all do that, I am sure, in similar circumstances.

But I have got to wonder about the fairness of a system which allows one individual to take poker machines off

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three AFL clubs. We are not talking about small community clubs here; we are talking about AFL clubs — Richmond, the Western Bulldogs and the Brisbane Lions. They have lost their poker machines.

Where have they been delivered? The door of the centre of Underbelly — the Carlton Football Club. You have got to wonder about the fairness of a system that allows that to happen.

I must declare an interest; I am a member of the Richmond Football Club and also the Western Bulldogs Football Club, so I have a fairly keen interest in this particular matter. But it probably distresses me more to see those Fitzroy supporters who saw the Manningham Club as the last link with their old team. That is no more, or will be no more very shortly. It has been carted off down to Royal Parade, and buckets of money have been delivered there. It is very sad from a financial point of view, certainly from the perspective of Richmond and the Western Bulldogs, for those Fitzroy supporters who have already had their club taken from them and transported to Brisbane, to now have their last link with the old Fitzroy Football Club taken from them by Bruce Mathieson. He is perfectly entitled to do that, I gather; it is not immoral or unethical and certainly not illegal. But you have got to wonder, and I certainly do, about the fairness of a system that allows that to happen.

I should at this point state my own position on gambling. I have no problem with gambling at all. I have been known in the past to have a flutter on the pokies myself. In years gone by, from time to time, I probably had a bit more of a flutter than I should have.

I do not do that very much any more because I do not really have much time these days, but I can understand — and I have seen people become addicted to this form of gambling — that it can be, for some people, a very insidious form of gambling. That is something we should address. However, we should not declare the whole industry as evil just because 2 per cent, 3 per cent or 4 per cent — whatever percentage it is — have a problem with this particular form of gambling.

I heard Mr Barber talking earlier about Mr Pakula's libertarian stance on this. My view and Mr Pakula's view are as one, in that if nobody is being hurt, then people should be allowed to go and have a flutter on the pokies if they desire to do so. But we do have a responsibility. The industry in particular has a responsibility to ensure that those who are hooked on poker machines, those who have been

sucked in, if you like, by the poker machine bug, are looked after.

As I mentioned before, this auction process has been stuffed up, and it has been stuffed up from day one by a government that stuffs things up on a regular basis. Last year I recall going to a number of community clubs throughout the Western Metropolitan Region, sitting down with their presidents and their voluntary boards and so forth and trying to explain to them what this government had in mind, because what it had in mind was to wipe these community clubs out. That was what was going to happen; that is what the Labor Party had in mind for those community clubs. If the Labor Party had had its way at that time, there would not have been a community club with poker machines left in this state. They would have all been bankrupted. They all knew that and they were all very worried. In the end they were all very grateful to the coalition for forcing the changes that it did. The shadow Minister for Gaming in the Assembly, Michael O'Brien, did an outstanding job. I commend him and congratulate him on the job he did in protecting —

Mr Guy — He is a good man.

Mr FINN — He is a very good man, Mr Guy. He is to be congratulated and commended on protecting those small community clubs which are run largely on a voluntary basis and would have been wiped out if the Labor Party and the Brumby government had had their way. It was a cruel and drastic period in the lives of a lot of people. They know that it was the Labor Party which was entirely responsible for the trauma they were put through at that particular time.

We get to this point now in 2010 and we discover, having been through all that, that the bottom line is that we are about \$1 billion down. There is about \$1000 million less in the kitty than what we were anticipating, than what we should have. As I said before, the taxpayers of this state have good reason to feel that they have been ripped off. They were expecting a good deal from this.

The government told the people of Victoria that this new system was going to bring them riches that they could only dream about. People are going to have to dream about them, because they certainly have not got them.

This auction process has been an unmitigated failure from the point of view of the taxpayers of this state, and we in this Parliament have a huge responsibility, in fact almost the entire responsibility, to ensure that the taxpayers get a fair go at every opportunity. The taxpayers of this state

have been ripped off, and as a result the people of the western suburbs have been ripped off. That is where I arc up, because I know — and there are a lot of people on this side of the house and even maybe one or two on the other side who are only too aware — that the people of the western suburbs miss out on a lot. We need a lot of infrastructure and services to catch up with the rest of Melbourne. However, now the state government has \$1 billion less with which to get those goodies.

That should anger the people of the western suburbs, because once again we have missed out. We were told that this auction process would benefit the west and would provide us with the services and infrastructure that I mentioned. We were promised by the Labor government that this would be the case, but it has just not happened. We have missed out again. The west has been duded yet again. I have to say the people of the west are getting pretty sick of that. You would have thought after all these years that they might be getting used to it, but they are now beyond that. They are getting sick of it, and they are ready to fire up on a government that treats them with such contempt and has done so for such an extended time.

We are \$1 billion down and we have a government that has completely stuffed this up, but I have to ask: what else would we expect? When you look at its record, when you see what it has done over 11 years, when you see a government that is teetering, when you see a government that has a record that it should be ashamed of, what else could we expect? Of course it would stuff it up. This mob could not organise a brawl in an Irish pub.

**COUNCIL | Members Statements  
26 May 2010**

## Abortion: legislation

**Mr FINN** (Western Metropolitan) — It was with some considerable horror that I read in the Herald Sun of last Thursday, 20 May, a story headed 'Healthy babies aborted'. The story began with:

Almost one late-term abortion is performed in Victoria every day, and 54 babies survived the procedure to die postnatally, according to figures released by the state government.

Of the 345 late-term abortions in 2007 — the highest number on record — 164 were performed at a Melbourne clinic on women with healthy fetuses who said they were suffering psychological or social

## Abortion: legislation...

problems.

What particularly distressed me was the sentence that stated:

In 54 of those cases the foetuses were classed as having died postnatally — usually within minutes of birth.

In other words, these babies were born alive and discarded and allowed to die. How can we call ourselves a civilised society if we allow this to happen — in Melbourne in 2010?

Add to that the recent news that the Royal Women's Hospital is complaining of the abortion overload it is suffering, with a sixfold increase in late-term abortions since the passing of the Abortion Law Reform Act in 2008. Melbourne has become the late-term abortion capital of Australia. For the small and the vulnerable, Victoria is now the place to be killed. How much longer can we tolerate this outrage against humanity?

**COUNCIL | Adjournment**  
27 May 2010

## Western suburbs: paediatric services

**Mr FINN** (Western Metropolitan) — I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Health. I note in the recent budget a considerable amount of money was provided for the Monash Medical Centre for what amounts to a new children's hospital. I congratulate the centre on that and wish it all the best -- good on it! But I ask the question: what about us in the west? It seems we have missed out yet again.

Paediatric surgical services at the Sunshine Hospital, for example, are best described as pathetic. If children are in desperate need of paediatric care and they are taken to Sunshine Hospital, they are told immediately to go to the Royal Children's Hospital because the Sunshine Hospital is not capable of meeting their needs. It is a giant game of ping-pong, using children as balls, bouncing around the western suburbs between hospitals.

It is totally unsatisfactory and I, for one, will not tolerate it any further.

Add to that the fact that in the western suburbs of Melbourne we have some of the fastest growing municipalities in Australia. Melton and Wyndham spring to mind as municipalities that are growing at an enormous rate, and depending on which day it is, Wyndham is frequently the fastest growing municipality in Australia.

Families coming into these areas in very large numbers also means there are children, because children are, generally speaking, part of families. These children need medical services. We do not want a monument to the minister, as is being built at the moment at Sunshine. We do not want operating theatres being built and used as office space, as has happened at Sunshine in the past. We need real paediatric services with surgery now.

I ask the Minister for Health to provide services similar to those being provided to Monash Medical Centre to either Sunshine Hospital or Werribee Mercy Hospital, or preferably both because the western suburbs, as I said, are growing at an extraordinary rate, and we need these services desperately.

Children in the west get sick too, in case the minister is not aware of that, and they deserve the same services as kids on the other side of Melbourne. Kids in the west should not be put in a second or third-class category. They deserve proper medical treatment as much as anybody else in Melbourne. I ask the minister to ensure immediately, as a matter of extreme urgency, that those services and proper medical care is provided to those children.

