FINN IN THE HOUSE

Speeches February to June 2016

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Sunbury municipality

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — My constituency question is to the Minister for Local Government. I refer to the minister’s claim that she broke the ALP’s promise to the people of Sunbury that they would control their municipal future. Nobody believes her claim. The minister’s claim that this promise was broken after an independent audit review’s report was delivered. In fact most people believe her betrayal of Sunbury was a result of an extensive campaign from within the Labor Party and trade union movement to undermine the democratic vote of the people of Hume. I ask the minister: what role did the member for Broadmeadows in the Legislative Assembly, the Labor councilor for Sunbury, Cr Ann Potter, and the Australian Services Union play in the decision to leave Sunbury shackled to the City of Hume?

Australia Day

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — It was a delight to meet so many guests as I travelled around Melbourne’s west on and before Australia Day this year. So many locals are doing such wonderful work as volunteers in the western suburbs, and a small number of them were recognised in various Australia Day honours by council and government. Highlighting individuals is fraught with danger, but on this occasion I will run the risk.

I was thrilled to be present at Overnewton Castle in Keilor for the announcement and presentation of the Brimbank Citizen of the Year Award. Despina Havelas is someone I am proud to call a friend. Despina’s work over the years supporting families dealing with autism has been recognised for the wonderful effort that it is. She founded the Autism Angels group, an organisation I am involved with, and has worked to the point of exhaustion to improve the lot of parents and children struggling through life with autism. Despina is an extraordinary human being — even more so when you consider that she contributes to the community as well as looking after her own son with autism. Despina Havelas is an amazing woman, and I congratulate her on her much-deserved award. Well done, Despina.

Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Amendment Bill 2015

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I have listened with a great deal of interest to a number of speakers in this debate, particularly to Ms Patten, and I have to say that I actually agree with some of Ms Patten’s comments — particularly the one where she said this bill is not going to solve anything. That is the truth: this bill will not solve anything. I have to disagree with her when she says that giving kids drugs is helping them, because it is not. I do not care whether it is from their mother, father, brother, uncle or whoever it might be; anybody who gives a child drugs deserves everything that is coming their way.

We also heard today that the war on drugs, as it is often referred to — the heavy-handed approach, as it has been referred to today — does not work. I ask the question: how would we know? How would we know it does not work, because we have not tried it? We have at best been half-hearted in our attempts to crack down on the drug industry. I pose the question here tonight, and it is getting on towards the night: when are we going to start seriously fighting drugs? This bill is a small step. It will add a little bit of gravitas here and there, and that is all for the better. But the bottom line is it is not going to solve the drug problem. Let us face it, the drug problem in Australia is probably the biggest problem we have. It is a problem that permeates every level of society — it permeates families, it is an insidious, vile disease which just goes everywhere. As a father of teenagers — and I know the issue of drugs is helping them, because it is not. I do not care whether it is from their mother, father, brother, uncle or whoever it might be; anybody who gives a child drugs deserves everything that is coming their way.

Unfortunately there are people out there who are making a great deal of money out of drugs. They are making squillions out of drugs. I may have made it known in years gone by what I would like to see done to these people — and I am not talking about the drug dealers on the streets or the junkies who might be selling a few grams to fund their own habit. I am talking about the blokes in the Rolls-Royces; I am talking about the people who are making hundreds of millions of dollars out of selling drugs — the people up the top of the tree. They are the ones who more than anybody else we should be targeting, and when we get them they should be subject to the death penalty.

I am not a strong supporter of the death penalty for much else, only for terrorism and for drug kingpins, because if we are serious about the war on drugs, if we are serious about protecting our children from these criminals, from these vile, horrid subhuman individuals, then we will go after them with a passion. We will catch them and we will say to them, through the court process, that they have forfeited their right to walk on the earth with us. Now I have to say to you that I do not think it would take many before the other kingpins realised that this just is not worth it. If some of these kingpins see a few of their mates going to the gallows or to the gas chamber or wherever it might be, I think they would wake up very quickly and realise that they just might be next.

Let us face it, these people at the top of the tree are the ultimate in selfish individuals — anybody who has a mansion, who has cars, who has everything else that they may have gained by selling drugs to kids, by selling misery and death on the streets. It does not get much more selfish than that, does it? I do not think it gets much more selfish than that. There are the ones that we really have to go after.

It was great to see the other day El Chapo, the drug dealer in South America, get his. I sincerely hope that he does get his, and I know what I would do with him if I had my way. I have to say to you that I would be more than happy to pull the lever to dispatch that individual. The fewer of those we have on this earth the better this world will be. The sooner we get rid of them, the better.

Having got that off my chest, I move to some of the comments that we have heard here today about marijuana. We heard from Ms Hartland and we heard from Ms Patten that marijuana is nothing much really, is it? How wrong were they. Marijuana is an exceedingly dangerous drug. I have known people over the years who have been long-term users of marijuana, and I have to say that their minds no longer exist. Marijuana has destroyed their capacity for reason and their capacity for rational thought. It has destroyed them as human beings. People say, ‘Oh, it’s not addictive’. I tell you what: try to find somebody who smokes cannabis on a regular basis and try to get them off it and you will find out very quickly how addictive it is.

Mr Ondarchie interjected.

Mr FINN — We might do that too, Mr Ondarchie. We have here a drug that is extremely addictive, that is extremely dangerous and that indeed does ultimately cause mind-destroying injuries to those who use it.

But we move on now to what you would almost call the drug of the moment, and that drug is ice. I have spoken about ice to a good mate of mine, a bloke called ‘Sir’ Les Twentyman, who I have referred to in this house on a number of occasions. Les has been warning about the dangers of ice for some years, and he is at the coalface. He is seeing what ice does to those who take it. He is seeing that on a daily basis, and it is something that horrifies him, and particularly horrifies him on the basis of where it is taking some suburbs.

We are not just talking about families; in some instances we are talking about actual suburbs and country towns where
Wyndham City Council

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Local Government. Now, the minister might recall that last year I called for her to set up an inquiry into the activities of the Wyndham City Council. Things have deteriorated somewhat since I made that call — to say the very least, in fact — and I am now asking the minister to dismiss this council and take action. I think we have well and truly got enough to say that this council is totally dysfunctional, that good governance has broken down and that there really are not too many councillors there that are worth two bob, to tell you the truth.

It is a very, very sad state of affairs to see the situation that the Wyndham council now finds itself in after being such a strong, well-managed and well-governed council not so long ago. As I mentioned in an earlier contribution in this house, when I was elected almost 10 years ago the Wyndham council was the best council in the west. I think it would probably now be the worst, and that is really saying something. I ask the minister to take into consideration what is going on down there.

The latest incident involves the holding of a council meeting in secret, almost on the eve of Christmas. I say ‘almost’ because it was on the 23rd December. At that secret meeting, almost on the eve of Christmas, they suspended a councillor who had applied for leave anyway. When, at the last council meeting as I understand it, he sat in the public gallery, he was told that if he did not leave he would be in contravention of the local government act and he would be charged.

This council is a circus. Tommy Hanlon and Ashton have nothing on this crowd, let me tell you. The community in Wyndham is showing extreme frustration and total disgust. The number of people who hear the name ‘Wyndham council’ and just shake their heads and walk away is quite staggering. The degree of anger is really starting to boil over. People have well and truly had enough of these councillors. They could not run a tap, and it is just a dreadful reflection on what should be a great community. They need a great council, and I ask the minister to sack this wretched council now.

Minister for Public Transport

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — Mr Ondarchie made a reference during his contribution to living in the seventies, and I have to say that whilst I have the greatest admiration for my friend and colleague Mr Ondarchie, I do not think it is in fact a case of living in the eighties. This is a very serious situation. The safety of children attending state schools must surely be the minister’s paramount responsibility. My very great concern is that he has failed in his responsibility in this regard. Will the minister guarantee that this appalling situation at Footscray will not be repeated at any other school in Melbourne’s west?

Asbestos at Footscray Primary School

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — My constituency question is to the Minister for Education. It follows the news very late last year that asbestos had been discovered at Footscray Primary School; in fact it seems that children may have been playing in asbestos at Footscray Primary School. This is clearly a very serious situation. The safety of children attending state schools must surely be the minister’s paramount responsibility. My very great concern is that he has failed in his responsibility in this regard. Will the minister guarantee that this appalling situation at Footscray will not be repeated at any other school in Melbourne’s west?
to the government, that it is in a fair bit of strife at the moment. It really needs to get its act together to serve more people — I would suggest millions of people throughout the state of Victoria — who are looking at what is going on in the public transport area at the moment and are wondering what they have done. They are asking to themselves, ‘Did we vote for these idiots?’ That is something that a lot of people are repeating to themselves over and over, almost on a daily basis: ‘Did we put these droogos into government?’. The public transport portfolio is an area —

Mr Herbert — The fantasy world of Mr Finn.

Mr Finn — Mr Herbert is whingeing over there, which he is particularly good at, it has to be said. Can I suggest that he go down to his local hotel from time to time —

Mr Herbert — I do; I go to the Cosmo.

Mr Finn — Where’s that? Costco?

Mr Herbert — I have been drinking

Mr Finn — I don’t want to know how much you have been drinking. What I am suggesting to you is that you go down and talk to the coxswain at the bar, and they will tell you that they think Jacinta Allan is a gooose. That is what they think —

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Morris) — Order! I will have to interrupt Mr Finn, as it is now 1 o’clock, so that we can take a break for lunch.

Sitting suspended 1.00 p.m. until 2.05 p.m.

Mr Finn — As I was saying before lunch, a bit over an hour ago, we are in fact not living in the 1970s, as Mr Ondarchie pointed out, but we are revisiting a period in our state’s history that not many people want to go back to. There is a very real concern that we are back going through the 1980s, and I am sure Mr Jennings well remembers how disastrous that time was for our state. It has to be said that the current public transport minister is not doing anything to allay the fears of Victorians who are deeply concerned about the direction that we are going. We just have to remember, go back to the 1980s. Mr Ondarchie, I am sure, will remember what I like to call the ‘Melbourne international tram festival’, where trams were parked down Bourke Street and they were parked down Swanston Street as far as the eye could see. We had no public transport to speak of in those days because they were all parked down the street here. It was somewhat of an embarrassment at the time. Nobody could seem to do anything to get them moving again.

People are concerned. I have to say, as I go around they are saying to me, when talking about Jacinta Allan, ‘Here we go again, the same old story over and over, there is no difference’. They are reminding me of the time we had the great scratchie ticket debacle, which I think was just before the election of the Kennett government in 1992. I recall well the then transport minister, Alan Napier, getting up and disclosing in the other place that many, many thousands of dollars worth of scratchie tickets had had to be pulped at a factory somewhere underneath the West Gate Bridge. People are concerned that we might see similar things happening again, because there is not a lot of confidence in this minister.

This, you have got to remember, comes from a party which gave us the myki debacle. It has to be said that the myki debacle continues to a certain degree. I think Terry Mulder — who has been mentioned in this debate by Ms Hartland as somebody she would like to see appear before the committee, and I do not think anybody has any objection to that — did a pretty difficult material when he was the minister with regard to the myki ticketing system.

I do not know who came up with the myki ticketing system — I do not think anybody knows who came up with the myki ticketing system — but whoever it was should be taken out and thrown into the Yarra River with a very large rock around their neck. It caused and continues to cause a great deal of angst. Why we as a state and Labor as the government did not go to many of the places around the world, to a country and a city that actually knew what they were doing and had systems that worked — Singapore, London, Singapore, London, there is no shortage of places — or get London’s Oyster card, the ticketing system over there, is somewhat of a mystery to me.

That brings to my mind who the transport minister was at the time. That of course was Peter Batchelor. He has kept a pretty low profile, it has to be said, in recent years, since his retirement. I hope he is having an enjoyable retirement. I hope he is enjoying that parliamentary pension. During his time as minister Peter Batchelor gave us the myki card and changed the name of Spencer Street station. At one stage you would not have to ask where Spencer Street station was, because it was pretty clear, was it not? But now I am more interested in the street by tourists in particular who are here to take in the magnificence of Melbourne and asked where is Southern Cross station, and I have to direct them. I am very happy to do that. I want to know why Labor governments and Labor transport ministers have this capacity, tendency — call it what you will — to mess with things that do not need messing with.

As a member of the committee that we are talking about, as you would know, Deputy President, I for one would like to ask the minister, Jacinta Allan, for her side of the story. I would be fascinated to know what has been going on from her perspective over the past year since she took over, because I well remember that one of the first acts of the then Gillard government after the election of the coalition in Victoria in 2010 was to take a dirty great slice out of the funding for the regional rail line and to find those funds. In fact for quite some time after we took office there was some debate within the government, as I understand it, as to whether the project would continue.

That was of great concern to those of us representing the western suburbs, and I had a number of discussions at the time with the then transport minister, Mr Mulder. But to his credit and to the credit of the then Treasurer, Kim Wells, they came up with the money that was needed to build the regional rail link. In fact they did not just come up with the money; they actually built the thing. Not only did they build the thing — and here is something that will shock the other side of the house — but they built a new station, V/Line, and under budget. When was the last time that we heard anybody from the other side claiming that they have done that?

Mr Morris — Was it the desal plant?

Mr Finn — I do not think we will go near the desal plant, Mr Morris, because that could take us down a path that could take a while to get off. We will leave that one alone. But the regional rail link is a work of art to look at. When I look at the Tarnet station and some of those stations at the back of Werribee now — once they were out the back of Werribee, now they are almost in the suburbs; houses are just popping up almost on a daily basis around them, and when you go down there you see that what we see now as pretty useless pockwows now have railway stations, and of course the lines, the car parks, the bus services and everything else that go along with it — I think to myself, ‘This is a legacy of the Liberal— Nationals government to the people of the western suburbs,’ and I am particularly proud of that.

But something went wrong after the change of government in 2014. We had found the money, we had built the project, we brought it in on time and under budget and all the Labor Party had to do — all Jacinta Allan had to do — was to print the timetables and run the trains. I would have thought that it was pretty straightforward. In fact I think any reasonable person would have thought that it was a pretty straightforward proposition that having had the whole project presented to her, all the minister had to do was to get the timetables right and run the trains. But to his credit and to the credit of Labor transport ministers, she could not do it. She stuffed it up. From day one as minister she stuffed it up and she is still stuffing it up. So I think it is sad that Labor had a majority when they were in government and as a community get to know from her perspective exactly what is going on before the whole system falls apart.

We were told yesterday in the public hearing of the Standing Committee on the Economy and Infrastructure, so ably chaired by my friend and colleague, Mr Morris, that nobody quite knows what is going on with the V/Line trains. We were told that there was a degree of confidence. Confidence is good; I like confidence. But we were given no guarantees. In fact I had to push some of the witnesses that we had yesterday to see if we could get a guarantee on when our V/Line services would be back to the service level on time and under budget. People are concerned that we had not just come up with the money; they actually built the thing. Not only did they build the thing — and here is something that will shock the other side of the house — but they built a new station, V/Line, and under budget. When was the last time that we heard anybody from the other side claiming that they have done that?...
is pretty important that we go to the next level and ask the minister if she can give guarantees. We gave our guarantees, we should ask her what is going on in her portfolio. Can she give some sort of guarantee that she has any idea of what is going on in her portfolio? I think there are a lot of people who are really keen to know.

When you have a situation where trains can sail through level crossings without triggering the bells or the barriers, then you have a situation where people’s lives are at risk. I do not think that there is anything more important than the safety of human beings. If you are in a car heading down the street to get some fish and chips or a beer or something and are crossing a level crossing and all of a sudden you are collected by a train, that is the end of you. That is a possibility that each and every one of us faces. Each and every one of us that crosses a railway line is facing that possibility at the moment. We do not know why. We were told yesterday that the derailment last week was not a result of over-greasing the tracks. This was a great relief to me, although the head of Metro Trains Melbourne did have to admit to us that he did not actually know why the train derailed last week — but it was not over-greasing. I suppose it gave me some sort of consolation and perhaps made me sleep a little easier last night knowing that too much grease did not cause that particular problem.

As Mr Morris mentioned in his contribution, there are so many questions that need to be answered. It reminds me of an election campaign that the coalition ran some years back. There are so many questions that need to be answered, and if the head of Metro Trains Melbourne and the head of V/Line and the head of Public Transport Victoria cannot tell us, there is only one way to find out, surely. If they do not know, then surely the minister must know. If she were doing her job, she would be on top of things. She would be aware of the dangers of the current situation. We should not shy away — I have to say this — from the word ‘crisis’, because I believe it has been said by others, that in fact we are facing a crisis in public transport in this state. I think, as I mentioned a moment ago, we are facing a situation where we can be cleaned up by a V/Line train or indeed a Metro train — that is another possibility — just by going down the street and crossing a railway line. If that is not a crisis, what is? That is directly affecting human lives and threatening human lives, and that is something that I think we should be very keen to hear from the minister about.

I commend Mr Morris for bringing this motion before the house today, because there are people right across this state, whether they be in the metropolitan area, in country areas or in regional towns, who want to know if their train will run, and there is no guarantee of that. There was no guarantee before this latest crisis occurred. There were a lot of people wondering what was going on with V/Line. They want to know if their train will run, and I think that is a pretty fair and reasonable sort of thing to know if you are a public transport user.

They also want to know if it is safe. I have seen photos of the insides of country trains from Ballarat, for example, and from Geelong that are so packed, so crowded that people are literally hanging off each other just to stay standing or people are crouched on the floor or sitting on the floor. It is not exactly a safe situation, and as a member of Parliament and as a member of the economy and infrastructure committee I would be very keen to ask the minister how long she intends for that situation to continue. I have to say some of the photos that I have seen have reminded me of some of the footage that I have seen on television of trains in India. It is people who are just packed in it. It is a very unhealthy scenario. I would not have thought.

Ms Pulford — Have you caught a train in India?
Mr FINN — No, I have seen it on the telly. I have never been to India.
Ms Pulford — There is a fair difference.
Mr FINN — Have you been to India? Have you caught trains in India?
Ms Pulford — I have caught trains in India.
Mr FINN — Have you caught trains from Ballarat?
Ms Pulford — I have. They’re incomparable.
Mr FINN — Have you? Lately? They’re incompetent, did you say?
Ms Pulford — They’re incomparable.
Mr FINN — I am sorry.
The DEPUTY PRESIDENT — Order! Through the Chair, I am sorry.
Ms Pulford — They are incomparable. I am being verbally.
Mr FINN — I am sorry; I do apologise. I am being baited by the minister, Deputy President, and I am being unfair to you, and I will most certainly address my comments through the Chair, but I am fascinated to hear the minister’s comments about trains in India, because I think that may well be the way that we are heading in Victoria at the moment with the numbers that are crammed on. We just might have big blokes on the railway platform pushing them in like they do in Japan. This could be a truly multicultural city, because we could have someone from India and have Japanese blokes pushing the crowd into the trains. We could say not only is the city multicultural but indeed the public transport is as well. That is something I would have thought we can all look forward to!

I am above all else a fair man, and I think it is fair and reasonable that we give the minister an opportunity to defend herself. I think it is important that we as a Parliament and as a committee give the minister a chance to put her side of the story, because there are a lot of people in Victoria at the moment who are being very, very uncharitable to the minister.

It is of course Ash Wednesday today, and I think we could even go as far as saying that they are being uncharitable to the minister. They are calling her things that, quite frankly, I do not think she should be called, and of course we are referring not just to people in the general community but even people within her own government who object to those sorts of things. I think Mr Ondarchie in his contribution made some reference to a phone hook-up.

Mr Ondarchie — Stitch-up.
Mr FINN — It may well have been a stitch-up. It might not have been intended to be a stitch-up, but I think it was by the end. But we had a phone hook-up, I understand, according to media reports, that a number of members of the government — Labor members of Parliament — were involved in, and apparently, back from all reports, they did not hold back on what they thought of the minister.

Mr Morris — Not just elevated rail but elevated voices.
Mr FINN — Indeed, not just elevated rail but elevated voices. I understand — just from reading that particular newspaper article — that again they were exceedingly uncharitable to the minister. This was splashed all over the newspapers. It was splashed all over television. It was splashed all over the radio. It is only fair that she be given the opportunity to put her side of the story. What could be fairer than what we are proposing here today? We are reaching out to the minister and we are saying, ‘Minister, we want to hear your side of the story. We want to know your side of the story as to why the Victorian public transport system is a total mess. We want to know why the Victorian public transport system is in crisis’. We want to know from the minister’s perspective why she has stuffed this up and why she continues to do that. It is only fair that she be given the opportunity to do that.

I think this motion today, with the support of course of both sides of the house, is only a fair and reasonable way to reach out to the minister and to give her an opportunity to publicly put her credentials on the table — to tell the people of Victoria, to tell those people who are perhaps stuck on train platforms, perhaps stuck in trams and not going anywhere just at the minute. This is her opportunity to reach out to them and explain that it might not be her fault after all. I could not begin to imagine whose fault it is, but it might not be her fault. So let us give her the opportunity.

Mr Ondarchie — Anybody but Jacinta.
Mr FINN — It could be indeed.
Mr Morris — Climate change.
Mr FINN — Oh, yes — I had not thought of that. I tell you what, Mr Morris has a big future. He has just pointed out that it could be climate change. I am looking forward to that, because that is the great thing about members of the Labor Party — it does not matter when it comes, but you know that at some stage they will blame climate change for anything and everything. So that is something we can look forward to as well.
But, as I say, the minister has been subject to significant ridicule in the media, and I believe she should be given the opportunity to right any wrong that may have been perpetrated. I keep using these words ‘fair and reasonable’ because that is what we are on about. We are on about giving her a fair go. That is what this is all about — giving her a fair go. We want to let her have her say. We want to hear from her. We want to hear what is going on in that mind of hers. We want to know what indeed is going on in the cabinet. I could not believe when I read this in the paper. I was appalled when I heard this.

Ms Pulford — On a point of order, Deputy President, Mr Finn has been going for 27, 28 minutes here. He has not introduced any new content in this debate in at least the last 15 minutes that I have been sitting here. He is returning to and repeating his points to an extraordinarily tireless degree. I was wondering if Mr Finn could be encouraged to wrap up his remarks, introduce some new content into the debate. This is very repetitious.

Mr Ondarchie — On the point of order, Deputy President, that is not a point of order. Mr Finn is entitled to put his contribution in the way that he sees fit, as are all members of this house. I do not think it is appropriate that the minister should editorialise on his contribution to this chamber, and I ask you to rule it out.

THE DEPUTY PRESIDENT — Order! I would encourage Mr Finn to bring himself back to the motion. Mr Finn, to continue.

Mr Finn — I am very happy to continue with my contribution on the motion, because what we are doing, as I said before, is reaching out to the minister: We are inviting her. We are not attempting to bully her, we are not attempting to intimidate her, but we are reaching out to her to come to our committee to answer some of the points, and to explain to her side of the story — which is a pretty reasonable sort of thing.

There is something else that the minister might like to clear the air on, because I have heard around these corridors, but I have also read in the media, that the minister is only there because she is a mate of the Premier’s. That is what I have heard. It would be good to know if that is the truth. It would be good to ask the minister herself if she is only there because she is a factional friend of a pretty friendless Premier just at the moment. He is a bit short on mates at the minute, so perhaps he is hanging onto Jacinta Allan in the hope that when he knows what he is hoping for, but he is hanging onto her for whatever reason. That is something that needs to be examined.

Mr Ondarchie — Talk about the infrastructure projects.

Mr Finn — Which infrastructure projects is he talking about? We have to find out I think, given that the Premier has declared that he has confidence in the minister —

Mr Morris — Does he?

Mr Finn — That is what he said. The Premier has said he has confidence in the minister. I think it would be a very, very good thing if she can put a case as to why the public should have confidence in her. It is all very well for a factional mate to have confidence in her, but it is the public that we serve here. As parliamentarians and as members of this house it is the public that we serve. If we ignore what the public is saying and what they are doing our jobs. It is a dereliction of our duty, in fact, if we ignore the public, and if the public are having doubts and are lacking in confidence in a particular minister, then I think it is important that we try to set their minds at rest.

Without doubt this motion — and a very important motion it is — gives the minister an opportunity to put her case on the record and to explain to the people of Victoria what she is doing, how she is doing it, what she wants to do and why they should have confidence in her. I do not know about what other members of the house may think, but there is a strong degree of doubt — doubts, I think, is a good word — in people’s mind about the minister’s ability in a lot of people’s minds, and I cannot be at all surprised about that given my own example in Sunbury. Last year the minister announced that as of 1 July last year, to be with the people, Sunbury residents would be kicked off V/Line train services. This came as somewhat of a shock, it has to be said, to the people of Sunbury, and they were not at all pleased. Having been brushed off by the minister for Sunbury in the Assembly, many of them came to me pleading for assistance, which I was very happy to do.

Mr Morris — Does he?

Mr Finn — We will get to that thing if you like; it is another broken promise by this government to the people of Sunbury. But on this occasion they came to me because the minister had made it clear that as of 1 July they would not be allowed to use V/Line trains, and they were not at all happy, because they had been promised previously by the previous member for Macedon in the Assembly, who represented Sunbury, that once the electrification of the Sunbury line occurred the Sunbury population would be able to use both the electric trains and V/Line.

Members have got to remember that the electrification of the line to Sunbury is not something that the people of Sunbury actually wanted. It was forced upon them by the Brumby government. The then member, Joanne Duncan, as a sweeter I assume to try to get the Sunbury people onside on this particular issue, made the promise that Sunbury people would be able to use both metropolitan trains and V/Line. Here they were, having had that promise made to them previously, and the newly elected minister — the minister that this motion is requesting appear before the economic and infrastructure committee — at the beginning of last year, a matter of literally weeks after taking over her portfolio, let it be known to the people of Sunbury that she was breaking the promise that had been made previously and that it need on 1 July last year.

Sunbury people would not be allowed to travel on V/Line. Not only would they not be allowed to travel on V/Line, but if they attempted to do so they would be facing a fine of some $432.

Mr Morris — Four hundred and thirty-two?

Mr Finn — That is right, $432, which is a fair whack for getting on a train, I would have thought, and you can imagine that the Sunbury community did not react well. They did not react well. They came to me, and I was very happy to assist them, as I always am.

I met with the Sunbury Train Association, and we sat down and discussed what could be done. I said to them I would be very happy to represent their views here in the Parliament. I see that as a very, very important part of my job. I am not a representative of Spring Street in the west; I am a representative of the west in Spring Street. When the people of Sunbury came to me with their concerns, I was very, very happy to help them and assist them. I have to say I may have had a degree of self-interest in this because when I get the train from Sunbury I much prefer to get the V/Line train than the metro train. The V/Line train is much, much nicer, much more comfortable and much faster; it has to be said, because of course the metro trains as a general rule stop at all stations. The V/Line trains stop at St Albans and maybe Watergardens and then go straight through to Footscray and the city.

Mr Ondarchie interjected.

Mr Finn — There are some good people on V/Line trains. I have met some shockers, but I will not name them, although I might have earlier in the day. As I say, I had strong arguments for the people who came to me, because I could fully understand the concerns that they had about what was about to be happening to their train service. In fact I do not think I have ever seen people so fired up on an issue. I recall putting out some brochures on the subject, and the reaction was quite extraordinary. It was absolutely amazing.

As a result of that fury in the community, the minister bent a little and she said, ‘We won’t be kicking you off the train and fining you $432 on 1 July; we’ll do it on 1 January.’ This was of course a huge relief to the people of Sunbury, who said, ‘Well, that gives us another six months to campaign,’ which they proceeded to do with some significant fervour. Members might ask themselves where Josh Bull, the member for Sunbury, was when all this was going on.

Mr Morris — He would have been supporting them.

Mr Finn — Well, he was not. He was very, very quiet on it.

Mr Ondarchie interjected.

Mr Finn — Josh Bull, very appropriately named. My understanding is that he spent most of the second half of last year under his desk in the foetal position as a result of the people of Sunbury letting him know and letting the minister know that they were not happy punters at all.

There was a public meeting held at the Sunbury Bowling Club. There was a pretty good set-up actually out there at the Sunbury Bowling Club.
Mr Ondarchie — An important piece of infrastructure.

Mr FINN — It is an important piece of infrastructure and it has been growing, particularly since it got pokies. There is an example there of why you should not play the pokies.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT — Order! I draw Mr Finn back to the motion, not the Sunbury-Rhodes question.

Mr FINN — I am sorry, Deputy President. I was just explaining where we were having a meeting to discuss this decision by the minister to remove V/Line services from Sunbury. We got there, and the place was filling up at a rapid rate. I was lucky enough to get a seat, in fact. What had occurred was that the geniuses at Public Transport Victoria or the minister’s department, or it might have been Josh Bull’s office — I do not know — had set up big tables with butcher’s paper and crayons. I do not know who we were supposed to draw or whatever. I thought, ‘This is going to be fun’, and during the course of this meeting they proceeded to tell us that we actually do really not care about. There were over 200 people there, which for 6 o’clock on a weekday is quite extraordinary, and you have to ask why 6 o’clock on a weekday was chosen — although I have got a fair idea. I do not think you would have to be a Rhodes scholar to work out why the meeting was held at 6 o’clock and not 8 o’clock. It was because if it had been held at 8 o’clock there probably would have been 2000 people in attendance.

Mr Ondarchie interjected.

Mr FINN — It is. Anyway, the poor moderator, chap, who was obviously being paid a poulite for taking his life into his own hands on this particular occasion, tried to lead us down all sorts of paths to get us away from the issue that people actually wanted to talk about.

Mr Ondarchie — How did that go?

Mr FINN — Not all that well, it has to be said. While we were having a break at one stage — I do not know; we were changing butcher’s paper or something similar — the minister showed up. It was probably not the cleverest thing she has ever done in her life, because the people at that meeting let her know in no uncertain terms. I am almost a veteran of Sunbury public meetings — I have been both on the winning side and the losing side from time to time — so I know that nobody holds a public meeting like the people of Sunbury. They get fired up in a big way, and on this occasion they were very fired up. The minister found out exactly what the people of Sunbury were thinking not just about the future of their V/Line service but about her, her history, her future and indeed the future of the government. I have to say that Jacinta Allan and the committee as minister and tell us exactly what is going on, because, as has been pointed out earlier today, yesterday we on that committee sought guarantees.

I personally sought guarantees from the head of Metro Trains, from the head of Public Transport Victoria, from the newly appointed head of V/Line, Mr Gary Liddell. I requested guarantees as to what would happen, and they could not give them to me. They said, ‘We are very confident that we will have this sorted out by the middle of the year’. However, earlier this year — back in early January — the Acting Premier at the time, Mr Merlino, said, ‘The worst of this is over.’ That was before the whole system just collapsed. We are getting conflicting stories from all over the place. Surely there must be somebody who can stand up and tell us what is going to happen.

Ms Wooldridge — It should be the minister.

Mr FINN — Of course it should be the minister. Who else could it be? If we can get the chief honchos from the various branches of the train network — and they are very busy — in and ask them what is going on, and if they say, ‘We can’t guarantee exactly what is going on’, then we have to go another step higher. That is something that I think the people of Victoria expect of us. If we cannot get answers from the people who supposedly have the hands-on control of our train system, then surely the person who is ultimately in charge of the train system, the Minister for Public Transport, will be able to provide us with some answers — hopefully all the answers that we require.

Of course you have to remember that Mr Liddell, who is the acting CEO of V/Line and who was appearing before the committee yesterday, had been in the job six days. He kept repeating to us that he was there to look after what was going on. He was not looking back — and he could not look back because he had not been there. He knew nothing about the past and he was really hoping he would know something about the future. We have this dirty great hole in our knowledge.

Ms Shing — Dirty great hole?

Mr FINN — It is a dirty great hole in our knowledge, and if you want to talk about dirty great holes, you talk about the desalination plant. What a shocker. Can you get the train down there as well, down to Wonthaggi? What a shocker. Can you get the train down there as well, down to Wonthaggi? What a shocker.

But we have this great vacuum in our knowledge, and we asked Mr Liddell yesterday a whole range of questions. The chair of the committee, Mr Morris, Mr Ondarchie, you, Deputy President, Ms Hartland, Mr Eideh, Mr Elasmar and I all asked Mr Liddell a series of questions which we had hoped would add to our general sum of knowledge of what had occurred over the last number of months to bring about this crisis. We wanted to know what had led to the situation where hundreds of thousands of Victorians had no train service. I thought it was a pretty straightforward question and that is what you do when you have
public hearings — you ask those sorts of questions. What happened?

Time and again Mr Liddle said, ‘I’ve only been there six days; I haven’t got a clue’. So what we need to do, given that the newly appointed acting CEO of V/Line was unable to answer questions — and I do believe he was genuinely unable to because, as he pointed out so often, he had only been there six days — we need to go to somebody who was in the engine compartment, if I can use that term, for the entire period of the last six months or so leading up to this crisis. That person, obviously, is the minister, because if the minister does not know, you have to ask the question, ‘Who does know?’ If the minister does not know then we have a lot of trouble on our hands. Commuters have even more trouble on their hands because whilst they are waiting for that train that never comes, they are wondering what is going on and nobody is in a position to tell them. If the minister will not tell them, who is going to tell them? In my view — and I do not want to browbeat her in any way, I will leave that to her — an obligation to come clean with the people of Victoria. I think she has a duty. It is part of her ministerial responsibilities to tell the people of Victoria exactly what is going on.

Mr Morris — She could tell us if she doesn’t know.

Mr FINN — Yes, Mr Morris points out that she can tell us she does not know if she does not know, but if she does not know, we need to know that, and that is something that the people of Victoria need to know also. If we have a minister who has overseen a period now of extended crisis of the public transport system and she does not know what has happened, and she does not know how to solve it, we need to know, and the only way we can find out is if we ask her. So all we are asking today is obviously for the Legislative Assembly to power the minister with leave to join us at our committee. We do not wish to be aggressive in any way. It is merely a matter of finding out these basic facts as to what has happened in the lead-up to this crisis. I am very hopeful that members of the government will support the motion.

Mr Morris — They’re a bit wobbly.

Mr FINN — They do not know either? Does anyone know anything over there? Whether we are Liberal, Labor, Greens, the DLP, Nationals, Shooters and Fishers, or whether we might happen to be, we all have the same obligation as elected members of the Parliament of Victoria to the people of this state, and that is to tell the truth. We all have the same obligation to shine a light might have been shone before, to shine a light on the truth and let the people of this state know exactly what is going on. That is what we are here for, perhaps primarily. Obviously we are here to represent our constituents, to develop policy and all of those things that we do so very well on a regular basis, but surely more than anything else it is our obligation, our duty, to tell the truth and represent us here, because if they are out there, they do not know what is going on, and if we do not know what is going on either, we are in deep, deep trouble.

The invitation has been extended to the minister to come and speak to the community and put her side of the story I, for one, as a member of the committee and Parliament, am very keen to hear what the minister knows because this is an extremely important matter of public importance. If we as a Parliament do not go after the truth in this then we might as well all stay home, or we could wander across the road to the inn — either way. This matter is important, the public transport system in this state is in crisis and there is one person who ultimately has responsibility. If we can explain to the people of Victoria exactly what is going on here, I think that would be a giant step in the right direction. I do not believe we will get that unless we have the full cooperation of the minister, with the blessing of the Legislative Assembly — our friends across the way whom we love so dearly.

I am therefore very hopeful that the government will support the motion introduced by Mr Morris today. I commend him most warmly for bringing forward the motion because I know he is a truth seeker and he wishes to find out what is going on. I know that as a representative of the Western District, which he does so very well, there are many people down that way in my old stomping ground — down through Colac and Warrnambool and even up to Ballarat — who want to know what is going on with their trains, and this is a genuine attempt to find out. I ask the house, and the government in particular, to support Mr Morris’s motion today.