**COUNCIL | Statements on Reports**  
27 May 2010

## Ombudsman: investigation into alleged improper conduct of councillors at Brimbank City Council

**Mr FINN** (Western Metropolitan) — In recent weeks we have seen on our televisions a reunion series of the program Survivor. One year down the track it might be appropriate to have a look at the Ombudsman's report Whistleblowers Protection Act 2001 — Investigation into the Alleged Improper Conduct of Councillors at Brimbank City Council. Perhaps we could call this 'Survivor Brimbank — the reunion.' It is important 12 months down the track to have a look at where some of the key players now find themselves after the damning recommendations and findings of the Ombudsman just one year ago.

Hakki Suleyman, who I am sure we all remember as the former electorate officer, branch stacker extraordinaire and general shonk, has left the office of Justin Madden.

He still heads up the Migrant Resource Centre North West Region, which some have suggested is a major centre for branch-stacking activities in the western suburbs. He may have changed shops, but he is still in the same business. He has been elected to the ALP national conference, which is the supreme policy-making body of the ALP. There is no doubt about it — when you get caught with your fingers in the till in the ALP they just kick you upstairs.

His daughter, Natalie Suleyman, the former mayor of Brimbank who ruled that city with an iron fist, failed miserably when attempting to enter this Parliament, as we recall. She now has found a job at long last. Despite what we are told by members of the ALP — that she has been ostracised within Labor ranks and they will not have a bar of her — guess where she is working? She is working for a Labor MP. She is now an electorate officer for Nathan Murphy. For all the nonsense the ALP talks about having cleaned up its act, it has taken her on board. The irony of ironies is that she now holds the position that was once held by Costas Socratous, the corruption whistleblower within the ALP. You cannot make this stuff up; this is the truth.

You have to wonder whether Mr Murphy knows what she is up to in his electorate office, because Mr Madden did not have a clue what her father was up to in his.

Then there is Cr Sam David, the three-time mayor of Brimbank and close associate of Dr Andrew Theophanous, the convicted fraudster, and his wife, the former deputy mayor of Brimbank, Kathryn Eriksson. Cr David has accused former councillor colleague Costas Socratous of stealing \$3000 from a western suburbs soccer club, despite the president and secretary of that club denying that there is any money missing or that they have seen former Cr Socratous for many years. Maybe it would be better for Cr David to answer some of the ongoing questions about his financial arrangements with Dr Theophanous around the time of the last mayoral election.

Then of course there is Mr Socratous himself, who has well and truly blown the whistle on what has been going on within the ALP in the western suburbs and indeed throughout Victoria for quite some years. On the front page of the Age last week he is reported as

## Ombudsman: investigation into alleged improper conduct of councillors at Brimbank City Council...

saying:

... the money, up to \$5500 a year, was provided to him for branch stacking through MPs' offices and via shadowy fundraising events.

He has:

... named Mr —

Theo —

Theophanous and state parliamentary secretary Telmo Languiller as architects of the long-running scheme.

Mr Socratous has well and truly told us all exactly what has been going on. This is not a surprise to me. It is not a surprise to anybody who has been keeping a close eye on what has been going on in the western suburbs for quite some time. This is just par for the course for the Labor Party in the west. This is the sort of corruption that passes as normal business for the Labor Party in the west. You might ask where Telmo Languiller and Theo Theophanous have gone. They know nothing! They were not there. They do not know anybody who was there. They did not see it happen. They do not know anybody who saw it happen. It was not them. That is what they will tell you. I wonder what this former minister and current parliamentary secretary are really up to. It is about time the truth saw the light of day. It is about time the cover-up was exposed. Justice is needed in Brimbank.

COUNCIL | Adjournment  
8 June 2010

## Autism: western suburbs schools

**Mr FINN** (Western Metropolitan) — I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Education. I note in the budget that an autism-specific secondary college has been provided for the people of the eastern suburbs, and I congratulate the parents of those children with autism from the east, but it does beg the time-honoured question: what about those of us in the west of Melbourne?

I have a new policy, and I am hoping the government will adopt this policy — that is, if it is good enough for the east of Melbourne, it is most certainly good enough for Melbourne's west. We in the west not only want an autism-specific secondary school but need an autism-specific secondary school.

As things stand, children who attend the Western Autistic School receive

just four years education before being shuffled off to struggle in a mainstream school, or to an often totally inappropriate special school. Parents of children with autism — as I have said in this house many times — suffer enough without the added worry of whether their children will be provided with an adequate education.

Last Saturday night I attended the Autism Angels of Brimbank dinner dance, and I sat next to one father of an autistic child. The worry was etched into his face; I could almost read it. He was obviously concerned about the school his son will be attending next year. He does not know. He said to me, 'Bernie, there is nowhere for my son to go.' And it is June. It is halfway through the year and this father does not know where his son is going to go to school next year. As if this kid has not got enough problems with his autism, the government will not provide the necessary support for a decent education.

It is not just not good enough; it is a disgrace in this day and age.

If the eastern suburbs are to be provided with an autism-specific secondary school, I ask the minister to immediately announce that a similar facility will be provided to serve the people of the west of Melbourne. To do otherwise is an outrage against autistic children and their families who live in Melbourne's west. It is just not good enough, and I ask the minister to announce that new school now.

COUNCIL  
9 June 2010

## Ambulance Services: Performance

**Mr FINN** (Western Metropolitan) — I think it was Celine Dion who sang about leaving the best till last, so it is with pleasure that I join this debate.

Mr Tee interjected.

Mr FINN — I will explain it to Mr Tee later. It may take some time and lots of hand movements.

I do not intend to speak on this debate for an extended period because, quite frankly, I find some of the stories I have had to read in researching this subject quite distressing, particularly when it relates to the deaths of children as a result of ambulances not arriving or arriving much later than they should have. I find that particularly distressing, and I think it is something members on both sides of the house should find similarly

distressing. There should be a mutual determination to improve the situation on that count.

I was fascinated to hear Mr Tee speaking in the debate earlier. He was telling us that he was around when the Kennett government did this and he was around when the Kennett government was debasing the ambulance service. Apparently what the Kennett government was not responsible for is not worth mentioning. In his next sentence he went on to attack the opposition for playing politics. I had to laugh, because I too was around during those days.

Ms Pulford might say I do not look that old, but indeed I was around in those days, and I remember that politics was being played with the ambulance service in the days of the Kennett government. But it was not the Liberals and The Nationals who were playing politics with the ambulance service in 1997, 1998 and 1999; it was a former member for Albert Park in the other place, John Thwaites, who was then the shadow health minister and Deputy Leader of the Labor Party. He went on to become the Deputy Premier of this state. He is the man — —

Mr Lenders — A good man!

Mr FINN — He was probably a better Deputy Premier than the current one; I would have to agree with the Treasurer there.

It was back in those years that Mr Thwaites rode on the back of the ambulance all the way into government. He was the one who played politics, and he was the one who was the champion of smear and fear. He put a situation into place where a good many people were too scared to ring for an ambulance if there was something wrong, because they honestly did not believe there was any chance it would arrive.

The tragedy is that 11 years later that is the situation we find ourselves in. Eleven years after John Thwaites told us this was happening — when it was not — this has come to pass. Perhaps John Thwaites is a prophet, I do not know, but he grabbed hold of his crystal ball and told us just how bad the ambulance system is in this state 11 years down the track. I find that deeply troubling, and anybody who has elderly or ill relatives or friends would find it equally troubling.

Turning to Mr Tee's amendment, some members of this house have suggested that Mr Tee does not have a sense of humour. His amendment proves that he does, and the fact that during the course of his address on his amendment he could not keep a straight face further proves my point. Members on this side of the house can

## Ambulance Services: Performance...

only say that Mr Tee cannot be serious in coming into this house and putting up something the likes of which he has done today. It is quite extraordinary.

I can understand why Mr Tee could not keep a straight face, because this amendment is nothing but a joke.

Some government members have, for reasons that are beyond me, taken this amendment seriously. Mr Tee has obviously put this up as a bit of a gag — having had a couple of reds at lunch time or something he has put this idea forward as a bit of a joke. I do not know whether it is Mr Lenders or Mr Viney but they have taken him seriously and they have decided to run with it. We find ourselves in the house at almost half past three actually debating the thing! There are some things that happen in this chamber — and indeed in this Parliament — that seriously escape my comprehension, and this certainly fits into that category.

When I hear members of the government such as Mr Tee come into this house and speak — not just on this subject, but on so many subjects — they tell us the government has spent X million or X billion. They spend, spend, spend; they love to spend other people's money. The definitive explanation of what socialism is all about is spending other people's money. That is what this government is all about. It does not particularly care if it gets a result. It does not particularly care if it gets an outcome. It just wants to spend money. As long as it's not its own money, it is happy. The trouble is, as Acting President Somyurek might know, it is sad when governments run out of other people's money, because the continuing definition of socialism is that when they run out of other people's money they do not stop spending. They continue spending, and that is what this government does.