COUNCIL | Adjournment
10 February 2016

Sunbury Road duplication

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. It concerns a campaign that has begun recently, almost in conjunction with one that I have been pushing for some years, for the duplication of the Sunbury–Melbourne road between the airport and Bulla and the construction of the Bulla bypass. This is something that has been a strong desire of Sunbury people in particular for a very long time. Now that the Hume City Council has got onside, I am hopeful that the minister might see fit to do something about it.

As the minister would be aware, within the last few days the road around the back of the airport has had a reduced speed limit of 80 kilometres per hour imposed on it, and it really needs to be duplicated at this time. There are huge numbers of people living in Sunbury and in the Shire of Macedon Ranges, and this is the major road between the airport, Sunbury and the Macedon Ranges. Huge numbers of people are using this road and as the airport continues to grow — as it inevitably will — this road will become even busier. As those who use the road would attest, the congestion at various times of the day is just extraordinary. I think it is long overdue that this road be taken on and duplicated. I ask the minister to take this matter into consideration and to direct VicRoads to begin a study of this particular proposal and get on with building this road duplication before the road is beyond any reasonable way of passing.

COUNCIL | Second reading
11 February 2016

Road Legislation Amendment Bill 2015

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I rise to speak this afternoon on the Road Legislation Amendment Bill 2015. For those who take an interest in such matters, this bill amends the Road Safety Act 1986, the Marine (Drug, Alcohol and Pollution Control) Act 1988, the Rail Safety (Local Operations) Act 2006 and the Dangerous Goods Act 1985. It also amends the Road Management Act 2004. Road safety is something that Victoria has been at the forefront of probably since the days of the Bourke government, which brought back to my childhood in fact. Victoria has led the way in a whole range of ways in the area of road safety. Victoria was the first place to have compulsory seatbelts, and that of course as we know cut the road toll quite significantly.

I remember that back in 1970, I think it was, there were over 1000 people killed on our roads, and I had a member of my family unfortunately killed. She was the first person to be killed in 1970 on the road, and that tragedy was such a savage blow to our family. It is worth remembering, as I always do when I hear the statistics and the news reports, that every time we hear that somebody has been killed on the roads it is a particular disaster for a family. It is not just reading out a news item and not just the counting of deaths; it is a tragedy for friends and for families, and it is in many cases a tragedy from which families, parents in particular, will never recover. That is something that I think we should always bear in mind.

Just recently we had the tragedy in my electorate of the two young people who were involved in an illegal drag race, as I understand — so it would appear — on the Western Ring Road. At an extraordinary speed they crashed off the E. J. Whitten Bridge and of course both died. That unfortunately was not the first such incident where illegal drag racing and similar pursuits have caused the deaths of young people, and whilst I am very sympathetic to the parents and the families of those who died, we can be grateful that at least they did not take any innocent person with them, as we saw
on a couple of occasions recently when people were speeding, usually in a stolen car, on the very busy Melton Highway just a few months ago, when a young man coming back from work, as I recall, was killed. He was going about his business, and he was killed because somebody in a stolen car decided that they would speed through an intersection.

These are incidents that are easily avoided, and they cannot be called accidents. It is a misnomer to refer to them as accidents. They are very, very avoidable.

If people just used common sense, then I think they would see the necessity to do 40 kilometres per hour under the speed limit on the open road, particularly in such areas as Sunbury Road at the back of the airport, where it is a lane either way. There are quite a few of those in the area around Wyndham. There are streets at Wyndham, kilometres per hour or 100 kilometres per hour — more than 80, I have to say, than 100 — but most of them were 100 before. It seems that these days the main job of VicRoads is sticking up signs saying ‘80’. Instead of fixing the roads, they put up signs. I noticed the other day it has started putting up signs saying ‘Rough road ahead’. My suggestion to VicRoads is, instead of putting up signs saying ‘Rough road ahead, why not fix the roads?’ Just a thought. That might be something constructive, but I digress.

We really need to take a common-sense approach to our roads so that we do not have that lunacy of speed that does kill and so that people get announcements of people getting in your way and forcing people to take particularly stupid actions to get around them and to get ahead.

It is ironic that this government is putting up a roads bill when we consider what has happened in the last 12 months; where this government has spent at least $1.1 billion of taxpayers’ money to stop a road that we know — everybody knows, including members of the government — we urgently need. But of course this was a captain’s call from the Premier, so I should say that this is yet another captain’s call from the Premier. Given the Premier’s inclination to wake up every morning and make an announcement, we would have to wonder why the government needs a cabinet. Why does it need a cabinet? Given the standard of cabinet ministers in this government, it would be better off without a cabinet. Just let the Premier go ahead and make announcements — the first thing that comes into his head. It does not matter how much it costs the taxpayer; it is not his money, is it? It does not matter. That is the Labor way. When you have got a Socialist Left Premier, that is even worse.

We really need to take a common-sense approach to our roads? Just a thought. That might be something constructive, but I digress.

Of course we have seen over recent days — and this may well come into the area of the Rail Safety (Local Operations) Act 2006 — an announcement of sky rail. It is over on the other side of town from me, but I note that this morning in the Parliament the member for Niddrie in the other place also was spruiking the benefits of sky rail. This leads me to express some concern that the Buckley Street level crossing in Essendon may well be removed with a sky rail put in its place. This is because of the area around Essendon might have a sky rail running 9 metres above their backyards — and indeed the people of Moonee Ponds, on Puckle Street. We might have them in Puckle Street as well. Indeed right along here from memory, I think there are three or four crossings — we might have an extended sky rail from just before Puckle Street in Moonee Ponds right up to the Essendon station and beyond. That is something that the people of Moonee Ponds, the people of Essendon and the people living near Glenelvie station should be very concerned about. Here was one of the local members in the Essendon area, the member for Niddrie, talking up the sky rail project. We should be aware that this is clearly on the agenda. I can assure members that I will be keeping a very close eye out — Ms Shing interjected.

Mr FINN — I can assure Ms Shing that I will jump to the defence of the people of Essendon and Moonee Ponds if this government attempts to put one of these big ugly sky rail things through their suburbs. That is not on. Moonee Ponds, Essendon and those areas are very nice areas. They do not need to be ruined by this monstrosity that the Premier dreamt up one day and, whilst it was still fresh in his memory, put out a press release or picked up the phone and called the Herald Sun and said, ‘Have I got a story for you.’ Well, he had a story for them all right; it has been running all week, and it is getting better every day.

Here we have the member for Niddrie, always running to the state of Victoria. It is removing the Buckley Street intersection, talking up the sky rail project. We could only assume that is the direction in which the government is going to go. It is the cheap and nasty approach that it favours, and I think — I do not just think; I know — that the people of Moonee Ponds and the people of Essendon deserve far better than the cheap and nasty approach of this government.

I would urge the minister, whoever the responsible minister is on this occasion — it is hard to follow, but in fact it seems to me the Premier is the only one who has got any say over this, so I urge the Premier — to drop any plans that he has for a sky rail through Moonee Ponds and Essendon. That is something that local people will not and should not tolerate. Madam Deputy President, as has been said —

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT — Order! ‘Deputy President’ will suffice, Mr Finn.

Mr FINN — The opposition will not oppose this bill.

COUNCIL | Adjournment
11 February 2016

Wyndham schools

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Education. The Wyndham City Council area is an area of great importance to the state of Victoria. It is an area that is growing at a rapid rate. In fact it is often the fastest growing municipality anywhere in Australia, and that is something that all levels of government have to take into consideration.

As I have said in this house in recent times, the local council is not exactly holding up its end of the bargain and is pretty much a disgrace, to tell the truth, but it seems the current state government seem to take it for granted.

I have had a number of representations from people in the Wyndham area about the need for schools to cover the growth in the Wyndham area. Now it staggered me to learn that in this particular year, despite the hard work of the department in building schools and refurbishing schools in the City of Wyndham, not
Ombudsman jurisdiction

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — My question is to the Leader of the Government. I am sure he will agree that the only beneficiaries of nobbling the Ombudsman’s investigation of Labor staffing rorts are those Labor MPs who are implicated. I ask him: how is using taxpayers funds to shield Labor MPs from investigation an appropriate use of that taxpayer money?

Assisted Reproductive Treatment Amendment Bill 2015

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I rise to speak on the Assisted Reproductive Treatment Amendment Bill 2015, which enables persons born as a result of donor treatment procedures, and further provides for the keeping of the central register and the voluntary register and for other purposes.

Dr Carling-Jenkins said she is very deeply conflicted, and I have to say I am very deeply conflicted. There are very clear cases here for a yes vote, and there are very, very clear cases here for a no vote. What we have to do is balance up what carries more weight — what is more important to whom. I have to say that I am very grateful to the Liberal Party, and to the leader, Matthew Guy, for agreeing very readily to a free vote on this bill. This is something that we are probably getting used to in this Parliament and we will probably have to get used to a little bit further on other issues. I remember back in 2008 when the Labor Party was last in government and it put up a number of issues on which there were also free — or conscience, as they were then called, votes, until we found out that there were not all that many across on the other side who had a conscience. That is beside the point. We now call them free votes, and I am very grateful to the Liberal Party and to the leader, Matthew Guy, for so readily agreeing to that free vote.

There is clearly, in debate on this bill, room for a discussion about the right to anonymity. I do not think there is any doubt about that. That is something that donors back prior to 1998 thought they had sewn up. They thought that was a promise — an ironclad promise. I have to say that I am not a big fan of retrospective legislation. I have never been a fan of retrospective legislation. Whatever the issue may be, it is something that I do not have a great deal of enthusiasm about supporting.

There is a very, very strong claim by donors — who had been given a promise, a contract, by the IVF providers at the time that they would be able to keep their anonymity — that this bill should be defeated. Then there is another strong claim. Dr Carling-Jenkins hit this one on the head when she said that everybody has the right to know who they are. That is a huge one. It is particularly big for me because I have often spoken in this house and in other places about the need to make children’s rights paramount once again in our society.

There was a problem — as was pointed out by Ms Pennicuik, I think Dr Carling-Jenkins and indeed Ms Wooldrige — when all this was happening back in 1998 and thereafter. The enthusiasm for this brave new world that we had taken to with vigour was such that there was not a great deal of thought about what would happen down the track. There have been a number of bills that I have spoken on in this Parliament in recent years about which I have warned were same things that we have not thought about what will happen down the track.

Well, here we are, down the track on this particular one, and we are seeking to find a solution to a problem which was planted many years ago. I wish that those legislators and all those in the IVF industry back then had given some
thought to what was going to become of the children they were creating — not just in the children who were actually born but also in terms of the huge banks of human embryos that we have sitting in God knows how many places around Australia. It is something that has concerned me for a very long time. We have taken these conflicts into very deep consideration, and I have probably changed my mind at least a half a dozen times on this one, and I might yet again if somebody puts up a strong argument.

I have to say that this is a red-letter day for me, because at this point in time I am actually going to support a bill on a matter such as this put forward by this government. Normally I would regard it as a stinking, rotten, foul government on these sorts of issues, but on this particular occasion I am actually going to support the government. Not only am I supporting the government but I am supporting the Greens.

Mr Ondarchie interjected.

Mr FINN — Somebody should get Mr Gough Whitlam. If anybody had any doubts about it being a red-letter day, that should settle it, because it is not very often that I agree with the Greens on much at all.

I think, as Dr Carling-Jenkins put before, everybody has a right to know who they are, everybody has a right to know where, possible, who their parents are and everybody has the right to know where they have come from. The year 1998 should not make any difference, and what was done prior to 1998 in 1999 should not make any difference. If we are a society which now believes, as I am told, in equal opportunity and equal rights, then every person who has been conceived with the assistance of a donor has the right to know who they are and what their genetic make-up is. That is pretty basic to us all.

So whilst I accept the fact that the rights of donors are extremely important — I do not make this decision lightly, not at all — I have to say the bigger right, if I can use that term, is the right of every single person, where possible, to know who they are and where they came from, because it can very much shape who you are and what they have blue eyes, why they have blonde hair, why they walk with a limp and all of these sorts of things that are handed down through the years. It answers so many questions to know who you are as an individual. It answers the same questions for people to know who their parents are, who their grandparents are and so forth.

I will support this bill because I believe that on balance the right to know who we are trumps, if I can use that word now, the right to a promise that may have been made 20 or 30 years ago. As I said, I support the bill. I will be listening very closely during the committee stage to figure out my position on the Greens amendments, but I will in all likelihood on this occasion support this bill.

Mr Morris — Oh, yes.
Mr FINN — You know the one?
Mr Morris interjected.

Mr FINN — Mr Morris knows the one. That is the main road between the Calder Highway and the Melbourne-Sunbury road. This has become a main road in itself of recent years because a huge number of people use that road to get from places up the Calder Highway — Gisborne, for example, and Diggers Rest — to Tullamarine airport, where a good number of them actually work. We have found ourselves with a situation where we have a road that is not much better than a goat track being used by huge numbers of cars on a daily basis. And I should point out to the minister as well that on this particular road there is a bridge which crosses Deep Creek. That bridge will only allow one car to pass at any one time.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr FINN — Or to cross it, I should say.
Mr Jennings interjected.

Mr FINN — It is Little John, and there is not even a troll under the bridge. But the problem with the bridge is that only one car can travel across the bridge at any given time, so we have a situation where we have, quite often, huge numbers of cars that are stopped awaiting huge numbers of other cars across the other side of the bridge making their way across.

The minister might be surprised to learn this; I know that there are not too many bridges of this nature in the inner suburbs. But in the outer suburbs it is not unusual, and on this particular road, the Diggers Rest Road, it is something that has been fair dinkum driving the locals nuts for a very long time.

I am asking the minister to provide the appropriate resources to upgrade the Diggers Rest Road to provide a facility that will adequately meet the needs of locals and those beyond, and in particular to duplicate the bridge across Deep Creek on the Bulla-Diggers Rest Road.

COUNCIL | Adjournment

23 February 2016

Bulla-Diggers Rest Road

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. The minister would be aware that I have raised in this house on many occasions a number of roads, particularly in the outer west and the outer north-west, that were built long ago and have since been absolutely inundated with traffic.

The growing suburbs, the increasing population, are using these roads, and of course the roads were built at a time when that sort of traffic was just not happening. In fact many of them — and Minister Jennings may well remember these times.

Mr Ramsay — The horse and buggy.
Mr FINN — The horse and dray. I am sure the minister remembers.
Ms Shing — There is no need to get sulky.

Mr FINN — Very good. Ms Shing: yes, very good. The particular road I wish to mention this evening is the Bulla-Diggers Rest Road.

Traffic congestion

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — My constituency question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. By 7.30 each morning the Tullamarine Freeway is often blocked from one end to the other. Indeed, it is often blocked well beyond the airport — right back to the township of Bulla. The Western Ring Road is its usual sluggish self, and the Deer Park bypass is often a write-off. The Calder Freeway staggerers into the Tullamarine merge, and the West Gate Freeway is a mass of brake lights. Melbourne’s west is being strangled by traffic congestion. Now that Infrastructure Australia has stated the obvious and declared the east-west link an urgent priority, will the minister heed that advice and give motorists from Melbourne’s west some hope of relief by reconsidering the government’s decision to scrap it much-needed road?
Independent Review of Climate Change Act 2010: report

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I knew when I saw on the notice paper a couple of weeks ago the independent review of the Climate Change Act 2010 that it would be a fascinating read, and a fascinating read it is — as fascinating as any other fairytale that one might come across at any given time. It is worth noting part of the context of this report:

The review of the act is occurring within the following context:

The conclusion of the Paris agreement at the 21st Conference of the Parties ... that the establishment responded that even several years of temperature data does not establish a climate trend. That takes much longer. But —

he asked the question —

when the period of no global warming gets longer than the period of actual global warming, what is the climate trend then?

That is a question I would like to ask the authors of this report. I would really like to ask how they can justify talking about action to keep temperatures below the average and keep it below 1.5 degrees when in fact there has been no increase for close on two decades. It is quite extraordinary. It just points out that those people who say the science is settled might have other things on their minds. They might have the prospect of losing money on the deal if indeed the science is settled as it clearly is, that there is no global warming, and that is the bottom line. Indeed, according to the Forbes report:

... the alarmist global warming establishment responded that even several years of temperature data does not establish a climate trend. That takes much longer. But —

Now this will shock everybody to their socks, to the core of their being. He added:

Even rank amateurs among the general public can see that the sun is the dominant influence on the Earth’s temperatures.

So it is not a tax — tax does not affect the climate. It is not legislation — that does not affect the climate. It is in fact the sun that affects the climate. It is, I would have thought, pretty obvious, but it seems that those people who say the science is settled might have other things on their minds.

The journalist Peter Ferrara from Forbes.com has said:

When the period of no global warming began —

as distinct from the prior global warming —

... the alarmist global warming establishment responded that even several years of temperature data does not establish a climate trend. That takes much longer. But —

Looking at the question: what are we carrying on about? And that is a question that I think is well worth asking.

Wyndham City Council

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — Since my call recently for the dismissal of the Wyndham City Council I have been inundated, firstly, with messages of support from people in that municipality, but I have also been inundated with complaints about this council from a number of people, one of whom is Stephen from Hoppers Crossing, who sent me the following email, and I will read some excerpts from it:

On 25 January, I had occasion to drive my cancer-affected 83-year-old father to the Wyndham private hospital for treatment. Because of his cancer, he cannot walk very far. I left the car park but when I returned, the entry ticket gate was out of order and wouldn’t admit any vehicles. I parked my car (alongside a dozen others) on a muddy patch (which I later found out is called: Old Sneys Road) and waited on a seat outside the hospital. Because cars could leave the car park but not enter, the car park was nearly emptied before the defective gate started working again. I returned to my car to move it into the car park, but found that it, along with all the others, had been given a $152 parking infringement by Wyndham council. The electronic records controlling the operation of the automated ticket gate should confirm that it was out of order on that date.