With regard to this motion, I do not particularly care how much this government claims it has spent on ambulance services in Victoria.

I say that because the outcomes do not match the claims of spending. If Mr Tee had told us with pride how much the government had spent and had then gone on to say, 'And as a result of us spending this money we have a night on perfect ambulance service,' I would have said, 'Good on you!' In fact I probably would not have said anything at all because if the ambulance service was night on perfect, we would not be having this debate. There would be other matters to discuss. The fact that ambulance services in Victoria are so far away from that particular situation leaves us all to debate exactly why, as Mr Tee tells us, the government has been spending money hand over fist

for night on 11 years.

We have heard this from government members again today, and I do not know how long they are going to keep this up. Will they keep banging on about this right up until 6.00 o'clock on 27 November: 'It is all Jeff Kennett's fault'? We hear the government saying, 'We have done such a wonderful job. We have spent all this money.'

We have spent dollar upon dollar and hundreds of millions of dollars, but because we have failed, because we have stuffed up, because we have let the people of Victoria down, it is all Jeff Kennett's fault. That is the fallback position.

Mr Viney interjected.

Mr FINN — Mr Viney well knows that is the fallback position of this government every time. Whenever this government fails — and God knows it fails so often — it is Jeff Kennett's fault. Jeff Kennett has not been Premier of this state for almost 11 years. He has run the Hawthorn Football Club for almost longer than he was Premier of this state. It is ludicrous to suggest that everything that goes wrong in Victoria in 2010 is Jeff Kennett's fault. It is stupid; it makes no sense at all. As the Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, would say, 'Guess what?'. The people voting in November

know it is not Jeff Kennett's fault. At long last, Mr Viney, they are waking up to you. They know what Mr Viney is on about —

Mrs Peulich interjected.

Mr FINN — He is short on most things, but that is another thing altogether! It is something to wonder about: the electorate has finally woken up to the fact that this government has not got what it takes. The people of Victoria know this government has spent a fortune because they have been paying a lot of money in taxes, a wide variety of taxes, on a lot of things. The money has disappeared but we have not got the outcomes. It is not just ambulances, it is a whole range of things, but given the debate today is on ambulance services I will try to contain my comments to that particular area.

After 11 years and all that money the ambulance service is actually going backwards. If somebody were to have a heart attack or an accident at home and ring for an ambulance, there would be a genuine fear that the ambulance service would not be able to meet their needs, that it is not up to scratch.

In the circumstance where the ambulance does actually get to the person and they are put in the back of the ambulance and it races off down the road towards the hospital, even then there is no guarantee that they

will actually get into the hospital.

We have heard so many stories of ambulances banking up in car parks of hospitals, with paramedics unable to get the sick people in the back of the ambulances into the hospitals. We have heard stories of ambulances being pushed from hospital to hospital as the paramedics search for a hospital bed. Even when the ambulance shows up, under Labor in 2010 after almost 11 years of government, there is no guarantee that the patient will be able to get out of the ambulance and into a bed.

A classic example of that is what we have seen out in the western suburbs, particularly at the Footscray hospital. I refer to an article in the *Maribyrnong Leader* of 20 April, which says:

Figures obtained by the opposition under freedom of information show Footscray was on bypass 9 per cent of the time between July and September 2009. The government benchmark is 3 per cent.

The bypass figure at Footscray was in fact three times what it should have been. I am not exaggerating when I say that even when the ambulance arrives there is no guarantee that it will actually get you to a hospital to be treated for the ailments you are suffering from.

It is not just the sick or those who are ailing who are the victims in this.

We must think also of those we used to describe in the old days as the 'ambos' — the paramedics who drive the ambulances and offer treatment at the scene. They do a great job — I take this opportunity to commend them on the job they do — but they work under enormous stress. I think it is a job I would not be able to do. I would not be able to show up to accidents and face the death and the blood and guts that they face on a daily basis. They should be very proud of the job they do.

It is a black mark against this government that, even after the wonderful job the paramedics do and the extraordinarily difficult conditions they face, this government still treats them as it does. It treats them so badly. We have seen that time and again. Sure, this debate must first and foremost be about providing an ambulance service to those who need it, but we should also be thinking about those highly qualified men and women who staff our ambulances.

They should form a component of this debate and in our thoughts when this matter is up for consideration.

Over recent years some very odd things have been happening in the Melbourne ambulance service. I brought one of those to the attention

## Ambulance Services: Performance...

of this house back in 2007, about two and a half years ago. It concerned the Craigieburn and district ambulance committee, which had been operating the Craigieburn community emergency response team (CERT) on a voluntary basis for about 12 years. The team was pretty much renowned throughout the Craigieburn area for the job it had been doing. It served Craigieburn residents outside the operating hours of the local ambulance station, which were from 9.00 a.m. to 9.00 p.m.

This program was begun and entirely funded by the local community — by locals, for locals. It was something the community was very proud of. There was no government financial support and it was a very successful program.

In fact it was so successful that it has been used as a blueprint for similar programs around Victoria. By any measure it was a major plus, a valuable asset, for the people of Craigieburn.

The then Metropolitan Ambulance Service squeezed the life out of this committee and this program over a 12-month period. It starved the program of support and removed the CERT from the control of the Craigieburn and district ambulance committee. At the time we heard some very serious allegations regarding uniformed members of the MAS bullying, intimidating and physically assaulting members of the Craigieburn committee. I raised that matter with the Minister for Health at the time, and I am still waiting for an adequate response.

The people in Craigieburn are entitled to wonder what has happened to the service that served them so well for such a long time. As I said, when I raised it in this house I asked the question, 'What is going on there?' I am still waiting for a response that I would regard as being sufficient to allay all the concerns about this matter that the people of Craigieburn have. Again, it is just an example of the ambulance service going haywire under a Labor government.

Despite what John Thwaites had said in 1997, 1998 and 1999 — that he as health minister and Steve Bracks as Premier would fix the ambulance service — the service has gone backwards, and that is the bottom line. There is no way to look at it other than that. The promises were made, but like most things with this government they were not followed up.

After 11 years you would think this government would get up, beat its breast and say, 'Haven't we done a magnificent job? Haven't we got the best ambulance service in Australia?'. After 11 years of government you

would think that would be the case. But it is not. I look around the chamber this afternoon and there is nobody here. There are two members of the government in the chamber — three, I am sorry; one member has come scurrying in.

Mr Lenders — Four.

Mr FINN — No, Mr Lenders cannot say that because the Acting President is non-partisan in her position. The bottom line is that I do not see members of the government of this chamber lining up to defend the record of the government. I do not see members of the government lining up to defend what they have done in this area. And the reason is that what this government has done is indefensible.

Mrs Kronberg — You cannot defend the indefensible!

Mr FINN — Mrs Kronberg is absolutely spot-on the money: you cannot defend the indefensible. So after 11 years, in October, of this Labor government, the ambulance service has gone backwards. It is not serving the people of Victoria in the way that it should, and this government expects four more years of that. I do not think so, and I do not think the people of Victoria will stand for that either.

## COUNCIL | Questions without Notice 9 June 2010

### Hazardous waste: management

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I wish to direct a question to the Minister for Environment and Climate Change. I refer to the Auditor-General's damning report on the EPA (Environment Protection Authority) tabled today and entitled Hazardous Waste Management. The Auditor-General makes it clear that a conflict of interest could exist with the head of the enforcement unit holding de facto decision-making powers while also sitting on the review panel for those same decisions, stating:

The lack of clarity creates the potential for a conflict of interest that could undermine the integrity of the panel.

After close to 11 years in government, will the minister now clean up this discredited and mismanaged body and end the conflicts of interest in the EPA's review processes under longstanding management revealed by the Auditor-General?

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr JENNINGS (Minister for Environment and Climate Change) — In my substantive answer to Mr Davis

only a few minutes ago — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The PRESIDENT — Order! Minister!

Mr JENNINGS — In relation to how Hansard may record that, it might be thought that I was unruly.

Nonetheless, thank you, President, for the intervention to enable me to provide my answer.