Upon arriving home, I immediately emailed our $400 000 per annum general manager —

CEO, I am assuming —

acquainting her with the facts and requesting that the ticket be reviewed, but over a month later, other than the standard automated acknowledgement, I have still not been favoured with the courtesy of a reply. As the due date for payment of the ticket was 22 February, I emailed her again on Monday, 22nd, seeking a reply to my earlier email of a month ago, and received no reply to that, and yesterday I emailed a third time, seeking replies to my two previous emails, but again, other than the standard automated acknowledgement —

no substantive response has been received. Now, this I think is the sort of thing that gives local government a bad name, when people have been given a parking ticket for what is clearly a wrong reason — for a situation where the Wyndham council, in this particular instance, is in the wrong. The council cannot get any satisfaction from anybody at the council at all.

I ask the Minister for Local Government to intervene with the Wyndham council on behalf of Stephen of Hoppers Crossing and ask it to afford him the leniency that he desires and indeed provide him with what I would describe as a fair go.

Mr Dalidakis — Do you have his surname?

Mr FINN — I have got his surname here, but he has asked me not to make it public. I am happy to provide it to the minister and I ask the minister to intervene on his behalf.

Western Metropolitan Region roads

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. I have raised with the minister on a number of occasions now the need for road upgrades in the outer western suburbs of Melbourne, and I am doing it again tonight. I wish to bring to the minister’s attention an article that was in the Wyndham Leader. Reporter Sarah Anderson gives details of how she travelled down Point Cook Road. She says:

It took peak-hour motorists 26 minutes to work their way along the 5-kilometre stretch down Point Cook Road from Saltwater Promenade to the Princes Freeway last Tuesday.

I know. I was one of them.
The road may be signposted for 60 kilometres an hour, but for much of the trip 50 kilometres an hour is as good as it gets.

I set off from the Saltwater Promenade intersection at 7.35 a.m. and completed the first (duplicated) 1.6 kilometres in 21/2 minutes.

I sailed down Point Cook Road — even an incident near Sneydes Road which required police and a tow truck didn’t bring me to a halt — until I got to the end of Sanctuary Lakes shopping centre.

Two lanes merge into one and traffic starts to slow.

There, the first of nine motorcyclists and cyclists fly past me, filling me with envy each time.

Once we hit Dunnings Road, just 2.5 kilometres and 41/2 minutes into the journey, I can see my fate ahead.

A queue of red brake lights as far as the eye can see.

We spent more time sitting motionless in our cars than actually driving.

... It took 24.45 minutes to get to the roundabout at Central Avenue. Then it was smooth sailing to the freeway.

It’s 8.02 a.m. Twenty-six minutes, in clear weather, without any traffic-stopping incidents.

Thanks to the good work of the former Minister for Planning, the current Leader of the Opposition, a new overpass and diamond interchange is being built at Sneydes Road at Point Cook, but we need a lot more. Unfortunately the Leader of the Opposition is no longer in a position to help the people of Point Cook, so I am asking the minister to do that. I am asking the minister to direct his department to conduct an immediate study of what is needed to free the people of Point Cook from this nightmare everyday.

It is interesting that the Wyndham council before the last election was very, very active. It spent many hundreds of thousands of dollars campaigning on this issue, but of course since the election it has been very, very quiet indeed. So I am asking the minister to get that report together and to implement it for the good people of Point Cook.

COUNCIL | Constituency questions

Traffic gridlock

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — My constituency question is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. One incident in the Burnley Tunnel this morning shut down the entire western suburban road network. The Tullamarine, West Gate and Calder freeways were gridlocked for hours. Major arterial roads throughout the west were at a standstill. Mayhem was the order of the day. Under normal circumstances it would take me 15 to 20 minutes to travel from my home in Bulla to Kings Way. Today, as I crawled past Melbourne Airport, I noted from the electronic time board it would take me 69 minutes to take that same journey. What occurred this morning was an outrage. What is a greater outrage is the lack of action by the Andrews government to prevent a repetition. Melbourne’s west deserves better. I ask the minister: when will the government accept that it got it wrong by scrapping the east–west link and reverse its disastrous decision?

The PRESIDENT — Order! It is very borderline as a constituency question, I have got to say.

COUNCIL | Adjournment 8 March 2016

Victoria University Sunbury site

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — My adjournment matter this evening is for the Minister for Planning. I ask members, and indeed the minister, to cast their minds back some 20 years when the Kennett government gifted Victoria University land and buildings for the opening of the Sunbury campus of Victoria University. They were very exciting times for those of us who were involved, and certainly I was deeply involved at that time. It was a very exciting time for Sunbury. Sadly, during the period of the Brumby government, Sunbury lost its university, and the buildings and the land have sat idle ever since. Those buildings sit atop Jacksons Hill, and they are very much a part of the history of Sunbury.

There have been plenty of suggestions from the local Sunbury community as to what these buildings and this land could be used for, but alas, to this point nothing has eventuated, and indeed those buildings are still sitting there doing precisely nothing. One idea that the community does not support is the prospect of selling the land for housing and losing the unique opportunity this site offers, and of course that loss would forever. I think it is highly debatable that Victoria University has the legal right to sell the land, given that it was gifted the land for educational purposes back in the 1990s, but it most certainly does not have an ethical right to carry through such a sale.

So I am asking the minister to refrain from changing any current planning permits or planning zones to residential zoning on Jacksons Hill and surrounding Jacksons Hill. I ask the minister to take on board the views of the Sunbury community, and I ask the minister to ensure, as much as he possibly can, that he uses his powers to keep Jacksons Hill and that educational precinct in Sunbury as it is and not turn it into quite a few houses and quite possibly a couple of blocks of flats.

COUNCIL | Constituency questions

Safe Schools program

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I stand in this house today as a father representing parents all over the state. I have a message for the Andrews government, and I hope it will listen. The parents of Victoria do not want our sons to be taught how to suck their penises. We do not want our daughters taught how to bind their breasts. We do not want our children being taught to question their gender. The parents of Victoria do not want their children prematurely sexualised. We want our kids left alone to be kids. We want childhood protected and the innocence of our children respected.

What we do not want is to be branded as bigots because we love our kids. What we do not want is millions of our dollars being spent exposing our children to concepts and thoughts that threaten their normal development. What we do not want is our role as parents usurped by programs based in radical social engineering. What we want is for this and other governments around Australia, particularly the federal government, to scrap the so-called Safe Schools program, and we want it scrapped now.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr FINN — Sorry, the Nazis are in town.

Ms Hartland — On a point of order, Acting President, we were just referred to as ‘the Nazis in town,’ and I would ask Mr Finn to withdraw that comment.

Mr Dalidakis — On the point of order, Acting President, I share Ms Hartland’s concern. I believe the comment was made to all of us. Obviously everyone is well aware of my family dying during the Holocaust, and, being Jewish, it is highly offensive. I suggest that Mr Finn withdraw unreservedly.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Elasmar) — Order! Mr Finn knows the procedure.

Ms Shing interjected.

Mr FINN — She’s a disgrace.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Elasmar) — Order! Mr Finn knows the procedure.

Ms Shing interjected.

Mr FINN — She’s a disgrace.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Elasmar) — Order! I ask Mr Finn to withdraw.

Mr FINN — I withdraw.

COUNCIL | Adjournment 9 March 2016

City of Wyndham education resources

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — My constituency question is for the Minister for Education. Recent media reports highlight the fact that no new schools will be opened in the City of Wyndham this year. Understandably this has angered local residents who understand them and well the desperate need for increased educational opportunities in Wyndham. Wyndham is one of the fastest growing municipalities in Australia. Families are moving in every
day and babies are being born every hour. What hope can the minister offer that the government will sometime soon meet the demand for new schools in the City of Wyndham?

**COUNCIL | Second reading 9 March 2016**

**Upholding Australian Values (Protecting Our Flags) Bill 2015**

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I begin by saying that I am absolutely delighted to be speaking on the Upholding Australian Values (Protecting Our Flags) Bill 2015. I commend the introducer of the bill, Mr Daniel Young, for having the foresight to bring this forward. I think it is a very valuable piece of legislation, and legislation that he should be very proud of indeed. I am sure he, as the father of a young child, will be able to tell that young child as that young child grows what he has done in this house today, and indeed his grandchildren and possibly his great-grandchildren. That will be something that he can wear as a badge of honour for the rest of his life, and I commend him for this bill.

I have been a big fan of the flag for a very, very long time. I have been a member of the Australian National Flag Association since the 1980s, since I was very, very young. I have to say, like my friend and colleague Mrs Peulich, that I love the flag. It is disappointing to hear the Greens get up here and do what Mr Barber did — nitpick — on such an important issue, but that is what we have come to expect from the Greens. That is just the way that they seem to know that if anybody is going to get up and sling off at Australian values, sling off at our flag, and sling off at anybody who supports the flag or our values, it will be the Greens, and they have not disappointed me today, not one little bit.

I remember some years ago driving down Royal Parade in Parkville, which I have to say I think is Melbourne’s premium boulevard. Without upsetting any supporters of St Kilda Road, I think Royal Parade is indeed, even given the fact that it has the Carlton Football Club associated with it, still Melbourne’s premium boulevard. I recall it was a sunny day, a beautiful day in fact, and I looked up through the trees. There was a bit of a breeze blowing, and there at the end of the boulevard, at the end of Royal Parade, at the Haymarket intersection, there was the Australian flag in all its glory. I thought to myself, ‘What a magnificent sight’. I thought to myself that there were surely very few sites better than that flag that I saw that day, and indeed not just the flag itself, but what it represents.

We heard about what the flag is made up of — that it represents the ocean, the union flag and the Southern Cross and the stars and all that sort of mechanical material. But the flag to me represents freedom; it represents opportunity; it represents a way of life that so many of our families, generations ago, came here to make the most of — to create in fact, but also make the most of. I see that flag as something that we should all be very, very proud of, and something that we should not under any circumstances be treating with anything but disdain.

I recall the first time I visited Washington, DC, some years ago. I had just flown from London so it was a fair haul, and my wife and I landed at the Washington, DC, airport. I looked out the window, and there I saw was the US flag. The first thing I saw, in all its fulsomeness, was the flag of the United States of America. I thought to myself, ‘That tells me all I need to know’, because as we know America is a country that is so incredibly proud of its flag. I think that is something that we could learn from. That is something that we should take up. We should in fact fly our flag more than we do. I would like to see the Australian flag flying above every building — not just public buildings but every private building as well. I think that would be a great sight, most certainly, but it would also be a great appreciation of our flag and what it stands for. I urge all the community to fly that flag far more often than we do.

The number of empty flagpoles that you see around the place, including I have to say on this building, is unsatisfactory. I think that if there is an empty flagpole, we should stick an Australian flag on it. If there have to be 6 or 10 — or however many — Australian flags flying from the one building, so be it, and that includes this building. That may be something, Acting President Morris, that you might like to take up with the President at some stage; as I understand it, he is responsible along with the Speaker for the flag-flying activities of this building. I understand it is his responsibility. I could be wrong — I will check with the Clerk.

One of the most important groups of people that we need to respect in this debate is of course our diggers. These are people who have fought — many of whom have died, many of whom have been injured — fighting for our freedom under our flag. One of the great legacies, probably the greatest legacy, of Australia is that wherever freedom has been under attack in the world, Australia has been there to defend it. Whether it be in World War I, World War II, Korea, Vietnam, the Middle East — you name it — Australia has been there. And Australia has been there with that flag, our flag, flying above our soldiers, flying above our diggers. That is something that is such a precious, precious part of the Australian heritage and indeed the Australian values that Mr Young speaks of.

I cannot help in the very short period of time that I have left but also mention one group of people that I absolutely adore our flag, and that is migrants. I go to a lot of citizenship ceremonies. In the western suburbs, as you would imagine, there are a lot of people who have come to this country and who want to become Australian citizens — how totally understandable that is. When given their flag at their citizenship ceremony, they clutch it as if they are never going to let go of it again. Many times I have seen people from Somalia, South America, Europe wherever they are from — clutching their flag and beaming with joy that they are now Australians. It is something that warms the heart and it is something that a lot of people do not take into consideration in these things, but it is something that they should take into consideration — that the people that have come here have come here for the very reasons that I have spoken of and for the very reasons that our flag is so important.

The love of the flag is so strong in Australia that even those who would shred our constitution and even those who want to destroy our Westminster system have said — and I was delighted to hear Mr Leane earlier today talking about his love of the Westminster system, and that surprised me, I have to say, as I thought he was a republican, but the republicans themselves have said — that even if Australia becomes a republic, they will keep the flag. Now, I have to say I do not believe that for a minute. Not for even half a second do I believe that, because in my experience most of them loathe the flag.

The fact of the matter is that they know that if they go against the trend, they will lose popular support for their cause — or what little popular support there is left for their cause.

This bill is important because any attack on the flag is an attack on Australia. Any attack on our flag is an attack on our nation and the people of this nation. I am a great believer in freedom of speech. As members will know, I have risen on many occasions in this house to speak about the importance of freedom of speech, but I do not believe that we should have the freedom to attack this nation. I do not believe that we should have the freedom to attack our flag in the way that we so often see, and that is why this bill is so important. That is why what Mr Young brings to this Parliament today is something that is so deserving of our support.

Once again I congratulate Mr Young on bringing this bill forward. I urge all members of the house — even the Greens, in the unlikely event that they wish to rethink their position — to support this bill, to support our flag, to support our nation and to show for all the world to see that we do love Australia.

**COUNCIL | Adjournment 9 March 2016**

**Sunbury Road duplication**

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I wish to raise a matter of the attention of the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. I first raised this matter about a year ago, and I have been staggered, I have to say, by the lack of progress by the government since then. I am delighted to say that the Hume City Council has come onside. The project that I am talking about is the proposed duplication of the Melbourne-Sunbury road, including the Bulla bypass.
There was just a couple of weeks ago a major accident at the bottom of the Bulla hill. The Bulla bridge was built some 150 years ago and is certainly not up to the job of providing for the traffic — the very heavy traffic — that it currently takes. As a result of that accident many thousands of cars were sent off through country roads, across one-lane bridges in some instances, and it was somewhat of a debacle.

I am delighted to say that the Hume council has come on board to support the duplication of the Melbourne–Sunbury road. I can only say that it is extremely, extremely disappointing that there is a lack of support for this project from the member for Sunbury in another place, because this is something that really should be bipartisan. This is something that is necessary for the future of the Sunbury and Bulla communities — and not only Sunbury and Bulla, but also the Macedon Ranges, where a good number of people work at the airport live. Of course what we are talking about is the main road from the Macedon Ranges, Sunbury and Bulla to Melbourne Airport, where thousands of people who travel on that road work. I am asking the minister as a matter of urgency to provide the necessary funding to bring this project on. We need to duplicate this road. Sunbury is now a major centre. There are tens of thousands of people there, and tens of thousands of people more in the Macedon Ranges, and we need to provide satisfactory roads for people to travel on. At the moment it is not unusual in the peak hour in the morning for the traffic to be banked back way past the airport and right back into Bulla. That is not good enough, and I for one will be screaming non-stop until such time as the government comes to the party on this. I ask the minister as a matter of urgency to provide funding for this project.

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**COUNCIL | Adjournment**  
*10 March 2016*

**The Strand, Williamstown, toilet facilities**

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water. I do not know if many members of this house get down to Williamstown. I know that Ms Lovell is very fond of Williamstown, being a former resident of Williamstown, and the President indicates he is a regular down there. Indeed it is a magnificent place.

The Strand in Williamstown in fact is one of the more beautiful streets in what is a beautiful city. In fact I had lunch at a restaurant of the same name last Saturday, and it was superb. Overlooking the bay, it provides the best view of our city possible from anywhere in Melbourne. It is well worth the trip just for that alone.

The fine weather, which we have had up until today, attracts walkers, cyclists and picnicking families, and that is where the problem begins, because when people gather there will be a need from time to time for public conveniences. I have myself from time to time had the need to visit the public conveniences down on The Strand in Williamstown. There is only one set of public conveniences on The Strand, and let me tell you, they are a disgrace. They are an absolute disgrace. Honourable members interjecting.

Mr FINN — This is to the minister because it is the responsibility of Parks Victoria. The state of these toilets has been not good for a very long time. In fact I am told by some that the appalling state of these toilets dates from the 1960s.

Mr Ondarchie interjected.

Mr FINN — Yes, indeed they are, Mr Ondarchie. It is time, I think, for the minister to step in and to upgrade the conveniences on The Strand. Just because it is in a safe Labor seat does not mean that it should be ignored.

Mr Ondarchie — A safe seat.

Mr FINN — A safe seat indeed, and it has the same impact on you. I am asking the minister to provide the wherewithal to upgrade the toilets on The Strand in Williamstown and make The Strand a more complete experience for those visiting what is a wonderful part of Melbourne.

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**COUNCIL | Constituency questions**  
*10 March 2016*

**Truganina road safety**

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — My constituency question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and I refer the minister to the tragic road crash in Truganina this morning that resulted in the deaths of two people and that is necessary for the future of the Sunbury and Bulla communities — and not only Sunbury and Bulla, but also the Macedon Ranges, where a good number of people work at the airport live. Of course what we are talking about is the main road from the Macedon Ranges, Sunbury and Bulla to Melbourne Airport, where thousands of people who travel on that road work. I am asking the minister as a matter of urgency to provide the necessary funding to bring this project on. We need to duplicate this road. Sunbury is now a major centre. There are tens of thousands of people there, and tens of thousands of people more in the Macedon Ranges, and we need to provide satisfactory roads for people to travel on. At the moment it is not unusual in the peak hour in the morning for the traffic to be banked back way past the airport and right back into Bulla. That is not good enough, and I for one will be screaming non-stop until such time as the government comes to the party on this. I ask the minister as a matter of urgency to provide funding for this project.