In my substantive answer to Mr Davis I indicated that the EPA has accepted all nine recommendations, and of the nine recommendations in the report seven of them have already been acted on. The recommendation that relates to this issue is one that has been completed. Prior to receiving the recommendation from the Auditor-General we had already remedied the fault that has been identified in the Auditor-General's report tabled today.

#### Supplementary question

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — The minister's mismanagement and failed oversight also extends to the keeping of records relating to dangerous waste.

The Auditor-General found that the minister is potentially in breach of the Public Records Act 1973. Can the minister advise the house what legal advice he has had relating to this potential breach, and will he release it so that the public is aware of the risk to which it has been put?

Mr JENNINGS (Minister for Environment and Climate Change) — The President will know that I am not the subject of the Auditor-General's report, despite the way Mr Finn has asked the question. I am not subject to it.

Mr Finn — Are you sure?

Mr JENNINGS — Yes, and I am not subject to the recommendation that he refers to. However, the Environment Protection Authority is subject to the Auditor-General's report and the EPA is subject to that recommendation. The EPA has accepted the validity of those recommendations and will comply with them.

## COUNCIL | Members Statements 9 June 2010

### Planning: city of Moonee Valley

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — Last Saturday at lunchtime I joined shadow planning minister Matthew Guy and two Moonee Valley councillors, Paul Giuliano and Rose Iser, and a good cross-section of locals at Queens Park in Moonee Ponds for a rally to express their anger at attempts

## Planning: city of Moonee Valley...

by the Minister for Planning, Justin Madden, to destroy all they love about their neighbourhood. This goodly crowd of people came to take a stand to protect the character of Puckle Street, Buckley Street, Keilor Road and Mount Alexander Road and so many other parts of the local area. They came to protect it against a planning minister who does not want to know what they think and who cares even less.

The position of locals is very clear. They do not want Moonee Valley turned into a concrete canyon and neither do I. The people of Essendon know they have the future of their neighbourhoods in their own hands.

They feel a sense of duty and will be putting that into action when they vote in November, not just to protect their own area within Moonee Valley but also to protect other suburbs and towns throughout the state of Victoria. That sense of duty will see them queuing up to consign Justin Madden to the political scrapheap, and that will be a very good thing. Bring it on!

**COUNCIL | Adjournment**  
**10 June 2010**

## City of Brimbank: business permits

**Mr FINN** (Western Metropolitan) — I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Local Government. This is a matter that concerns our old friends at the Brimbank council. It seems that the orchestra has been sent home but the melody lingers. I promise you, Acting President, that nary a Suleyman will be mentioned in this contribution.

I have recently had a meeting with a constituent, Mr Peter Sangh, who operates a business in Brooklyn. Recently there have been concerns about dust on the site of his business in the Brooklyn area, but he assures me that that issue has been resolved and is no longer of concern, or certainly no longer of concern to the degree that it was.

Mr Sangh and the landowner — to give a perspective of the whole situation — sought out a permit for the business in 2006, and on 12 April of that year Mr Sangh received correspondence from the Brimbank City Council stating that he did not need to have his own permit as another permit given to the landowner covered his permit application.

He has been operating his recycling business successfully since that time. A couple of months ago he was told that he is operating with no permit and

needs to shut down and relocate — that is, after four years. When Mr Sangh showed the council the letter regarding the permit it said a staff member had made a mistake and that he would have to shut down. The council denied that any permits at all existed for this particular business.

The council has said that if he reapplies for new permits, they will be issued with Environment Protection Authority conditions, such as requiring him to pave asphalt over an acre of the former tip site he operates on at a cost to Mr Sangh of over \$1 million. This would send him broke. He would be out of business, and it would mean the loss of employment to hundreds of people. It would be the end of his small business at this particular time. The council is now denying that permits ever existed, even though there is evidence to suggest that Mr Sangh and other people applied in good faith and were approved to operate in that area.

Whilst I have raised this issue in respect of Mr Sangh, there are other businesses in this area which are facing the same problem. This is extraordinary, to say the least.

I ask Minister Wynne to institute a program of mediation between Brimbank council and Mr Sangh and any other business that faces a similar problem and, at the same time as instituting this mediation program, to remind the Brimbank council of the importance of small-to-medium-sized businesses, such as the one it seeks to send to the wall. I ask the minister to institute this mediation program as soon as possible.

**COUNCIL | Adjournment**  
**22 June 2010**

## Electricity: high-voltage powerlines

**Mr FINN** (Western Metropolitan) — I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Energy and Resources, and it concerns a letter I received a couple of weeks ago from Mr Laurie Grima of Sunshine West. The letter begins:

Powercor is putting 66 000 volt powerlines through our neighbourhood to provide power to industry on the other side of the Western Ring Road. The powerlines will be running along Ridgeway Parade, Nancy Street and Whitesides Avenue in the Sunshine West area.

There has been no consultation from Powercor and when they

were asked about the powerlines, they stated Brimbank Council gave them permission and Powercor provided a contact number that was disconnected.

There is some evidence that electromagnetic radiation can have health impacts and I am very concerned for the wellbeing of my family ...

These lines are close to our homes and a kindergarten, yet Powercor will not put them underground saying it doesn't want to pay. I am sure you would agree that the health of the Sunshine West community, especially the kids, is more valuable than investing in underground powerlines.

I agree with Mr Grima that the health and welfare — and wellbeing, indeed — of the Sunshine West community is extremely important. I have to wonder if Powercor or another energy company were to be putting in powerlines on the other side of Melbourne whether they would be putting in overhead lines or they would be putting them underground. Frankly, we in the western suburbs are totally sick of the double standards of government, of the private sector, of a whole range of interests across the community when dealing with people in the western suburbs.

We seem to get a raw deal time and again. This really has to cease, particularly when it may well endanger the lives and the health of people living in the western suburbs.

When I read this letter, I picked up the phone, I spoke to Mr Grima and I visited his home, where a goodly number of concerned neighbours had gathered. They took me around and showed me exactly where the poles had gone up and where the overhead powerlines are due to go. What we are talking about here are high-voltage powerlines opposite a kindergarten. It is just not good enough.

I ask the Minister for Energy and Resources to convene a meeting to ensure that consultation is provided by Powercor and that no overhead powerlines go up until such time as the local community is totally reassured that there are no health risks — that there are no dangers to their health or wellbeing.

I ask the minister to do that rapidly, as the poles for these overhead wires are already erected. He will need to do that quick stick. I ask the minister to do that as a matter of urgency.

## Rail: western suburbs

**Mr FINN** (Western Metropolitan) — I wish to ask a question of the Minister for Public Transport. I refer to the poor level of service provided on western suburbs rail lines in the minister's own electorate — the one that he shares with a number of us. The Herald Sun today reports in its 'Angry travellers lash out' story that its survey of train travellers reveals that western suburbs passengers are the angriest and feel they are getting the worst service on the network. Given that the minister claims to frequently travel from his home to work on public transport, how frequently does the Black Rock-based minister experience delays, cancellations and the appalling service on the Sydenham line?

Hon. M. P. PAKULA (Minister for Public Transport) — I thank Mr Finn for his question. I, too, noted the survey story in this morning's Herald Sun.

What it primarily indicated was that in particular passengers are concerned about issues of overcrowding. Those issues are just one part of the story. Passengers seek also to have trains that run consistently and reliably, which is a message I have heard loud and clear since I have been the Minister for Public Transport.

That is exactly why the government is making the massive investment that it is making, not just in additional rolling stock to provide more services, better frequency and less overcrowding but also in infrastructure such as the regional rail link project, which is about separating Metro services from regional services. That will ensure that passengers throughout that north-western corridor, whether they travel on V/Line services or on Metro services, have extra dedicated track so that we can put more services on both Metro and V/Line services as a result of that separation.

Mr Finn interjected.

Hon. M. P. PAKULA — I take up Mr Finn's interjection. The whole purpose of the regional rail link project is to provide more dedicated track so that the services coming from Geelong, Bendigo and Ballarat no longer have the interaction with services on the Metro line that Mr Finn has referred to.

Mr D. Davis interjected.

Hon. M. P. PAKULA — Unlike Mr Davis, who interjects, I am a regular user of public transport, including on the Sydenham line, the Werribee

line and the Williamstown line. On numerous occasions I have used the train to get to my electorate office in Yarraville, which happens to lie not on the Sydenham line but on the Williamstown line.

We are investing record amounts into putting on more services and more rolling stock and creating more reliability, all of which is designed to alleviate exactly those issues identified by Mr Finn and this morning's article — that is, reducing overcrowding by putting on more services.