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**COUNCIL | Questions without notice**  
*22 March 2016*

**Public sector enterprise bargaining**

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — My question is to the Special Minister of State, representing the Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water. Can the minister confirm that some enterprise bargaining agreements (EBAs) settled since he came to government, including for metropolitan water authorities and the Royal Botanic Gardens, have been paid for out of the Parks and Reserves Trust Account, which is in contradiction of the trust’s terms?

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**COUNCIL | Members statements**  
*22 March 2016*

**Traffic congestion**

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — My constituency question is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. The minister is clearly aware of the traffic mayhem on roads in Melbourne’s west over the past week. As a result of construction, congestion on freeways and major roads has surmounted what we have come to expect of recent times. At the height of last week’s debacle the minister was quoted as advising motorists from Point Cook, Werribee, Hoppers Crossing, Altona and other suburbs in the west to ‘take an alternative route’. Having thought about it now for seven days, I ask the minister: to which alternative route was he referring?
assaulted and trashed the office of my good friend, Senator Cory Bernardi?

Parents have an absolute right to protect their children from a so-called anti-bullying program. This program and its mates to employ bullyboy tactics against those concerned about this so-called anti-bullying program is obscene. If the Andrews government is serious about combatting the very real problem of bullying, it should first have a good, hard look at itself. The attitude of the Premier and Deputy Premier towards parents throughout Victoria is nothing short of disgraceful. I urge you to continue to fight for what is best for children, and I promise them — —

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Elsmar) — Time!

Production of documents

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I rise this afternoon to say that I do not wish to see the Leader of the Government suspended from this house. I think that the Leader of the Government is a shining beacon in an ocean of dimwits on the other side of the house, and I have to say that without him it would be a very, very boring place indeed. I can certainly understand why the government is panicking at the prospect of coming in here without Mr Jennings — because without Mr Jennings those opposite have got nothing. They would not be able to look at their watch and see what time it is or even what day it is for that matter. Without Mr Jennings they would be rudderless. They would have nothing going for them at all. He is, as I say, someone who leads from the front. For example, if a minister is to be sacked, Mr Jennings will be there. I just do not understand how members of the government would feel without him. They have my sympathy. So I can fully understand — —

Mr Mulino — On a point of order, Acting President, on the point of relevance, I was kept on an extremely tight leash during my brief speech today, and I think Mr Finn is making some very gratuitous and negative comments that really have nothing to do with the motion.

Mr FINN — Further on the point of order. Act 14 President, I am failing to see how my comments are negative. In fact I am praising Mr Jennings. The fact that Mr Mulino may well loathe Mr Jennings has nothing to do with me. I am not really into their factional brawling over there. I do not know who is after whom and who is doing what to whom and how many times at the moment, so I really fail to see what point he is trying to make.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Morris) — Order! I do not uphold Mr Mulino's point of order. I am not sure if it was a 'tight leash'; I think it was medium length at best. Mr Finn, to continue.

Mr FINN — I think Mr Mulino would be best if we kept him on a leash permanently. That would be a very good thing. Perhaps he could, Acting President, have a read of that report that you tabled in the house earlier today on rabid dogs.

Ms Shing — On a point of order, Acting President, I find the inference Mr Finn has just made about Mr Mulino, which seeks to draw a parallel between him and a rabid dog, to be deeply unfortunate and indeed unparliamentary, and I ask that he withdraw that comment.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Morris) — Order! The member who was referred to in the chamber. I have not heard the member raise any concern, so I will ask Mr Finn to continue.

Mr Mulino — Further to that point of order, Acting President, I am very grateful for Ms Shing's insights, and I reiterate them, and I would hope you would uphold her insightful and timely comment.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Morris) — Order! I thank Mr Mulino. There was reference to a report; there was reference to yourself. I think it is a rather long bow to draw that there was something that was derogatory in that remark. I do not uphold the point of order. I will ask Mr Finn to continue.

Mr FINN — I can understand the sensibilities of members of the government when they are faced with losing, perhaps for an extended period, the only person over there with the wit to lead them. I can certainly understand their feelings on this matter, but the bottom line, and the question we must answer, is: what is more important — the Leader of the Government leading his party or the primacy of the Parliament?

That is what this is about. The Parliament has made a decision and has sent a direction to the government, and the government is defying the Parliament. Governments have fallen in years gone by; we all remember the Whitlam government back in the 1970s. It tried to defy the Senate. It tried to govern without the Senate, and the Whitlam government was dismissed and sent to the people. We are not attempting to do that. We are just making a statement that this house and the dictates of this house are very important. We are democratically elected members of Parliament. What we say and what we decide in this house is extremely important; they cannot be brushed off by an arrogant, contemptible government that has no regard for this house or indeed for the democratic process.

As I say, I can understand why the government does not want to lose Mr Jennings, but the importance of the Parliament and the importance of this house, to my way of thinking, are far more important than any concerns the government might have. I very strongly support the motion put forward by Ms Wooldridge, and I urge the house to support that motion very soon.

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I wish to raise a matter tonight for the attention of the Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water. Last week I attended a meeting along with a number of colleagues, including Alan McMillan, Ms Hartland and Ms Kairouz from the other place, at Catholic Regional College, Caroline Springs. There was a full house as hundreds of people had gathered to
express their disgust at the proposed expansion of the Ravenhall tip.

The Ravenhall tip, for those who may not know, is a filthy big stinking hole in the ground that leads quite often to illnesses for the local residents, affects families in their homes and is one of the more unpleasant aspects of living in what is otherwise a very nice place. Caroline Springs is a very nice place, as I am sure Mr Melhem will attest, but this particular tip is causing no end of trouble, and the fact that it could be expanded to four times its current size is causing considerable angst, to say the least, in local communities.

Many at the meeting expressed their anger at the Environment Protection Authority (EPA). They said to me and to others, and publicly at the meeting, that they had contacted the EPA on a number of occasions about the stench coming from the tip and were yet to receive any satisfaction from the EPA at all. They feel that they have nowhere to go because they have made complaints and, as I said, despite the stench, they get no satisfaction at all from the EPA. I can certainly understand and sympathise with their plight. Can members imagine what it must be like to be in your own home and be awakened by the stink from a nearby tip and, when you ring the EPA, to get no satisfaction at all? The EPA just does not want to know. It passes the buck, and that is something that I find quite appalling.

So I ask the minister to direct the EPA to take complaints about the Ravenhall tip seriously and act when the stench reaches intolerable levels, which I hasten to add is intolerable. I think the EPA has said to me that they are about to chuck it and, as my friend and colleague Mr O'Donohue pointed out so well in his contribution to the debate in this house this afternoon, the EPA has said to me that they are about to chuck the EPA if they do not do something about it. They have said to me that they are about to chuck the EPA if they do not do something about it. They have said to me that they are about to chuck the EPA if they do not do something about it.

COUNCIL | Constituency questions 24 March 2016

Sunbury university land

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — My constituency question is to the Minister for Education. A little over 20 years ago the then Kennett government gifted the land and buildings of the former Caloola institution to Victoria University for it to provide tertiary education services in Sunbury. Some years later Victoria University decided to close its Sunbury campus, which left the building in a dilapidated and in a deteriorating state. Will the minister provide confirmation or otherwise that Victoria University still owns the land and buildings it received as a gift to itself more than two decades ago?

COUNCIL | Constituency questions 12 April 2016

Sky rail policy

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — My constituency question is to the Minister for Public Transport. The minister, I am sure, is aware of the high degree of interest in her proposed sky rails in the southern and south-eastern suburbs of Melbourne. I am standing here today to inform the minister that interest is also growing in the north-west of Melbourne. Concern is growing in Moonee Ponds and Essendon about what the government will do to replace the level crossings at Puckle Street, Park Street and Buckley Street. Will the minister rule out sky rail as a means of replacing these level crossings?

COUNCIL | Second reading 12 April 2016

Victoria Police Amendment (Merit-based Transfer) Bill 2016

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I rise this afternoon to speak on the Victoria Police Amendment (Merit-based Transfer) Bill 2016, and in doing so I remind the house that, as we were told in the second-reading speech, this bill facilitates the merit-based transfer of police officers to country general duties positions.

This bill provides the legislative instruments to ensure the commencement of important reforms agreed between Victoria Police and Police Association Victoria as part of the enterprise agreement. As part of the 2015 police enterprise bargaining agreement the chief commissioner and the police association agreed that general duties constable and senior constable positions at country locations should be filled via a merit-based selection process. This reform needs to be recognised by the legislative amendment to the Victoria Police Act 2013, and this bill does that. This is a bill that the opposition will not be opposing, as my friend and colleague Mr O’Donohue pointed out so well in his contribution to the debate in this house this afternoon.

I have to say, and I am sure it will not come as any surprise to anybody who has been in this house for any period of time, that I have deep respect, admiration and indeed affection for Victoria Police. Victoria Police is an organisation that is made up of some magnificent people — people who do the sorts of things that need to be done to keep us safe. That is something that we must all be grateful for. I mean, these are people who go out of their way to put themselves on the line, who put their safety in jeopardy in order to prepare for another busy day the next day, then you are doing something that is truly admirable — turn on the news and sit back with your family and just relax and prepare for another busy day the next day, then you are doing something that is truly admirable.

One of the problems we have, of course, is the two-up policy of the police force. I do not knock that policy for one moment. I believe in the particular dangerous world that we live in, where we have seen far too many terrorist attacks in Australia and of course overseas, we have a situation now where police feel that they can no longer go out and do their jobs on
their own — going solo, as it were — and feel that a two-up policy is necessary. I believe indeed that it is necessary, because the safety of our police is also very, very important. People say about the police, ‘Well, that’s their job’. It is their job, but we should not be putting police in a position where their lives are endangered any more than they already are. I think that a two-up policy is currently in effect — put into effect by the chief commissioner and police command — is a policy that is needed. But what it does is cut the effectiveness of police on the ground. This means we need more police. It is as simple as that. Victoria Police needs more members. This government is not interested in knowing about what Victoria Police needs, and it is not interested in knowing what Victoria Police requires to protect our community. That is a direct result of the fact that Labor has never cared about the police. Labor does not care about the police. In fact Labor will use the police, cut their effectiveness as an election ploy. It will take us all for a ride, using the police as some sort of attractive election ploy. But we all know that when the election is over, Labor will go back to what it really is — and that is, a party that does not like the police. It loathes police — in fact it loathes authority — and it loathes law and order. It is part of, I suppose, that intrinsic socialism that the Labor Party has. I think it is very, very sad that so many people are taken in by the Labor Party saying that it cares about police and cares about law and order, when it does not and it never ever has. That is just a —

An honourable member interjected.

Mr FINN — Yes, I think ‘tragedy’ is not too strong a word to use in describing the situation in this state and the attitude that this government has towards police and policing. I believe that the community deserves better than it is getting currently, and I believe that our police deserve better than they are getting currently. Most certainly this bill does improve the lot of police in some small way, and that is a good thing and is why we do not oppose this bill. I do hope the Premier will actually do something positive in this area. He has not done anything too positive anywhere else, but I am hoping that in terms of law and order in this state this Premier will take the bull by the horns and will actually do something about getting more police on our streets. Put in more police — do not think, do! Mr Drum interjected.

Mr FINN — John Kennedy indeed, Mr Drum; I thought you would pick up on that. I think the Premier has to get on the front foot here. He has to actually do his job and take the actions which will put the safety of our community at the forefront — and that means more police on our streets. The reality is at the moment that just is not happening. The police are feeling more pressure and are feeling under the pump more every day, and this government is just not taking the slightest bit of interest in what is happening to those magnificent men and women of Victoria Police. In summing up, as I said before, I say the opposition will not oppose this bill.

It is a bill which will, to some probably small degree, improve the lot of police in Victoria. But I do put out a plea to this government to get its priorities straight and to think about what is important to the men and women and children — the families — of Victoria. I think safety in their own homes, safety in their streets and safety in their schools are of paramount importance, and they always should be. At the moment that safety is under greater threat than it possibly ever has been before, and that is happening very largely because police are under the pump. There are not enough of them, and we need more.

I could go on, and I could talk about the pursuit policy. I am very pleased, I have to say, that I understand police command is reviewing that, if indeed it has not already reviewed that policy, because I think that non-pursuit policy by Victoria Police was a prize piece of ratbagtery, to tell you the truth. I think most police would actually agree with me, and certainly the ones that I have spoken to over this have expressed that a large part of their frustration as police has been that policy.

They also have expressed the view that there are just not enough of them. I come back to the basic problem that there are just not enough police in Victoria. As a Liberal-Nationals government from 2010 to 2014 we did everything in our power to try to change that, but this government has dropped the ball. It has totally dropped the ball and has gone back to its old ways. It does not care about police, does not care about law and order and does not care about the community, but this bill will hopefully go some way to helping the police.

Abortion legislation

To the Legislative Council of Victoria:

The petition of certain citizens of the state of Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Council that because of the abortion legislation passed in Victoria in 2008:

— abortions are allowed to be performed up to the point of birth;
— babies in the womb who have reached the age of viability and older are being aborted;
— it is not necessary for medical care to be provided to babies who have survived an abortion;
— there is no obligation for medical professionals to facilitate the provision of access to appropriate services such as pregnancy support, counselling, housing, mental health and other such services for pregnant women experiencing physical or emotional distress.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Council of Victoria support the Infant Viability Bill 2015 introduced by Dr Rachel Carling-Jenkins which will rectify the problems with current law outlined above.

By Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) (1960 signatures).
Possums

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I raise a matter this evening for the Minister for Planning and Water, the Honourable Lisa Neville. I do not wish to offend the Greens in any way with this particular matter, but I have been approached by a constituent who has expressed some worry, very grave concerns about the numbers and behaviour of possums in the western suburbs. He has expressed the view that the number of possums has escalated significantly in the western suburbs in recent times and that it is causing him some considerable distress, causing his dog some considerable distress and sometimes causing his cat distress as well. He is hoping we might be able to do something about this matter.

I can speak from personal experience on this, because I know that, whilst I cannot hear the possums on the roof of my house because we have a tiled roof, the garage is a more audible place when possums run there. It is like they are wearing footy boots, and they are banging around up there. Quite often our dog will be sucked in by the possums, and Bobbidog will take to barking at the possums, which will ignite the dogs who live on either side of our property, and before you know it every dog within a 5-kilometre radius is barking its head off. So you can see why people are concerned about the impact of possums in the western suburbs.

I have to say I am not particularly sure what action I would like the minister to take with regard to the possums, but I do ask the minister to take this matter very, very seriously. This is something that is causing some significant concern in the west, and I ask the minister to direct her department to study the issue of possums in the western suburbs and to produce a report and recommend some actions as to what can be done to alleviate what could well become a very, very significant problem in the not-too-distant future. I trust that the minister will take this on board, and I will be very happy to let my constituents know that action is on its way.

Vocational education and training

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — My question is to the Minister for Training and Skills. On 23 March in this house the minister quoted from the preliminary results of the 2015 training data. Given the 2014 report was released in March last year, how much longer will Victorians have to wait to see the results of the 2015 training year?

Supplementary question

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I refer to the minister’s previous comments when he said people have a right to know what is happening in our training system. Will the minister end his double standards and commit to releasing the data this week, or is he only interested in having these reports in the public domain when they support his political campaigns?

Traffic congestion

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — My constituency question is to the Premier. The Premier may not get to the western suburbs often, but I can assure him that traffic congestion is strangling the west of Melbourne. Even on a good day traffic on the West Gate, Calder and Tullamarine freeways and other main roads in Melbourne’s west is chaotic. One small vehicle accident can, and often does, shut down the traffic flow entirely, leaving traffic mayhem for hours. Now the Premier’s favoured option and I understand he has announced it this morning, of the western distributor will do very little to improve the situation. I am pleased the federal government agrees, as evidenced by its decision not to fund any part of the flawed project. The only real solution to our traffic problems in the west is construction of the east–west link. Will the Premier now cut his criminally wasteful losses, accept the $3 billion offered by the commonwealth and build this desperately needed road?

Battle of Long Tan commemoration

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I have long thought the treatment of Australian troops returning from the war in Vietnam was one of the darkest episodes in our nation’s history. Those who served in Vietnam did not deserve the degraded scenes they faced upon their return. I am delighted to say that attitudes have changed. We now readily accept Vietnam veterans as heroes, as indeed they are. In the finest tradition of the Australian military, diggers went to Vietnam to fight for freedom. They joined with forces from South Vietnam to fight the tyranny of communism. They fought with courage and with incredible bravery. They are every bit as much Aussie war heroes as the original Anzacs or those who fought Japan and Germany in World War II.

I have been deeply moved over the past 18 months or so as the Australian Vietnamese community has shown its gratitude to those Australians who left these shores to defend them. The outpouring of emotion from those who came to Australia to escape the communist barbarians is instructive. It shows the innate decency of the Australian Vietnamese community. They have not forgotten those who defended them, and they never will. Perhaps more importantly, here is a community that has embraced its new home and is comprised of fair dinkum Aussies who love this wonderful land of opportunity and freedom. I am proud to call many Vietnamese Australians my friends, just as I am proud of my fellow Australians who fought the good fight in Vietnam. They have my eternal respect and gratitude, and the 521 who did not return will be remembered forever.

Sex Offenders Registration Amendment Bill 2016

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I rise to speak very briefly this evening on the Sex Offenders Registration Amendment Bill 2016. As Mr O’Donohue has so eloquently said, the opposition will be supporting this bill. I just want to put on the record my abhorrence of those who commit these vile acts. Nobody — should be violated in the way that these creatures violate women and quite often children and sometimes men as well. These offenders are not a lot better than animals — in fact I think it would be safe to say it is rare to find an animal that does what these creatures actually do.

As the father of three daughters, obviously their safety is my paramount concern. I see them and I see their friends, and it is my very strong view that they have an absolute and total right to walk the streets of our community in safety, and anybody who threatens that safety has to be dealt with and indeed dealt with very, very harshly. There is a community expectation that we as a government, via our police force and our laws, protect them and that we lock the offenders up and ensure that they are not in a position to reoffend.

I think we as a Parliament perhaps have to take a bit more of a proactive role in making it clear to the judiciary exactly what we want: that the rights of victims and potential victims trump those of offenders every time — every time. I am all for human rights and civil rights and all sorts of rights, but the fact of the matter is that the rights of sex offenders, once they have committed these evil acts, are — to put it kindly — limited. Certainly if the rights of the victims and those who would be seen as potential victims were threatened, then clearly they will win every time.

I see in this legislation there is reference — which I think Ms Pennicuik was making reference to — to offenders’ right to reference. I think we need to have some reference to that as well. I can understand why some people would want to keep sex
offenders’ names out of the public arena, but I have to say that in this area I think we have to, once again, put the rights of victims and potential victims over the right of offenders. For example, I think every parent has the right to know where danger is lurking. If I had a paedophile living next to me and my family, I would want to know about it. That is something that perhaps we can address in further legislation down the way a bit. With some of these civil libertarians their priorities are peculiar, to say the very least. We have to protect the innocent — we have to protect those who it is our role to protect — and I think putting the rights, the so-called rights, of sex offenders as our priority is just plain wrong. It is just totally, totally wrong.

I support this bill. In saying those few words tonight I am very hopeful that the government and the opposition will continue to work together to provide a safe environment for everyone and to ensure that these dreadful, vile, evil acts are eliminated, if not completely obliterated, from our society.

COUNCIL | Adjournment
14 April 2016

Point Cook schools

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Education. I bring to the minister’s attention a news release of 7 May last year. This release was put out by the member for the Assembly electorate of Altona, Jill Hennessy. She says in that press release that as a result of funding by the government, and I quote:

Students in Point Cook are big winners in the Andrews Labor Government’s first state budget.

The budget includes funding for purchase of land for the promised Point Cook 10–12 school, with further funding to be provided in future budgets.

Now that sounds like a marvellous thing, but the question has to be asked: where is this land? Is it a guessing game in Point Cook as to where this land might be, if indeed this land has been purchased, and indeed whether a decision has been made to purchase this land. I think, given that previous Labor governments have given Point Cook the rough end of the pineapple for quite some time, we really need some action on this.

Point Cook desperately needs further secondary education facilities. We have a situation where many children from Point Cook are catching a bus to Bacchus Marsh to go to school, which is just insane. That is the truth. The minister looks surprised, but that is the truth. Many of them are actually catching a bus to Bacchus Marsh because the facilities just do not exist in Point Cook.

So I ask the Minister for Education to explain to the people of Point Cook — and to anybody else who might be interested as well — exactly where this land is that the government has supposedly purchased. I am told, as Ms Hennessy says, that the school is due to be completed by 2018, so I would assume that would mean that the building would presumably start pretty soon. Now, if the building is due to start pretty soon, then I would imagine that the land would also be a part of the deal. I am asking the minister to explain to the people of Point Cook what is going on with this land, if indeed this land exists, and if it does exist, where it is.

COUNCIL | Petitions
3 May 2016

Abortion legislation

To the Legislative Council of Victoria:

The petition of certain citizens of the state of Victoria draws to the attention of the house that because of the abortion legislation passed in Victoria in 2008:

- abortions are allowed to be performed up to the point of birth;
- babies in the womb who have reached the age of viability and older are being aborted;
- it is not necessary for medical care to be provided to babies who have survived an abortion;
- there is no obligation for medical professionals to facilitate the provision of access to appropriate services such as pregnancy support, counselling, housing, mental health and other such services for pregnant women experiencing physical or emotional distress.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Council of Victoria support the Infant Viability Bill 2015 introduced by Dr Rachel Carling-Jenkins which will rectify the problems with current law outlined above.

By Ms BATH (Eastern Victoria) (2986 signatures),
Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) (862 signatures),
Dr CARLING-JENKINS (Western Metropolitan) (2426 signatures), and Mr ONDARCHIE (Northern Metropolitan) (1965 signatures).

Laid on table.

Ordered to be considered next day on motion of Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan).

COUNCIL | Second reading
3 May 2016

National Electricity (Victoria) Further Amendment Bill 2015

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — It is indeed a pleasure to speak on this bill, particularly following my friend Mr Ramsay but especially following Mr Barber, because when I hear Mr Barber it sometimes inspires me to rise to my feet to rebut some of the more outrageous things that he gets away with or indeed attempts to get away with. But tonight I will resist that temptation because I know there is a

COUNCIL | Constituency questions
3 May 2016

Melbourne Autism Expo

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — Last Saturday it was my very great pleasure to attend the Melbourne Autism Expo in Ringwood. As the shadow parliamentary secretary for autism spectrum disorder, I had previously accepted the invitation to be an ambassador for this event, and as such I spoke at the official opening, along with the local federal member and my good friend Michael Sukkar.

The Melbourne Autism Expo was devised and organised by two mums, Larissa Hill and Natasha McArdle, who were ably assisted by an army of volunteers. I am sure they had no idea when they first began this process how successful they would be. When I arrived on Saturday morning the place was awash with people. Queues stretched as far as the eye could see. The Karralyka Centre in Ringwood is a substantial building, but it was bursting at the seams from the moment it opened until it closed.

Larissa and Natalie are very much the victims of their own success. They and their team are to be congratulated on their initiative and the execution of a wideranging event that met a huge demand in the community. Saturday again showed that families with autism want information, it showed that families with autism want support, and I look forward to being part of the Guy government that will deliver both in spades.

Point Cook secondary school facilities

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — My constituency question is to the Minister for Education. As I hope the minister is now aware, secondary education in Point Cook is at a premium. Demand is growing almost on a daily basis. Given the government’s claim that it is now swimming in cash, I was staggered that no provision was made in the budget of last week for more schools in Point Cook. Given the obvious need for further secondary education facilities in Point Cook, will the minister outline what plans he has to provide for that demand, or has he totally deserted the residents?
keenness at this late hour for members to be elsewhere — namely, in bed asleep.

I will just make a reference, and I will agree with Mr Mulino on this occasion when he says that electricity is a very important commodity in our society. In fact I would go as far as saying that without electricity we would not have the civilisation that we now have. Indeed we would not have the standard of living that we enjoy in this country.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr FINN — Indeed. Thank you, Sir John Monash.

We would not have that standard of living that we enjoy. So I have to ask why the political left in this country wants to drag our standard of living down by slapping another carbon tax, which is a tax on electricity? This is a tax which is designed to force the price of electricity up, to provide a source of revenue for a government that is redistributing where it will, but a tax which will make life more difficult for the families of Australia.

In the state budget last week we saw this government in Victoria — and I use that term very loosely — impose its very own Victoria carbon tax. And we hear from the federal leader of the Labor Party that if he is elected on 2 July — if indeed the election is going to be on 2 July — that he will be slapping on a carbon tax as well. So lucky, lucky us! Lucky Victoria will be having a carbon tax not just from the federal government, as it had before, but a carbon tax from the state government as well.

Let us go back to 2013 when the proposition was put to the people of Australia: ‘Vote for this crowd and we’ll keep the carbon tax’ or ‘Vote for this crowd and we’ll get rid of it’. The people of Australia overwhelmingly voted for the Abbott government to remove the carbon tax, and it was not even up to the credit of the Abbott government that is exactly what it did. That is a legacy that Tony Abbott can be very proud of.

I have to again ask why the Labor Party, why the Greens, why the left of politics in this country wants to make life difficult for families, why they want to make life difficult for businesses, for industry, for employers and indeed why they want to slap a tax on jobs — or another tax on jobs. Have they not got enough, and do they not care about ordinary Australians who are struggling to pay their bills as it is? Why do these people want to slap another tax on that will boost the cost of a basic commodity such as electricity? Of course it flows through. It is not just the electricity bill. It flows through to everything — supermarkets, you name it. Everything will be passing it on to the poor old family trying to pay their bills, so I ask the Labor Party to consider that.

I know we cannot expect common sense from the Greens. That is pushing reality out there beyond all expectation, but I ask Labor Party members in the occasional moment when they might have some common sense to put the interests of Australian families out in the suburbs and in country areas first, to turf any prospect of the carbon tax at a federal level and to do away with the carbon tax that was announced in the budget last week. That is something that would be a positive contribution to Australian life and a very positive contribution to the welfare of this nation.

COUNCIL | Adjournment
3 May 2016

Footscray Hospital

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I wish to raise a matter this evening for the Minister for Health. I refer to the recent state budget, which did make an allocation for the Footscray Hospital, but this was a mere drop in the bucket compared to what is desperately needed to make this hospital of the standard that it should be.

I have raised this matter in the house before. I recall very early in my tenure as a member for Western Metropolitan Region visiting the Footscray Hospital and being absolutely shocked at what I saw and what I experienced, because I have to say to you that despite the best efforts of doctors and the nurses, who all do a wonderful job, what they have to work with there is not a lot better than what one would see in a Third World country. That is something that I think we should be ashamed of — that we would have a hospital serving a community which quite frankly should be bulldozed and rebuilt. It long ago outlived its usefulness. I refer to the building. As I say, the standard of care and the standard of healing and specialty offered to patients is right up there with any other hospital in the state. But the nurses and the doctors are working under some extraordinarily difficult circumstances because of the state of this decrepit hospital. It is something that I have to say we as Victorians should be ashamed of.

I ask the minister, given that the state government is apparently rolling in money, as it should be given the number —

Mrs Peulich — Rivers of gold.

Mr FINN — Rivers of gold indeed, Mrs Peulich — as it should be, given the significant tax increases that we saw in the state budget. Given that the state government has all this money, I ask the Minister for Health to allocate the money necessary to rebuild the Footscray Hospital. It is about time that Labor governments in this state stopped taking the money necessary to rebuild the Footscray Hospital. It is about time that Labor governments in this state stopped taking the money necessary to rebuild the Footscray Hospital.

COUNCIL | Constituency questions
4 May 2016

Western Distributor project

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — My constituency question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. I fear that the minister may not know the answer to any of the questions related to the western distributor as I further fear that he has been frozen out of having any say over this dog of a project. Confusion still reigns supreme among locals over almost every aspect of the western distributor. The time has come for some serious answers to local residents. Will the minister facilitate a frank and transparent flow of information to locals over this far from satisfactory but very expensive attempt to deal with traffic congestion in Melbourne’s west?

COUNCIL | Petitions
4 May 2016

Abortion legislation

To the Legislative Council of Victoria:

The petition of certain citizens of the state of Victoria draws to the attention of the house that because of the abortion legislation passed in Victoria in 2008:

babies are allowed to be performed up to the point of birth;

babies in the womb who have reached the age of viability and older are being aborted.

It is not necessary for medical care to be provided to babies who have survived an abortion;

there is no obligation for medical professionals to facilitate the provision of access to appropriate services such as pregnancy support, counselling, housing, mental health and other such services for pregnant women experiencing physical or emotional distress.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Council of Victoria support the Infant Viability Bill 2015 introduced by Dr Rachel Carling-Jenkins which will rectify the problems with current law outlined above.

By Mr YOUNG (Northern Victoria) (1029 signatures),

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) (1588 signatures),

Mr BOURMAN (Eastern Victoria) (1893 signatures),

Mr DALLA-RIVA (Eastern Metropolitan) (6635 signatures) and

Mr MORRIS (Western Victoria) (2608 signatures).

Laid on table.
Mr FINN — This is Comrade Marshall, Ms Crozier. So it does not surprise me to hear what he is trying to do to the CFA. There is no doubt that the CFA is trying to control the CFA; there is no doubt about that, and Mr Leane knows that. Honestly, to come in here and use as your basis the word of Marshall; good God, what is the country coming to? Could anyone take anybody seriously who comes in here and uses Peter Marshall as a basis for their argument? That is just a nonsense.

It has been a matter of record for 20-odd years that Peter Marshall and the UFU want to have the CFA smashed and the volunteers in the CFA. That is a fact. Nobody can dispute that. And here they are with the Premier in their pocket, and we well know why they have the Premier in their pocket. Firstly, the Premier of this state is a hardline, left-wing ideologue — the most left-wing, hardline ideologue we have ever had in the office of Premier in this state. He makes Joan Kirner look like a moderate. That is the fact of the matter.

Secondly, this attempt by the Premier to destroy the CFA as we know it is a payback for what the UFU did for the ALP in the lead-up to the last election. We all know what happened in marginal seats and indeed in some safe seats prior to the last election. We saw people dressed in firemen's uniforms going around on fire trucks intimidating, threatening and bullying people at polling booths and at street stalls. Wherever opponents of the ALP were gathered, these people would appear and make their presence felt in a way that was most unsavoury. Of course we well remember seeing at the last election the ALP how-to-vote card that featured a firefighter on it.

The fact of the matter is that Daniel Andrews — Dodgy Dan, the Premier of this state — owes the UFU big time, and the ALP too. This is a part of the payback. He is giving the CFA to the ALP, to Peter Marshall something that Marshall has always wanted, which is to control the CFA. He has always wanted to control the personnel within the CFA, and the volunteer network in the CFA has prevented him from doing that. So what does he do? He gets rid of the volunteers. For the Premier of Victoria to do that, I say, is a disgrace. It is not just a disgrace; it puts the lives of Victorians at risk, because without the work that the CFA does week in, week out but particularly during the summer periods, and without the presence of CFA volunteers, many more Victorians would die in fires. We live in one of the most fire-prone areas on earth. Without the CFA volunteers, we do not have a hope in hell of fighting those fires that we are faced with on a yearly basis. It is an annual thing. We have good fire seasons, we have bad fire seasons, but we always have a fire season. We need those CFA volunteers.

Here we have the Premier of this state coming in and attempting to smash a network which has been protecting Victorians for generations. It is not just about mistreating the volunteers; it is not just about degrading the volunteers as being unimportant, as clearly the Premier does; it is about protecting the people of Victoria. I know in my own situation — I am not in a particularly fire-prone area — it is good to know that the CFA station is not far away, because if a grassfire got going near where I live, I would not have a hope. There are so many people who are in that situation. Wyndham is bad; up around Sunbury and Bulla is bad. Constantly there are fires around Sunbury; we lose houses every year around Sunbury. That is something that the Premier does not care about. What he does care about is pleasing his mates. What he does care about is looking after his union buddies in the UFU, in this particular instance.

What the Premier also does not care about is his own minister. We have seen that. I have to say that what the Premier is doing to Ms Garrett should not surprise anyone given what he has previously done to Mr Somyurek. I suppose it is pretty mild by Daniel Andrews's standards. It is still a disgrace that a Premier would just turf a minister to one side and say, 'You don't matter.' I do not know how this government is going to resolve this issue. I do not know how its members can all sit in the same cabinet and not know how they can all sit in the same caucus, because we know that the hatreds within the ALP are very much alive, do we, Mr Leane? We know that the hatreds within the ALP are very much alive, but this is an issue that has brought them to the surface. This is an issue where they are bubbling over at the sides. Here we have a Premier who has dismissed his minister totally out of hand and has told his minister that she, her advice and her stand on these issues are just not required. It is just extraordinary. What it comes down to is protecting the lives and the property of Victorians.

One of my very first memories was of the Cressy fires, which I think were back in 1967. My father was off fighting the fires, and my mother cooked a batch of scones that could have fed a small army and headed over to feed the firefighters. It is one of my very early memories. I remember those firefighters with a great deal of affection, because they were, and are still, very much a family. These are people who depend on each other for their survival. How many times have we seen volunteers out fighting fires only to return home to find that that home is no longer there, to find that their own home has been burnt to the ground in the course of a bushfire? It is that time when the CFA rallies around to support those people.

This is a community that used to be — and I would like to think that it still is, but it certainly used to be — what Australia was all about. What we are seeing from this Premier is an attempt to destroy that, and I hope he fails. I sincerely hope he fails. As I said before, of all the appalling things he has done — the scrubbing of the east-west link and the blowing of a billion dollars; we could go on about all of the things he has done — this attack on volunteerism, this attack on the volunteers of the CFA, is clearly, in my mind, the worst thing that he has done. In doing this — if he succeeds — he will be putting at risk the lives of Victorians in rural areas, and he will be putting at risk the lives of people in the fringe areas around the edges of Melbourne, in places, for example, like where I live. The lives of my next-door neighbours will be put at
Western Metropolitan Region constituent

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing, the Honourable Martin Foley. The issue concerns correspondence I have received from a constituent, Louise Sadler. This is an issue that she has raised with me and others. It concerns a property she owns in Maribyrnong, which was rented by the Department of Health and Human Services. The issue concerns the property’s state of disrepair when it was returned to her in May 2015. Ms Sadler explained to me in an email how much she was expecting and how much it cost to actually fix up the property she is talking about.

The concern I have tonight is that Ms Sadler has issues. She has been doing work in the CFA...
Given that the government currently, as it proclaimed in the recent budget, apparently has shiploads of cash — given that it is absolutely rolling in money — it would be able to put that money into some public transport in the Avondale Heights area. I ask the minister to put in place immediately plans to extend the rail line up Military Road to Avondale Heights.

**COUNCIL | Constituency questions 24 May 2016**

**Goonawarra Primary School**

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — My constituency question is to the Minister for Education, and it follows a visit I made last week to Goonawarra Primary School in Sunbury. Goonawarra is an area that historically has suffered a number of social problems. Principal Alan Fairweather told me the combination of a welfare officer with a school chaplain had worked wonders in helping many children facing myriad difficulties. The problem is that Goonawarra Primary School has been funding the position of school chaplain since the end of 2014. That is how highly it values this position. As this is a significant impost on the school’s budget, will the minister provide funding to Goonawarra Primary School so it can continue the important work of its school chaplain?