As I indicated when we announced the timetable improvements in June that focused on Frankston, Cranbourne and Pakenham, I also look forward to announcing improved services and extensions to services in the northern and western corridors later this year.

### *Supplementary question*

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — In thanking the minister for his answer, I point out to him that we in the west would very much welcome him as a fellow resident, if indeed he deigned to join us at some stage.

My supplementary question is: why is this government yet again ignoring service provision for the western suburbs, an area this minister purports to represent?

Hon. M. P. PAKULA (Minister for Public Transport) — Mr Finn clearly had his supplementary question drafted in advance of my answer, because had he listened to my answer he would have heard me say that we are investing in more rolling stock — in 38 new X'trapolis trains, of which we currently have 6 out on the network — and that we have more coming on stream between now and the end of the year. What that additional rolling stock will allow the government to do is, in consultation with the operator, to announce further improvements to timetabled services focusing on the northern and western corridors later this year.

## Australia: republic debate

**Mr FINN** (Western Metropolitan) — The recent Queen's Birthday holiday provided an opportunity for the more boring members of our community to start flapping their jaws about that hoary old chestnut — the republic. By doing so, the republicans betrayed their pathological hatred of the Royal Family, but did little else. This issue is

not about personalities; it is not about Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth, Prince Philip, Prince Charles, Camilla, Diana or even Paul Keating and Malcolm Turnbull, but it is about our system of government and a constitutional monarchy that allows freedom that is the envy of most of the rest of the world.

If our constitutional monarchy were a car, it would be comfortable, it would be economical and it would be reliable.

Republicans want us to buy a new vehicle, but they will not tell us what make or model; they will not tell us how much it will cost; and they will not even tell us if it will start or take us to where we need to go. They want us to buy a pig in a poke.

That is just not good enough for Australia and for Australians. If republicans can come up with a better system of government than Australia's constitutional monarchy, then let us see it. Let us hear what they have got. At this point they have not done it because they know, as indeed we all know, that the constitutional monarchy is the best system of government for Australia, because it has made Australia one of the greatest nations on this earth.

## Police: Werribee

**Mr FINN** (Western Metropolitan) — I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. I am sure the minister would be very much aware that the issue of police numbers is a major concern in the Werribee area and has been for a decade or thereabouts. There is a significant and worrying lack of ability by police to respond to incidents in the Werribee area, and quite often those police are down to one unit with no wagons on the road at all. That is really quite intolerable in this day and age.

Mr Drum — In Werribee?

Mr FINN — In Werribee, Mr Drum.

An honourable member — No vehicles?

Mr FINN — No vehicles; I am informed that is quite often the case. To cover major incidents, such as we have seen from time to time in Werribee, units are called out from most places in the western suburbs, which leaves the rest of the west without the sort of police coverage that is necessary. It is again a situation, to understate the matter, which is far from ideal.

This issue has been pursued by

## Police: Werribee...

locals, led by Lori McLean, for quite some years. I have no doubt that the minister would be aware of that, and I am sure many members of the house would be aware of it as well. The lack of police numbers puts enormous pressures and stresses on the police who are on the front line. They are not able to do their jobs properly; they are not able to protect the community in the way they would like to protect it because of the lack of resources provided by the government and certainly the lack of police numbers in the Werribee area. Added to this is the fact that Wyndham, which is in the Werribee area, is one of the fastest growing municipalities in Australia.

It has experienced a huge population growth and the same police problems we have had for the best part of a decade. This is a major issue in Werribee and one that I believe should be addressed.

This week on the police website an announcement appeared about the temporary closure of the Werribee police station. The announcement appeared yesterday at 10.32 a.m. It said that the station would be closed to the public from 7.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m. from Wednesday, 23 June, to Friday, 25 June. There is no explanation and no reason given why the people of Werribee will lose their police station for three days. The announcement was just put on a website at 10.32 yesterday morning.

I ask the minister to provide an explanation to the people of Werribee as to why they have lost their police station for these three days and to ensure that it never happens again.

**COUNCIL | Second Reading  
24 June 2010**

## Appropriation (2010/2011) Bill and Budget Papers 2010-11

**Mr FINN** (Western Metropolitan) — I do not intend to speak on the budget for very long, because quite frankly I do not think the budget deserves it. What we have seen with this budget is more of the same: no vision and no hope for Victoria or Victorians. This is a boring budget from a boring government that is bored with being in government. After 11 years I suppose that is not surprising. The good news is that it has only a few months left.

By Christmas it will be gone and Victorians will as one rejoice in the new government that will take some

interest in what is necessary to make Victoria the great place it should be. The bottom line is that it is time this government moved on. If it does not move on voluntarily, the electorate will move it on. I have no doubt that come 27 November this year that is exactly what will happen.

After almost 11 years in power, the government continues to show absolutely no respect for the taxpayer or for the taxpayer dollar. It is a bit like the federal government, the former Rudd government, as it was until a few hours ago. It spends money like it is going out of fashion. We have seen federally with the home insulation program and the Building the Education Revolution program, the latter of which was under the stewardship of the new Prime Minister, what disasters Australian taxpayers money has been used to fund. This is typical of what we can expect from the Labor Party whenever it reaches government at any level in this country.

It must break the hearts of people like former Prime Minister John Howard and former federal Treasurer Peter Costello to see what has happened federally, where a \$28 billion surplus or thereabouts has been turned into an around \$150 billion deficit. That is desperate. It reflects the attitude of the Labor Party, wherever it may be in government, towards taxpayers money. Unfortunately that attitude, so prevalent in Canberra, has also been prevalent here at the state level for almost 11 years.

That is the basic difference between the Labor Party and those of us on the conservative side of politics in this country: on this side of the house we believe that those who work hard for their money have a right to keep it — or as much of it as is possible.

The Labor Party, indeed federally the socialists these days, has absolutely no compunction about reaching into people's pockets, about emptying their wallets, about tipping them upside down and shaking them until every cent falls from their pockets, and taking it and spending it at will. They have absolutely no concern and no worry about that at all.

There is a significant difference between those on this side of the house and those in government on attitude towards taxpayers and towards the right of taxpayers to keep as much of their own money as possible.

What we have in this state is a government that never tires of spending other people's money. In fact it has to be said that it has never seen a dollar that it did not want to spend, as long as it was not its own. I suppose

the ultimate description of socialists is those who want to spend money until they run out, and as long as it is not their own, they will keep spending it.

That is very much the concern of many Victorians today as a result of what this government has done, because what you will never see from this Brumby government — and never saw from the Bracks government previously — is value for money. Members opposite will get up in this house and lecture us at very great length about how much they have spent on particular projects. They will tell us about the hundreds or thousands of millions of dollars they have spent on police or hospitals or ambulances or any number of services throughout the state, but they never tell us about outcomes. I think I know why: because, generally speaking, the outcomes are lousy. They are very bad outcomes.

Mrs Kronberg interjected.

Mr FINN — Indeed, as Mrs Kronberg says, they have stuffed up. Labor has stuffed up again and again, and that is what we see too often.

For evidence of that we only have to look at myki, which surely has to go down in the annals of this state as one of the greatest, if not the greatest, financial disasters that any Victorian government has ever perpetrated.

I wonder at this moment, as I have before, exactly where we are in terms of spending on myki; we must have reached \$1.5 billion by now. I know certainly out in the western suburbs we could do with that \$1.5 billion. We could spend that \$1.5 billion on services that people could actually use. As I have said in this house before, we have spent hundreds or thousands of millions of dollars on this particular scheme, and at this point in time we cannot even get a myki tram ticket to travel down Bourke Street. That is where this government has its priorities: they are about spending, not about the actual outcomes.

I do not know about other members — and I might survey them later — but I like to get value for money.

On those very rare occasions when I go shopping I like to get value for money. That is not something that this government is even mildly concerned about. It just does not seem to enter into the equation at all. Over recent months we have seen the latest foray of this government into a project called smart meters. I fear to think where that is going to end, because I think these smart meters have the potential to be an even greater financial disaster than myki.

Given the fact that Peter Batchelor, the Minister for Energy and Resources,

## Appropriation (2010/2011) Bill and Budget Papers 2010-11...

is in charge of smart meters pretty much convinces me that it will be a total, unmitigated disaster. As we know, Mr Batchelor's stewardship of anything turns to disaster pretty quickly. He has the runs on the board on that score; his success rate is zilch.