**COUNCIL | Members statements 24 May 2016**

**Safe Schools program**

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — We can still smell the whiff of perfume from Mother’s Day, so it is appropriate to consider the importance of parenthood. Good parents nurture and protect their children and strive to give them every opportunity in life. To have the great fortune of being born into a family with good parents is the best start in life. Many single parents should also be proud of the often gargantuan effort they put in. Given the universal recognition of the importance of parents to the future of our next generation, I was staggered by the comment of the Premier recently when he let it be known that that high regard might not be so universal after all.

When confronted by concerns of parents about what their children would be taught at schools, he called those parents bigots. When confronted by parents worried about a social engineering program put together by a hardline Marxist, the best our Premier could do was to spray them with abuse. To love and care about one’s children does not make any parent a bigot. To express justified concern about the so-called Safe Schools program does not make anyone a bigot. Daniel Andrews should be ashamed of himself for this foul slur. While he is in the mood for apologies, the Premier should apologise to every parent in this state and he should hang his head in shame.

**COUNCIL | Second reading 24 May 2016**

**Crimes Legislation Amendment Bill 2016**

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I rise this evening to speak on the Crimes Legislation Amendment Bill 2016. As has been mentioned, the opposition will not be opposing this bill, but I must in the process of speaking on this bill express my very deep concern about what is happening in the area of law and order in this state. We are in a situation where crime is in many areas rampant. It is totally out of control. In fact ‘rampant’ might be understating things a little bit.

If ever any further evidence is needed that the government hates the police, just have a look at who has been appointed as Minister for Police. Here is somebody who is an entire failure. Wherever she has gone, whatever she has done, her entire political life she has failed. So what has the government done with Lisa Neville? It has made her the police minister. Is that not a sign for the world to see of what Dodgy Dan and his mates think of the police in this state? It is a disgrace that any government would put somebody like Lisa Neville in charge again.

The fact of the matter is that Labor has failed on law and order. Labor has been, as it always has been, a total, unmitigated failure on law and order. We have in this state people living in fear in their own homes. We have people who are at home watching television, playing with the dog, scratching the cat or whatever they are doing, and they are in fear of somebody coming in, kicking their front door down, smashing them up, taking their keys and stealing their car. This is something that people are genuinely afraid of right across the city of Melbourne, and it is only a matter of time before some of the crooks catch on, I am sure, in some of the regional areas as well. This should not be happening; this should not be allowed to happen.

We have gangs on our streets who are not afraid of the police. They are not afraid of the law. They have no fear at all of the police. I suppose when you consider that the police up to this point may not have been able to pursue them, maybe they are right to have no fear. Maybe they are justified in their antics and the way they get away with what they do, but the reality is that we have people living in fear in their own homes even with the security that people have. We all have, I am sure, secure doors. I am sure we all have secure windows. Even with the security that we put up around our homes, people are still afraid of what might happen and indeed what could happen any time of the night or day.

We hear about people getting up to have a glass of water in the middle of the night, or indeed to get rid of one, and walk into their kitchen and see blokes that have broken in. They get one to go on with — they are belted on the side of the head — and their car is stolen. In 2016 this is happening. This is not New York. In fact, if it were to happen, it should not be happening, after Rudy Giuliani’s crackdown some years ago. It would not be happening over there, but the fact of the matter is it is happening here.

We have a crime wave in this state, and this government has no idea about how to stop it. It has no idea about how to handle it — none, zilch. I have to say it has little interest. The fact that the government has appointed Lisa Neville as Minister for Police would indicate that it has little interest in handling the crime wave in this state.

We have people living in fear in their own homes, and that is just not good enough. I will give an example. Last Saturday night in my own electorate, in Point Cook, which is a very nice suburb — as I am sure Mr Melhem will agree, and I know Mr Ramsay, who was there very recently, will agree that Point Cook is a very, very nice place — there was a party, which is not unknown.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr FINN — No, Mr Ramsay was not at the party, not that I am aware of anyway, but there was a party. As the evening wore on the party was gatecrashed by thugs, by hoons, by lunatics — call them what you will — who went in and smashed the people in the house, absolutely smashed the house and made particularly unattractive gestures towards the neighbours with a view to continuing their rampages through their houses as well. Again that word came up — fear. There was fear in our streets. The police came, saw what was going on and left. This is what I heard from an eyewitness. That seems to me to be a very strange way of going about things, and it seems to me that the police in this state are not given the authority to do their job.

Mr Ondarchie interjected.

Mr FINN — Exactly right, Mr Ondarchie. They are not given the resources, and they are not given the authority to do their job, and they need both. How can we expect the police to protect us? They do not have the police numbers. If they do not have the cars, if they do not have the vans, if they do not have everything that they need in order to do their jobs, how can we expect the police to do that? So we had that situation just last Saturday night in Point Cook.

Mr Rich-Phillips made reference before to what happened at Moomba this year. We have all been to Moomba. It is one of the most delightful times of the year, apart from Richmond winning. It is one of the more delightful times of the year, and we get our families and get some considerable joy from going into the Melbourne festival in the day. It was that time of the year where Melbourne is at its best, and you expect to be able to go in there and enjoy the festivities and be a part of what is a wonderful festival. But not this year. We had gangs running amok, and people ran in fear for their lives.
Again I use that word — fear. That is the word, wherever we look in this state, that pervades. Fear of the very people we live with — these thugs — these gang members — who are running our streets in this state.

Again nobody seemed to be able to do anything about it. Police did not do much about it. They checked the video and then no more. That is all very well. Trial by video is a marvellous thing. We will check the video and find out who did it, but it is not going to help you if somebody has got you in a headlock and is smacking you in the face and trying to walk around you down the street. We need to actually prevent these things from happening, not catch those who did them after you have got out of hospital. It is not good enough. Again we have a situation where law and order has broken down in Victoria, and again the government has not got a clue. This government does not have a clue how to restore it or what it needs to do to restore it.

We then move on, and Ms Fitzherrbert made reference. I think it was a little bit earlier today, to the drive-by shooting that occurred near her office. Unfortunately these are not uncommon. We find frequently that there are shootings now — there are drive-by shootings, there are shootings of people. The use of firearms, presumably illegal firearms, is through the roof. It is interesting, because if somebody had a legal firearm and it was out of a safe or out of an area where it should be, the police would undoubtedly come around and pick it up, but the police do not seem to be able to catch up with illegal firearms, and they are the ones that are causing most of the trouble these days. Again, the police do not have the resources or the authority to do their job. Again, it is the responsibility of this government to give the police both the resources and the authority, and it has not. This government has failed yet again. Here we have a situation where people are driving around shooting at other people, shooting at business premises and shooting into homes. It is just totally unsatisfactory. It is something that we cannot possibly handle under any circumstances allow to keep going.

Then we move on to the Apex gang, which is a continuation, I suppose, of the gang that kicks down your front door, gives you a smack in the head and pinches your car. That is, again, what is becoming almost the norm in certain parts of Melbourne these days.

You would think that faced with that situation a government would actually take this matter seriously, would take the matter far more seriously and would address it as a serious matter, but instead this government has appointed Lisa Neville as the Minister for Police. Clearly it is not taking the matter seriously, and you would not expect Labor to, because historically they have taken little or no interest in the gun laws. That is the situation we have had total contempt for authority, it has had total contempt for law and order and it has had total contempt for the police. As I have said in this house many, many times, the police are used by the ALP at election time, but once the election is over, Labor members no longer wish to know about them.

So we have a situation here where in my view our police are being mistreated rather than supported. I have been told to a number of friends of mine who are officers of the law, and they are deeply concerned about what is going on. Indeed a number of my friends have said to me, ‘I’m giving this up.’ They have said, ‘I’m out of here. I can’t cope with this any more.’ I think that really has to be addressed as a matter of significant urgency. Unfortunately on the scale of importance it just does not rate with this government.

I could go on for quite some time about the role of the judiciary in all of this. Mr Ondarchie — Please do.

Mr FINN — I have not got much time left. Of course we are suffering here in Victoria from the Rob Hulls legacy. Here was a man who was a Labor Attorney-General for 11 years. He made every judicial appointment for 11 years, and we are going to be suffering from that for decades — for probably a generation or two. I am just afraid to think that that might be continuing under this current Attorney-General. People might think that he is a moderate. They probably thought the same thing of Rob Hulls. Wrong!

I am starting to think that there may not be any such thing as a moderate in the ALP. Certainly when it comes to law and order, when it comes to these important matters of personal protection, of protecting people even in their own homes, the ALP just does not care. It does not want to know, and it puts it on the backburner. It is busy with its social agenda, it is too busy trying to twist children’s minds at school and it is too busy pushing the personal barrows of ministers. Of course with this Premier — and keeping in mind this is the most extreme left-wing Premier this state has ever had — we have a government that just does not care. I urge the government to start taking these matters seriously and make Victoria safe again.

COUNCIL | Second reading
24 May 2016

Serious Sex Offenders (Detention and Supervision) Amendment (Community Safety) Bill 2016

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I shall speak relatively briefly this evening on the Serious Sex Offenders (Detention and Supervision) Amendment (Community Safety) Bill 2016 because I think it is a matter that can be dealt with relatively briefly. It also getting on to 11 o’clock, and I doubt if people’s minds are perhaps operating as clearly as they were maybe 12 hours ago, so I will address this bill, as I say, relatively briefly.

I address this bill not so much as a legislator but rather as the father of three daughters. I have to say to the house that their safety and the safety of other women and girls must be, with regard to this matter, our only priority and our only concern.

That is the only thing that matters. The scum that regard themselves as having the right to help themselves to women and girls by way of sexual assault, in my view, really do not come into it at all. Their rights are forfeited when they commit these particularly appalling acts.

Given that the community is in no mood for sitting back and allowing this sort of thing to go unpunished, I think we have to, as a Parliament and as a community, go in a lot harder. We have to show these people that we will not tolerate this sort of behaviour under any circumstances. Sadly, the public has lost confidence in the judicial system; that is a sad fact of life. Far too often we see people getting before the courts and not receiving their fair whack — not receiving what a fair-minded member of the community would regard as justice — and this has to change.

I understand, as I mentioned in debate on the earlier bill last week, that this is the result of 11 years of Rob Hulls as Attorney-General and his appointing people to the bench that were of a like mind to him. They, generally speaking, are averse to justice. That is something that we have to be aware of. Unfortunately it seems to be becoming the norm in the next two or a half years, but certainly I am very, very hopeful that in the first and second terms of the Guy government we will see some radical changes with regard to justice in this state. I use that term ‘justice’ very deliberately, because I think justice is what we need.

At the moment we have a legal system that the majority of people in the community regard as being for lawyers. The legal system is there to provide lawyers with Mercedes-Benzes. It is there to provide lawyers with fancy houses. It is to provide lawyers with overseas travel. Justice, in the minds of most people in the community, does not come into this matter at all. That is something that needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency, because I think we cannot survive as a civilised society for very long if the community does not have faith in our judicial system; that is a fact of life. Far too often we see people who do not have faith in the judicial system be able to exploit the judicial system. In fact we cannot survive for very long as a civilised society if indeed we have a judicial system and not a justice system, which is what we would really like.

In the debate on this bill tonight the sex offender register has been spoken about. I would have no problem. I have to say, with making that public. I think that people have a right to know whom they are living next to. I think they have a right to know if some evil piece of scum is living in their neighbour hood. They should be able to be able to protect themselves; they have a right to be able to protect their families.

I think in the case of child sex offenders — and I am sure everybody in this house would see such offences as particularly disgusting — they in particular should be on a public register where people are
notified of their whereabouts so that they can protect their kids. As I said, as a father that is my main priority — protecting my children.

If I cannot find out where one of these creatures is — one of these sex offenders — I am struggling to do everything I can to protect my kids, and that is something that, as I said, needs to be addressed.

**Business interrupted pursuant to standing orders.**

**Sitting extended pursuant to standing orders.**

Mr FINN — I very much appreciate the minister going to that effort to give me the extra time that I need this evening, but I can assure him I will not need an hour, so he can relax. I will conclude my contribution at that point, but I am hoping that this legislation will go some small way to ensuring that our state is a safer place because that is certainly what we need at the moment. We need to be able to go back perhaps a little way to when we knew that if our kids went down to the park they were safe. We need to go back a little way to when our teenage daughters perhaps went out on a Saturday night or even during the day and they were safe.

We need to send a very strong message to anybody who contemplates involving themselves in any form of sexual assault, serious or otherwise, that their days of freedom are over and we will not, as a community, as a society, tolerate that sort of behaviour. Respect is something that is perhaps very much underestimated in our society, and I have to come down hard on offenders in order to re-establish that respect, then indeed that is something that I believe we must do.

Community safety is paramount, as are rights of people, particularly women, to walk the streets without being threatened by the sorts of animals who would pose the sorts of threats that we have seen over the years. The rights of those women too are paramount. I am very hopeful that this legislation will go some way to ensuring that those rights are reinforced and protected.

**COUNCIL | Constituency questions 25 May 2016**

**Taylors Road management**

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — My constituency question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and I refer the minister to the ongoing lobbying by the Delahay Action Group on the topic of Taylors Road, particularly west of Kings Road. Traffic on Taylors Road has grown exponentially over recent years, and VicRoads has not given it the attention it deserves. This is not the first time I have said this; in fact I think I have raised this matter a number of times in this house. The removal of the roundabout is very welcome indeed, but more attention is urgently needed. I ask: will the minister transfer responsibility for all of Taylors Road to VicRoads?

**COUNCIL | Second reading 25 May 2016**

**Infant Viability Bill 2015**

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — Rising to speak on the Infant Viability Bill 2015 this afternoon I have to say how disappointed I am that we have only dedicated a little over 2 hours to this legislation, because I think it is a very important bill — one of the most important bills that has come before this Parliament for a very, very long time. It is good legislation. It is designed to save babies, it is designed to help women, and I very warmly commend Dr Carling-Jenkins on her efforts in putting this bill together and bringing it before this house.

Saving babies and helping women — it is hard to believe that anybody could oppose concepts such as that, but as we have already heard today that is unfortunately the case. Certainly the majority of people in the general population are very much opposed to late-term abortions. Every poll that has ever been taken has shown that the majority of people are opposed to late-term abortions.

Ms Springie interjected.

Mr FINN — That is right, Ms Springie, they are.

Ms Springie interjected.

Mr FINN — Late term; yes, absolutely. Even in the United States, which Mr Mulino made reference to with Roe v. Wade, where they have had abortion on demand for 40-something years and 50 million dead babies as a result, the polls show that people are against late-term abortions.

This bill seeks to protect babies. I use the term ‘babies’ because my Latin at school was not all that flash and it still is not now, so I will use the word ‘babies’. It seeks to protect them from 24 weeks. There is nobody — I do not care who you are; I do not care what you hide behind — who could deny that babies of this age are tiny living human beings who deserve to look at them. If they were born today, they would most probably live — almost certainly live — given the appropriate care and attention. They have got little arms, they have got little legs, they have got little noses and eyes and ears — everything that you and I have got.

To quote something that is often thrown at me by the Greens, the science is settled. These babies are human beings. They are little people who are deserving of our protection, and we cannot continue to say, ‘It is very clear in the short time that I have to speak on this bill today that a vote against this bill is a vote for late-term abortion. It is a vote to kill a viable, live baby who would otherwise survive if born alive. It is a vote for the current situation of abortion until birth in this state, and that, I think, is barbaric and totally unacceptable.

Perhaps we should ask ourselves as members of this Parliament — as members of the human race — under what circumstances should we kill a baby? Under what circumstances would we kill a baby? Some say, ‘What about sick babies? What about babies with disabilities? Surely you have to have abortions for those?’ My view is that if somebody is sick, you treat them; you do not kill them. That is what abortion does: it kills them.

If a child has a disability — and I feel very strongly about this — you love that child. You bring that child into the world, you do not kill that child because that child has a disability. As the father of a child with a disability — and a severe disability — I regard it as subhuman to try...
to rip the humanity of a child of anybody away because they have a disability. This is the most evil way that man has invented to rip the humanity of anybody at any time in their life. Unfortunately late-term abortion for the reasons of disability adds to the view of a lot of people in this society that people with disabilities are somewhat less than human, and that view unfortunately is a fact of life.

Babies are born alive, as we know, as a result of what the abortion industry calls a ‘failed abortion.’ Some of the stories we have heard about babies being killed after these failed as 24 weeks are abhorrent. This bill addresses this outrage against humanity.

We desperately need more support for women. Last Saturday afternoon at the rally out the front I met little baby Tobias. Little baby Tobias was about three or four months old, and he was listed to be another victim of the abortion industry, but his mother was given the support and help that she needed and that she did not know existed, and she was able to go on and have Tobias. Tobias today, let me tell you, is a very happy and a very healthy little boy. It was wonderful to meet him on Saturday.

Late-term abortion of course aggravates the trauma for mothers and the medical staff involved. We have already heard from the Royal Women’s Hospital on that matter over the years. Abortion is not a gift to women. Indeed Planned Parenthood — hardly a pro-life organisation — refers to late-term abortion as a side-effect of abortion. Wow — a side-effect! Professor Priscilla Coleman of the United States surveyed 260,000 women around the world, including Australia, and her conclusion is that 10 per cent of all depression in the world is caused by abortion. The impact of abortion on women is often long lasting. The later the abortion, the greater the impact. One day I am sure a future parliament will gather to apologise to generations of women for presenting abortion as a panacea to all their woes.

Abortion as a panacea to all their woes. One day that stain will be removed. Thousands, maybe millions, of babies are operated on in utero they are anaesthetised to prevent them from feeling the pain, so why would we assume that a baby from 24 weeks on would not feel the pain as they are cruelly killed in an abortion? Partial birth abortion is one of the most evil ways that man has invented to kill another human being. It is evil beyond words but legal in Victoria.

This is the first attempt to give Victorian babies the rights that they deserve and Victorian women the support that they need, but I assure you it will not be the last. Abortion until birth is a blight on Victoria. It is a stain on our state and it is a stain on its people. One day that stain will be removed. Let us begin that cleansing today. Win, lose or draw on this bill, the battle will continue and justice will one day prevail. Thousands, maybe millions, of babies lives depend on it, and we will fight for them.