In fact I think Mr Batchelor was the one who started myki when he was transport minister, if my recollection is correct.

This government will get up and beat its breast, it will tell us how much money it has spent — it has spent hundreds of millions on this and on that. But the government will not tell you what it got for the money — and that is the important part.

Sure, we want to know how much the government has spent. The Victorian public needs to know how much has been spent, but what we really need to know more than anything else is what we got for the money. What did we get for the \$200 million or the \$300 million? That is the important part, and unfortunately that is always the part that this government is not even mildly interested in. It does not care; it is not their money; it is not an issue; it does not know. That is the attitude of the Brumby government.

It is very sad when I see so many problems and the priorities of a government that could do so much if only it set its mind in the right direction. Unfortunately we have a government in this state that is far too busy playing games — and it happens not just in this state: we saw it federally overnight. As the federal opposition leader, Mr Abbott, said in Parliament today, the Prime Minister had a midnight knock on the door; he was taken out and executed as a part of the thuggery that passes as normal politics within the ALP. This is going on all over the place.

There is one word, I suppose, out my way, in my electorate, that sums that all up — that is, Brimbank. You only have to mention Brimbank and people know exactly what you are talking about.

It is all about the worst things in politics. It is about the sort of corruption that we normally associate with the ALP in New South Wales. That is something that the ALP and this government should address as a matter of priority. They have to clean their act up, because if they do not, they will stand condemned as a group of individuals who have stood by and allowed this to happen — if not been involved in it themselves.

I do not wish to revisit the Brimbank issue and the corruption of the Brimbank council at any great length in this particular debate. But it has to be

said that, whilst people cannot find a hospital bed, cannot get an ambulance and cannot find a policeman when they need one, a lot of money is going into places like Brimbank for the ALP to use as its personal play toy in its own games, in its own political party. That is intolerable; that is something this Parliament should not have to put up with. It is something that the community should not have to put up with.

One would hope — probably hoping against hope, I would suggest — that the ALP will come to its senses and will see that its priorities are all wrong in this regard. The ALP should stop playing its games and put the needs of Victorians before all else. That is what we need in this government; that is the change in priorities that we need in this government, but I shall not be holding my breath, I can assure members.

I mentioned before that myki is now up to about \$1.5 billion of expenditure. I wondered aloud what we in the western suburbs could do or could buy with that \$1.5 billion — as well as the money spent on smart meters and on so many other programs this government has put into place that have blown up in its face.

Every day I think of the West Gate Freeway. Those who use the West Gate Freeway regularly, and I look around this chamber and do not see too many who do; Mr Koch would probably be a frequent user of it — he must be!

He just shook his head and rolled his eyes; he knows exactly what I am talking about. He knows what the West Gate Freeway is like.

Mr Koch — I try to get over it.

Mr FINN — As Mr Koch says, he tries to get over the West Gate. That is the problem. This is the main gateway to Melbourne from not just the western suburbs but from western Victoria — from Warrnambool, Colac and Geelong. Geelong is the second biggest city in Victoria. Many thousands of people who come to Melbourne every day have to use the bridge and the freeway, and it is just not up to it. What do we get from this government? It is going to put some fairy lights on the side of the bridge. That is sensational! It puts a couple of flags up for us to have a look at while we are stuck in the traffic. That is very helpful.

Mr Koch — They closed the lane on us.

Mr FINN — The government loves to close lanes. Do not get me started on VicRoads or we will be here all day and all night. The problem is that this government once again shows that it just does not care about the western suburbs, or indeed the west of the

state, by its attitude to the West Gate Bridge and the West Gate Freeway. Every day the gridlock is getting further back. We had it back to Kororoit Creek Road a few years ago. Now it is back to Point Cook. Do we want it to go to Little River, to Lara, to Geelong? How bad does this traffic have to get before this government will actually do something? Does this government have any idea of what it is doing to the lives of thousands of Victorians as a result of it ignoring the problems on the West Gate? The West Gate is a sore that is not being addressed by the government, and that is a disgrace. The sooner this government realises that the West Gate has become a symbol of its neglect then maybe, just maybe, it might do something about it. Again, I will not be holding my breath.

Mr Koch — Do not hold your breath.

Mr FINN — I will not be holding my breath, Mr Koch, I can assure you. This is not quite on the same scale as the West Gate, but there is also an issue in Werribee that has been ongoing for some time; Mr Koch might be aware of this as well. It is the Cottrell Street issue at the railway gates and the bridge. This has been a matter of enormous fury — I think that would be the word to describe it — for thousands of people who live in Werribee, Wyndham Vale and surrounds.

Wyndham, depending on which day it is, could possibly be the fastest growing municipality in Australia. There are thousands of families moving to the city of Wyndham. If you speak to Mr Madden, in one breath he will tell you what a wonderful job the government is doing in opening up the Wyndham area to thousands of families who wish to move there, which is what it is doing. What he will not tell you is that the government is not providing the services and the infrastructure that these people need for a decent standard of living, and the Cottrell Street debacle is a classic example of what I am talking about.

Can I be so bold as to actually offer a suggestion that would not cost as much as might otherwise be the case. I suggest the government could extend the electrification of the railway line from Werribee to the racecourse.

If it electrified the line to the racecourse, the racecourse could become one big car park where people could park and get the train. It would take the traffic out of Werribee and away from Cottrell Street. Perhaps we will not then need to pour the money into Cottrell Street that is currently needed. The increasing numbers of people coming into Werribee and the surrounding areas — the city of Wyndham — will have a decent rail

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service. That is just a thought.

Mr Koch — We have not got enough trains.

Mr FINN — Mr Koch says we have not got enough trains. I know we do not have enough trains. Those of us who have stood on the station platforms of Hoppers Crossing, Werribee or Laverton — any of those stations along there — will know just how hard pressed, literally, one is to get onto those trains. You get to about 7 o'clock in the morning and you need those fat Japanese blokes to come along and push you onto a train.

Perhaps that is something that the government might like to consider. I hope the government will take the extension of the electrification to the Werribee racecourse into serious consideration. That would be a solution, or at least a major part of a solution, to a problem that has been ongoing in Werribee for a very long time.

For quite some time I have been very critical of the standard of health services in the western suburbs of Melbourne. Footscray hospital, I believe, is a disgrace. I do not believe anybody on the other side of Melbourne would tolerate for 1 minute the standard of service or the physical state of the Footscray hospital; it just would not be tolerated. We should not be expected to put up with this just because we are in the western suburbs, just because we are on our side of Melbourne. We should not be expected to put up with waiting around on trolleys for hours, perhaps even days, with major injuries. We should not be expected to put up with hospital buildings which are in an appalling state.

Their condition is almost Third World in some instances. We should not have to put up with that.

What we need in the western suburbs is again the sort of resources, the sort of funding, that people in the eastern suburbs have come to expect. I do not think that is unreasonable. I do not think that is an unfair way to look at things. Just because we live on our side of Melbourne does not mean that we should miss out on what people on the other side get. Health services are crucial to the sort of issue that I am talking about. In particular we are urgently in need of greater paediatric services in the west. At the moment there are very limited paediatric services and paediatric surgery options at the Sunshine Hospital. Many instances have been brought to my attention of late where children who were injured or who are ill have been taken to the Sunshine Hospital, only to then be put in an ambulance and

shuttled off to the Royal Children's because the Sunshine Hospital just does not have the ability to cope.

That is just not good enough.

Again there are areas as far out as Melton, Caroline Springs, Werribee and Tarneit — right through there — that are growing by the day. These areas are growing because families are moving there, and families by their very definition bring children. If the health services are not there, kids are still going to get sick. If the health services are not there, then we have a real problem on our hands. This government just does not seem to care about that.

Just recently we heard — I think it was in the budget — that the Monash Medical Centre out in the eastern suburbs had been given many millions of dollars for what is basically a new children's hospital. Good luck to it for that, but we want the same in the west. We are not going to tolerate missing out any more. We have been ignored and neglected for too long. Enough! We will not put up with it any longer.

That is the message I bring to this house today. I hope Minister Madden is listening. I am hoping he will get that message through his thick scone: that we are not going to put up with being neglected any more. For the benefit of the record, as I talk about this government neglecting the western suburbs, Minister Madden is over there chortling away like the clown he is.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Elasmr) — Order! Mr Finn —

Mr FINN — I withdraw, Mr Acting President. It does not change the fact of the matter, but I withdraw nonetheless.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Elasmr) — Order! I ask Mr Finn to withdraw politely and not qualify what he says.

Mr FINN — I withdraw. People can draw their own conclusions — in fact many already have.

It is extremely important for so many families in the west of Melbourne that we get proper health services for our children. It is not asking too much, is it, to expect proper and decent health care for our kids?

Mr Koch — Fundamental.

Mr FINN — It is fundamental, as Mr Koch says. That is what we want, that is what we need and that is what we are demanding. I am hoping, as the Treasurer enters the house, that he has heard what I have said here today and that he is listening to what I am saying about the need for the people of the western suburbs to receive the same treatment as those on the other side of Melbourne.

In the area of education, over the

past few years I have been to a number of schools that I have to say were in pretty poor shape. Some of them were an absolute disgrace. I remember visiting Werribee Secondary College earlier this year or last year. It was like going back in time. I felt as if I had stepped into a time machine and gone back six or seven decades. Many of the school buildings were literally falling down and many of them were being held up with sticks.

It is just appalling the way this government has treated many of the schools in the western suburbs.

We heard last week about the office of the Minister for Energy and Resources, Peter Batchelor, so members know what happens to anybody who complains. Government members, with their Gestapo-like tactics, come down on you like a tonne of bricks. They will bully you, they will harass you and they will intimidate you, because that is the Labor way. That is the only way they know. They do not want anybody standing up for themselves. They do not want people saying, 'Hey, we want what is rightfully ours.' If anybody — any school principal or any school community — stands up and fights for what is rightfully theirs, God help them, as far as this government is concerned. As I say, that is the Labor way. It always has been, and I reckon there is a fair chance it always will be.

There are so many principals who are annoyed and distressed by the physical state of the schools they work in, but they cannot say anything because they know what will come their way if they do.

Mr Koch — Julia will fix it.

Mr FINN — Julia will not be there long enough to fix anything, let me tell you. I hope, Mr Koch, that the new Prime Minister enjoys today, because it might be her only day in Parliament as Prime Minister. If she calls the election for the end of August, it just might be her only day as Prime Minister in the Parliament. We can certainly look forward to that, anyway.

As I said, we have heard all the noise from both federal and state Labor Party members about all the money they have spent on education. I would like to know where it has gone.

It certainly has not gone into the western suburbs, but that is again not something that we should be entirely surprised about. I well remember that when we came to government back in 1992 there was a \$600 million black hole in school maintenance that the Kirner government had left us.

I remember visiting schools. One was a school that I again represent now, the Gladstone Park Secondary

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College. I have related this if not to this house, certainly to another one in years gone by. It is not a small school; it is a fairly substantial school with a large school population. I recall going to that school and putting my foot through the floor and my hand through the walls and being shown the roof where wires were dangling down — hopefully they were not live, but they might have been. I do not know; I did not find out. I certainly was not game enough to check it out myself. That was what the Kirner government left us, and that sort of thing is exactly what the Brumby government will leave us in November.

It is not good enough for a government whose members beat their chests and puff themselves out and say, 'Oh, we're so good. We put education and schools first and foremost.' It puts the lie to that, because we on this side know that is not so at all — and they prove that every day.

Just recently I have raised the need for an autism-specific secondary school in the western suburbs. In the budget there is an announcement by the Treasurer that there will be funding for an autism-specific secondary school in the east — it could be in Warrandyte. It is to be out that way. I get a bit lost when I get into the eastern suburbs, I have to say.

Mrs Petrovich — You're a westie at heart.

Mr FINN — I am a fair westie, Mrs Petrovich, I have to say. That school will be out in the eastern suburbs. The bottom line is that the people of the eastern suburbs who have the misfortune to have children with autism will be getting a secondary school for the eastern suburbs.

Hon. M. P. Pakula — Ferntree Gully.

Mr FINN — Ferntree Gully, is it? I thank the minister for his assistance. I knew it was out there somewhere.

The bottom line is, though, that we in the western suburbs have the Western Autistic School, which provides four years of education. Once the four years are up, the kids are kicked out and the parents have to work it out themselves. That is just not good enough. I am not speaking through self-interest — I want to make that very clear — because my son goes to the Northern School for Autism, and that is a P-12 school.

My little bloke is right as far as education goes, although there are other issues that I might relate at another stage.

In the western suburbs kids with autism have four years of education. That is just outrageous and appalling. We need an autism-specific secondary school in the western suburbs as a matter of urgency. We do not need it

just today; we needed it last year. As I related to this house just a few weeks ago, lately I have spoken to parents — and here we are coming to the end of June — who do not know which school their children will be at next year. I know where my other children will be. My eldest girl is moving to a secondary school next year; I know where she will be. I think by the end of June every other member who is a parent would know where their children will be next year for secondary education, but not the parents of children with autism in the western suburbs.

If it is not bad enough for parents to be faced with the problem of having a child — or children, quite often — with autism, this is an added problem thrown in. There is a lack of educational facilities for them to go to.

If we are fair dinkum about caring for people, this has to be rectified. Autism is not going to go away. Autism is growing in numbers; every year it is growing in numbers, for whatever reason. That is one of the big problems with autism. We just do not know what causes it. We have no idea what causes it. Unfortunately that does not change the fact that it is growing in prevalence in the community. In places in the western suburbs where quite often, to be frank, a lot of parents do not have the physical resources to provide the sorts of services their children really need, they are facing the neglect of not having a secondary school at all.

In fact they are faced with the prospect of their children being put into a school for four years and then being turfed out and told to go to either a mainstream school, which in many cases — certainly it would be the case with my son, if he were in that situation — would not be an option, or to a special school, which in most instances is just not appropriate.

If the government were fair dinkum about social justice and looking after those in the community who really need to be looked after, it would provide an autism-specific secondary school for the western suburbs, and it would do it soon. In fact it would do it now. As I said in this house a couple of weeks ago, it is not something that we want; it is something that we need, and we need it desperately. I am hopeful that this government will take it on board and do something about it.

I want to make some brief comments about policing and law and order, particularly as they pertain to the western suburbs. I am not sure who I should feel more sorry for: members of the community who actually need a police officer after an incident or to prevent a crime from occurring or police who are working

in extraordinary and intolerable conditions — in conditions that neither you nor I nor anybody else in this building would put up with. From time to time we all have a whinge about various things such as our offices in this building and so forth, but they are almost palatial compared to some of the places police are forced to work in. Once again, I have to mention the Sunshine police station, which is horrendous; it is absolutely horrific. How anybody could expect people

— —  
Mrs Petrovich interjected.

Mr FINN — Yes, how anybody can expect people to work in such conditions, I do not know. The police at Sunshine are stressed, overworked and understaffed — all the things you would not want people to be — yet they go on and do the best job they possibly can. They are totally committed to protecting members of the community who need their protection. I take my hat off to those men and women of the Victorian police force on the front line who are out there protecting us. But they should not be subjected to the sorts of conditions they are subjected to by this government.

For at least a decade now the police in Werribee have been put under enormous stress as a result of being way understaffed. As I mentioned, the city of Wyndham is one of the fastest growing communities in Australia, but there is not the same degree of growth in police numbers. People are coming from everywhere into Wyndham, but the same number of police are expected to man the beat. Whilst we have a new Wyndham North police station — and that is a very nice police station — sadly, we do not have the police to keep it open for as long as it should be. I understand that this week the Werribee station has been closed for three days, without explanation. I do not know what is going on there. Perhaps we will find out at some stage. But that is the story of Werribee.

Mr Koch — There are too many officers. They can't fit them in!

Mr FINN — I have been to the Werribee station, and I do not think there are too many officers. They are pretty cramped there, I have to say. It is a pretty shocking place to be. The situation at Werribee with the lack of police has been ongoing for a long time. The government knows about it, but it does not care. It says, 'It's Werribee, don't worry about it. They'll vote for us anyway.' That is the government's attitude. It says, 'The western suburbs, don't worry about them. They'll vote for us anyway.' I am hopeful that will change very soon.

We have seen the problems with policing in Footscray, and they are ongoing. We have had the police station at Williamstown closed overnight because the police at Footscray need more officers. They pull them out of Williamstown and put them into Footscray, and then they pull them out of Footscray and put them into Werribee. We do not want musical-chair police officers. We want new police officers. We want police officers who will protect us and who are able to do the job they need to do. They need the resources and the authority to do their job. It is pretty basic. Any government that is worth its salt should provide to the police in this state the resources and the authority to do their job.

Irrespective of what is going on in the western suburbs, what Victoria Police needs more than anything else is some leadership. It has not had any decent leadership now for a very long time. We now have a police commissioner — son of Christine, Simon Overland — who perhaps knows even less about policing than his predecessor.

You would not have thought that was possible; a lot of people certainly did not think that was possible. But from my conversations with a good number of police officers, that is the case. He has not got a clue what he is doing. We have a police minister who would have to be the worst police minister in the history of this state. He is so hands off he might as well have no arms! He just does not know what he is doing.

Mrs Petrovich interjected.

Mr FINN — He could be armless! He is just hopeless. When you go out and speak to the police on the front line and mention Bob Cameron's name, they just shake their heads and say, 'What have we done to deserve him?'. It is a very good question. We have had Christine Nixon for a decade, so we all know what she is like, and we now have Simon Overland, who knows even less about policing than she did.

We also have Bob Cameron, who just walks around in a daze and does not have a clue what is going on; he has no idea! They do not call him Sideshow Bob for nothing. He has absolutely no idea what is going on. That is of concern not just to police officers throughout the state but also to everybody who is worried about law and order in Victoria.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Somyurek) — Order! I say to Mr Finn that referring to the minister as Sideshow Bob is clearly out of order and I ask him to withdraw.

Mr FINN — I do apologise, Acting President. I was not actually referring to him. I was referring to others who

call him that on a daily basis.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Somyurek) — Order! Will Mr Finn withdraw?

Mr FINN — On behalf of every police officer in Victoria, I withdraw.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Somyurek) — Order! Mr Finn has to withdraw.

Mr FINN — I withdraw.

Mrs Petrovich — They might not.

Mr FINN — Mrs Petrovich is spot on the money. I am sure they would not. I said I would not speak for long, and I may have got that wrong.

We really need something in Victoria Police which will restore the values that Victoria Police once had. I have said this before, I will say it now and I will not doubt say it again and again: when I was growing up, Victoria Police was held in high esteem.

It disturbs and distresses me enormously when I see opinion polls showing that the majority of Victorians no longer have faith in Victoria Police. We need to restore the values that Victoria Police once held and stood for. We need to give police officers the authority, the respect and the resources to do their job. That is most important.

I will finish with a simple message to the government on behalf of the people of the western suburbs of Melbourne: we want our share. We pay taxes, too, in the western suburbs of Melbourne. We work, we pay our tax, we want our fair share. We are sick to death of budget after budget where all the goodies go to the eastern suburbs, the south-eastern suburbs or over the other side of town. Enough is enough. We want our share.

This budget has failed the western suburbs yet again — the western suburbs that put Labor back every election. The western suburbs is just taken for granted. That is the problem. The Labor government says, 'They are going to vote for us anyway. We do not have to give them a cent.' So it does not. However, after speaking to a lot of people out in the west over the last couple of years, I think that might be coming to an end — not too soon, I might say. The people of the western suburbs are finally realising that as long as they continue to vote Labor without question, they will continue to get nothing from this government and from the Labor Party generally. They realise that John Brumby does not care about the western suburbs.

Nobody in the Labor Party cares about the western suburbs. Nobody in the Labor Party has ever cared about the western suburbs, and quite frankly people in the western suburbs have

had enough. Come 27 November we are going to see a different attitude from a lot of people in the western suburbs. That 13 per cent swing in Altona earlier this year might be the start of things to come.

We might see this government, courtesy of the people of the western suburbs, go the same way Kevin Rudd has just gone. The people of the western suburbs deserve and need a fair go. I am committed to ensuring that they get that. I am committed to ensuring that their voice is heard. I am committed to ensuring that as long as this government is over there, it will be reminded of the neglect it has inflicted upon the people of the western suburbs of Melbourne.

COUNCIL | Questions without Notice  
24 June 2010

## City of Brimbank: Ombudsman's report

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I direct my question without notice to the Minister for Planning, Mr Madden. I refer him to the Ombudsman's report into Brimbank City Council tabled in this Parliament last year — he may be aware of it! I also refer him to the questions he answered at the time on the matters surrounding that report, his involvement with individuals named in that report and the resolution reflecting a lack of confidence in him passed by this chamber last year. I note also that the minister sacked the disgraced Hakki Suleyman from his electorate office when the Ombudsman's damning report was released, and we saw Mr Suleyman stripped of justice of the peace status.

I ask the minister: has he met with or had contact with Mr Suleyman since he left his employment, or does the minister still accept, unlike his federal Labor parliamentary colleague, Senator Stephen Conroy, that Hakki Suleyman is not suitable for employment as an electorate officer or for holding high office in the Australian Labor Party?

Mr Viney — On a point of order, Deputy President, that question clearly does not relate to the minister's administrative responsibilities in his function as Minister for Planning —

Mr Finn — On the point of order, Deputy President —

Mr Viney — I have not actually sat down.

Mr Finn — Well, you should!

## City of Brimbank: Ombudsman's report...

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr Viney — The question is also out of order in asking the minister for an opinion.

Mr Finn — On the point of order, Deputy President, the minister has clearly referred to this matter in previous question times. In the preamble to my question I referred to those answers. On the basis that he has answered such questions in the past, I believe he should also answer the question asked of him today.

Mr D. Davis — On the point of order, Deputy President, last year there was a sequence of questions to Minister Madden on the involvement of his electorate officer, on the Brimbank report and on the matters surrounding it in great detail. He answered those questions from the first one through.

This question follows directly from those questions and is a follow-on regarding those matters.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT — Order! I intend to uphold Mr Viney's point of order. I have looked at the question and I find it hard to see how I could give Mr Finn an opportunity to retrieve his position by reframing the question in some way. My concern is that, whilst the minister might have answered questions about this matter last year, at that point in time they were relevant to his responsibilities and administration because the person who was mentioned in the question actually worked for the minister in his electorate office. We are now quite some months on — perhaps as much as 12 months — and the individual no longer works for the minister. I am not sure it is relevant to seek an opinion from the minister about the person's suitability for employment, or even to seek some indication of whether the minister might have had any contact with this person. I rule the question out of order and uphold the point of order that has been raised.

Mr D. Davis — On a point of order, Deputy President, just to assist you, a number of — —

An honourable member — He has ruled.

Mr D. Davis — It is a point of clarification.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr D. Davis — The nub of the question — —

Mr Finn interjected.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT — Order! Mr Finn's interjections are not helpful. I say to Mr Davis that I have given a fairly clear ruling.

From my point of view, Mr Davis would really need to have a different point of order, because the ruling has been made. Is there a different point of

order?

Mr D. Davis — No, it relates to it.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT — It is a related point of order?

Honourable members interjecting.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT — Order! I will hear Mr Davis's related point of order.

Mr D. Davis — On a point of order, Deputy President, among that set of questions last year was a series of questions that related to planning matters.

They were squarely within the minister's portfolio and concerned the involvement of Mr Suleyman very directly in planning matters in the Brimbank City Council area.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr D. Davis — I am explaining the point. The issue is whether the minister has had further contact with Mr Suleyman, because Mr Suleyman is being rehabilitated in his other capacities.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT — Order! I regard that as totally pertinent to what I have already ruled on; therefore I am interested in Mr Davis's explanation, which he has put on the record. But the fact is that it is not a further point of order.

Honourable members interjecting.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT — Order! I understand Mr Madden used an unparliamentary term towards Mr Davis whilst he was making those remarks. I seek the retraction of that interjection and the remarks that he made.

Hon. J. M. Madden — My remarks were not directed to Mr Davis; they were directed to Mr Finn. I am happy to withdraw those remarks.

Mr Lenders — On a separate and very pertinent point of order, Deputy President, during the interchange between Mr Finn and Mr Viney, Mr Viney said he was still on his feet. Mrs Peulich then said she didn't notice. I find remarks regarding body size offensive and ask her to withdraw.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT — Order! We are entering into the serious business of government here.

The minister may have concerns, but the person to whom the remarks were made is also in the chamber and has an opportunity to seek that withdrawal if he finds the remarks offensive. In the circumstances, I will not pursue that. However, members should be careful in what they say by way of interjections, and I refer to both the issues that have just been raised in that respect.

Mrs Peulich — If the member took offence, I certainly withdraw the remark.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT — Order! On the basis of the ruling, I am unable to see how Mr Finn can pursue a supplementary question.





# FINN IN THE HOUSE

Speeches February 2010 to June 2010



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