School bullying

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I wish to raise a matter this evening for the attention of the Minister for Education. I am sure the minister is very much aware that bullying is a major problem within our schools, and I think it is safe to say that it has been a major problem in our schools for an very long time. It causes untold distress to children and to young people as they are growing up. Indeed it can lead to young people harming themselves, and that is something that we have to try to avoid, obviously, at all costs.

Something the minister might not be aware of is that children and young people are bullied for a number of reasons. It is not all for one reason. People who wear glasses are bullied, people who cannot play football are bullied, people who are too short are bullied and, indeed, if you ask the Premier, people who are too heavy are bullied. This is something that needs to be addressed. The last thing we need to have is a situation where these bullies grow up and think of themselves and express their bullying attitudes in those new positions. If you do not rectify the situation at school, you might have, for example — purely for example — the Premier of a state bullying those around them. This is something that really needs to be attended to, I believe, as a matter of urgency.

The state’s current alleged antibullying program does not have the confidence of the people of Victoria, and it does not have the confidence of the parents of Victoria. What I am asking the minister to do is to develop an antibullying program that will cover all possibilities, not just one. As I said, people are bullied for a whole range of reasons. I think this is something that is long overdue. It is something that has probably been overdue for as long as I can remember — for 40 or 50 years perhaps. I ask the minister to take that on board, to direct his department to come up with an antibullying program with credibility, an antibullying program that caters for all children and young people who are being bullied for myriad reasons.

Abuse in disability services

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) presented report, including appendices, together with transcripts of evidence.

Ordered that report be published.

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I move:

That the Council take note of the report.
Ross-Soden, for dealing with the members of the committee, which was in many cases on a par with herding cats. Trying to get everybody together in the one spot at the one time was a challenge. I offer my heartiest thanks to all those staff members, and I sincerely hope that this report will be picked up and used by the government.

The Minister for Public Transport. The minister has publicly indicated that the Deer Park level crossing that I have previously raised with her is not a part of the government’s program to remove level crossings. Despite pleas from the community, the best the minister can come up with is to say that minor changes to the timetable will create stable services. I ask the minister: what on earth does that mean, and how will it improve the Deer Park level crossing?

Deer Park rail level crossing
Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — My constituency question is for the Minister for Public Transport. The minister has publicly indicated that the Deer Park level crossing that I have previously raised with her is not a part of the government’s program to remove level crossings. Despite pleas from the community, the best the minister can come up with is to say that minor changes to the timetable will create stable services. I ask the minister: what on earth does that mean, and how will it improve the Deer Park level crossing?

Confiscation and Other Matters Amendment Bill 2016
Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I rise this afternoon to speak on the Confiscation and Other Matters Amendment Bill 2016. In doing so, I indicate that the opposition will not be opposing the bill. It seems to be legislation which is aimed to make the job of Victoria Police easier, and that to my way of thinking is a very good thing indeed. I have often spoken in this house of the need to give our police the authority they need to do their job. It is all very well to send our police out onto the streets and tell them to protect us, but if they do not have the authority of the Parliament to do that, they are pushing a very unfortunate substance up a very steep incline.

I think something that we as legislators should take very seriously indeed is the authority that the police have to do their job. The confiscation powers that are already in the Confiscation Act 1997 and the Criminal Organisations Control Act 2012 are a good start. I think to be able to disrupt criminal activity by way of confiscating various goods is indeed a very worthwhile and very helpful thing. A lot of these criminal organisations build up significant wealth — I suppose ‘wealth’ is the word — over a period of time. It is very good indeed to give Victoria Police the authority to confiscate what we are talking about.

We are also talking in this bill about the power with respect to bikie gangs. My view is that we cannot go in too hard against the bikie gangs; we have to go in much harder. Perhaps I put that the wrong way — we should be going in much harder against the bikie gangs. I note that when Campbell Newman was Premier of Queensland he introduced legislation up there that did cause a fair bit of consternation in parts, but he most certainly got rid of the criminal elements that pose such a threat in that state.

We have to remember that it is bikie gangs in Australia generally that are to a large degree responsible for the manufacture of ice and various other drugs. People following what I have said about this over the years will know that I have a very strong view on what should happen to people who conduct business in the dealing of drugs, particularly the manufacture of drugs. Quite frankly, I think that, whether they be federal or state, should have the power, the authority and the resources to smash these bikie gangs — to actually destroy them and make sure that they do not come back. I do not think that we should be too worried about all the civil rights of those involved in the manufacture of drugs. When we consider the damage, the destruction and the death that these people cause, particularly among our young people, I have no hesitation in saying go in hard, and the harder the better, because these people are scum. They are the lowest of the low.

I really believe that we have to show that we are fair dinkum. We have to show that we are serious when we take on these people, because they are members of vast criminal organisations that do not have any qualms about rubbing our noses in it and rubbing the police’s noses in it if they get the opportunity. That is not something that we should let happen. Whatever the result, the judiciary might actually catch up to what the police want to do as well. It is all well to tell our police to do their job, to go in and to smash these bikie gangs and smash these criminal organisations. It is all very well for our police to bring these people to a court of law and have them charged, to prepare briefs and to prepare a case, only to have a judge sitting on the bench give the offenders a tap on the hand and let them go. That is not something that I think is sustainable in our society. It is certainly not acceptable to the overwhelming majority of people, and certainly here in Victoria that is something that happens far too often.

That, as I have pointed out many times over the last number of years, is a direct result of the legacy that Rob Hulls left as ours after his 11 years as Attorney-General. We have heard about branch stacking and the loss of Rob Hulls took it a little bit further — he was actually involved in bench stacking — and as a result we have been stuck with magistrates and judges who, quite frankly I have to say, just are not doing their job. Their job is to protect the community and their job is to ensure that justice is done, and I do not think they have been doing either.

While the police have increased powers as a result of this legislation, and whilst they have a clear responsibility to go in and I have to say put their lives at risk against these people, because unfortunately the mongrels have no hesitation in shooting off a volley of gunfire or using other weapons, I would hope that the judiciary, particularly in Victoria, is also clear about its responsibility and upholds its end of the bargain to ensure that our community is protected, that justice is done and that people who threaten the lives of our young people, of our children, are put away for a very long time.

I see that out in the western suburbs. Unfortunately we see it in a lot of suburbs — quite a few suburbs. I am told that it is very rare for a school to exist where drugs are not readily available, and I am not just talking about government schools, I am talking about private schools. And in fact in some ways it is more likely to happen in a private school because the market perhaps is there for it. That is something that —

Mr Herbert interjected.
Mr FINN — No, it is true. The minister laughs. I am not sure.

Mr Herbert interjected.
Mr FINN — It is not outrageous at all. The minister should go out and talk to the kids, and they will tell him where the drugs are, they will tell him how to get them and they will tell him how much they are.

We have a minister of the Crown over here who says that is outrageous. I agree with him that it is outrageous that it is happening; it is absolutely appalling that it is happening. The minister is not even prepared to accept that it is happening, but it is happening on a daily basis right around the state.

Mr Herbert interjected.
Mr FINN — I am not suggesting that the teachers are selling drugs, but there are lowlife scumbags whose school as schools as marketplaces for drugs. That is the fact. These people use schools as marketplaces for drugs. That is where the market is. That is where the kids are, that is where the market is and that is where they go. That is a fact of life. If the minister does not want to accept what is happening in the real world, then perhaps he should step aside and allow somebody who is in the real world to have some authority over what is happening in his portfolio.

It is, I have to say, quite distressing to hear a minister of the Crown just refusing to accept what is going on. It is just unbelievable in every way that this minister — —

Mr Herbert — On a point of order, Deputy President, Mr Finn just makes allegations out of thin air. When he said drugs in private schools were far more rampant I said that was outrageous, and if he really thought that he should name the statistics and name the schools. It was nothing to do with what he is accusing me of.
Mr Finn — The point that I was making was that perhaps — I said perhaps, by the way — the market is greater in private schools because as a general rule there is a bit more money there. Kids are a bit more flush with funds, and people who are selling drugs will obviously move to where the money is. That was merely the point I was making. It disturbs me that the minister has difficulty seeing what is going on out there, so it is not surprising that our judiciary would fail to be impressed by the case that the police make on a regular basis with regard to these matters.

This bill, I think, is a step in the right direction. I think it will go some way to providing some protection to our children from bikie gangs, from those criminal organisations that sell their deadly chattels on our streets, in our schools and wherever they can possibly sell them. I think that is a very, very good thing; but I just hope that the government will take this matter even more seriously in future. We have to take a very, very strong stand against these people. Bikie gangs are not just fat men on motorbikes wearing leather. More often than not they are active criminal gangs which are a danger to our community and a danger to our kids, and, as I said before, we have to give the police every power that they require to smash these gangs, to destroy them.

The opposition will not be opposing the bill. I hope that the spirit of this legislation will continue on to other pieces of legislation which will give the police and perhaps other law enforcement agencies as well the power and authority they need to do their jobs properly.
We never, ever get that sort of go from the Labor Party, because we know and everybody in the western suburbs knows that the Labor Party takes the western suburbs for granted. Everybody knows that the Labor Party uses and abuses the western suburbs. That is a fact of the matter. I have to say it is encouraging, from my point of view, people around talking to many different people, that people are actually starting to realise this and they are starting to realise that until such time as we have some marginal seats out in the western suburbs we are still going to be treated abysmally by the Labor Party — forgotten indeed.

The Labor Party attitude is, ‘They’re going to vote for us anyway, so why would we give them anything?’ That is why Labor does not give us anything, and that is a simple fact of the matter.

The greatest outrage, I think, in recent history of course was the scrapping of the east–west link, the $1.1 billion of taxpayers money that went down the drain. Only Dan and his so-called election pledge, that we might recall he told us would not cost a cent. He was right there: it did not cost a cent — it cost $1.1 billion. As a result of that the people of the west are stuck in the traffic every morning, every night, and quite often during the day as well.

I remember last year on the grand final holiday — Mr Dalidakis’s eyes lit up when I spoke about the grand final holiday. He is obviously not running a small business, or that would change very, very quickly. The great thing about Mr Dalidakis is that he does not really like small business. He wishes he had something maybe like tourism that would allow him to get on a plane a bit more often and fly around, as is his wont. I recall it was a public holiday on the day before the grand final last year and I was going to the grand final lunch in Williamstown, as I said, the day before the grand final. It is a big day too, I have to say. It was a very, very entertaining afternoon. I suggest to anybody who is keen on a big day, I suggest to anybody who is keen on a big day — and I especially suggest to anybody who is keen on a big day — to head down to Williamstown later this year on grand final eve, because it is a ripper.

I was travelling on the Western Ring Road project. Before the interchange the traffic was backed bank. We just came to a complete standstill. This was at 11.30 in the morning. We are not talking about peak-hour on a work day; we are talking about 11.30 in the morning on a public holiday. The ring-road was a complete disaster, and much of the West Gate Freeway was as well. But this is what we have come to expect in the western suburbs. The people in the west were actually very excited about the prospect that we might be getting some assistance with the east–west link. There was a great deal of excitement about that. But no. Our Premier decided for reasons that deal of excitement about that. But no.

As a result of this absolute preoccupation with inner Melbourne the Premier, Daniel Andrews, said to the outer west — and to the outer east for that matter: ‘You can all go to hell!’ He said, ‘You can all go to hell! I want to hear nothing more of you, and quite frankly, they did.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr FINN — I am not sure if it is a parliamentary term, but that is what he said. I wish he had not, but he did.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr FINN — He did say, ‘Go forth!’ I have to say it was a very dark day indeed in Victoria’s history when we had a Premier treat the people of Victoria in that way. As a result we have people travelling in from Werribee, Point Cook, Laverton and even from Altona and Williamstown who are stuck on the West Gate sometimes for hours. Sometimes when it is particularly bad people just turn around and go home, if indeed they can turn around. If they get the opportunity to turn around, they will turn around and they will go home. That is how bad the traffic is in the western suburbs of Melbourne. But does the Premier care about that? Not on your nelly! Does this Labor government care about what the people of the western suburbs have to put up with on their roads every day? Not even slightly does the Labor Party care about the people of the west.

I say to the people of the west, ‘If the Labor Party does not care about you, don’t you care about the Labor Party. You give it the same treatment. Turn your back on the Labor Party in the same way that the Labor Party turns its back on you.’ That, I think, would be of huge benefit to the people of the western suburbs.

I am just staggered that we have seen the scrapping of the east–west link and the government has presented us apparently —

An honourable member interjected.

Mr FINN — Has there been a deal done? Is something missed? Has there been a nod and a wink? Has there been some sort of elbow in the ribs? What is going on with Transurban and the western distributor? From what I can see the western distributor is a real wooler. It is a dog of a project. It is a shocker. It will do nothing for anybody except Transurban. If I had shares in Transurban, I would be one of the most enthusiastic western distributor supporters imaginable, because I know money is coming. Yet big, big money, as Mr Dalidakis was talking about earlier. More money than Mr Dalidakis could ever hope for in any budget would come my way if I was running Transurban or indeed if I was a shareholder in Transurban.

This project will do nothing to help the people of the western suburbs. This project will indeed provide for the western side of Melbourne what Hoddle Street and the Eastern Freeway provide for the other side of Melbourne. We know what that is like. Why the hell does any government want to go ahead and push that onto the people of the west? Unless of course they did not care, and that is something that we must always keep in mind. The treatment of the people of Melbourne’s west by the Labor Party is historically atrocious, and nothing has changed. As I say, that is a tragic fact of life.

Out my way, in the Sunbury electorate, we have seen —

Mr Morris interjected.

Mr FINN — ‘No Bull’ — that is the slogan for the next election. ‘No Bull in Sunbury!’ We saw the Labor Party betray the people of Sunbury by reneging on its promise, breaking its promise and lying in fact to the people of Sunbury about giving them their own municipality, the city of Sunbury, after it had said before the election that it would go ahead. After the election it was a very, very different matter. That is something that the people of Sunbury are not happy about at all.

Something else that they are not happy about is that we saw earlier this year the Minister for Public Transport, Jacinta Allan, try to rip V/Line services out of Sunbury, and that did not go down well with Sunbury people at all. Such was the outrage that that decision had to be almost entirely reversed — or almost entirely reversed. But I understand that will be reviewed after the federal election, as indeed a number of things will be reviewed after the federal election, including Dodgy Dan’s leadership, as I hear it. There are numbers being counted as we speak, with the knowledge that the federal election is less than a month away.

I hope that those in the government will take their responsibilities seriously. I understand they are under a lot of pressure at the moment, but that is what they have been doing. There is going to be a lot of fun and games coming up over the next few weeks, but I sincerely hope they will take their jobs very, very seriously. They have an enormous responsibility. They have a job to discharge, and this government owes the people of Victoria.

COUNCIL | Adjournment

7 June 2016

Country Fire Authority enterprise bargaining agreement

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I wish to raise a matter this evening for the attention of the Minister for Emergency Services. It has been a somewhat concerning and perhaps even distressing experience for me in recent times as I have travelled around my electorate to speak to a number of people, many of whom have been volunteers with the Country Fire Authority (CFA) for a very long time. While my region is Western Metropolitan Region, it reaches into areas which have long been covered by the CFA — places such as Sunbury, Caroline Springs, Werribee, Point Cook and Truganina. Everywhere I have gone during the last
few weeks there has been an enormous amount of concern expressed to me about the future of the CFA. Volunteers in the CFA are genuinely concerned about whether they will have a role in the CFA going forward. In particular it has been reported to me that volunteers have been bullied and intimidated by members of the United Firefighters Union. That has significantly added to the level of their concern, and I can certainly understand that.

The CFA is far more than a firefighting outfit. I live just around the corner from the Bulleen CFA station. I often hear the siren go off at various times of the night and day, and within 4 or 5 minutes the truck’s siren is heard as well. CFA units attend many, many road accidents. They go to clean-ups. They go to a whole range of incidents around the place, which I think would be regarded by normal people as pretty important to our community.

This degree of concern that has been expressed to me is a real worry to a great many people. We are not just talking about the volunteers; we are talking about their families, we are talking about those who work with them and we are talking about those who are associated with them on a daily basis. We are talking about many, many tens of thousands of people.

I ask the minister, who I know has gone into battle in cabinet for the CFA as we know it, to continue her efforts to fight for respect for the CFA volunteers, and indeed I ask her to keep up her efforts to fight to keep our CFA.

The PRESIDENT — Order! I am inclined to rule the matter out of order. As the member would know, the adjournment debate does not allow a member to urge a minister to continue doing something. I will give Mr Finn a chance to rephrase the final action.

Mr FINN — Thank you for that, President. I ask the minister to redouble her efforts to fight for respect for the CFA and to find new ways to impress upon the Premier the importance of her argument.

Country Fire Authority enterprise bargaining agreement

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — It does indeed give me a great deal of pleasure to rise to speak to support Mr O’Donohue’s motion. I commend him on bringing this matter before the house today. I was just thinking over the last few days how many times I have heard in this house and the other place members rise and speak using very extravagant language to praise the Country Fire Authority (CFA) and to praise the Country Fire Authority volunteers. Indeed I have to say I have done it myself. What I have discovered over the last week or two is that there have been some people who when they used extravagant language actually meant it and there have been some who did not. It seems the Premier of this state is somebody who does not mean it at all.

I cannot believe what is going on in Victoria at the moment. Who would ever think we would see the Premier of this state attack the Country Fire Authority? Who would ever think we would see the Premier of Victoria attack volunteer firefighters? Who would ever think that that would happen? But that is exactly what has happened.

What Daniel Andrews is trying to push through at the moment is nothing new. The United Firefighters Union (UFU) has been trying to control the CFA volunteers for a very long time. Volunteers are something that the left — the Labor Party and the unions — have some trouble grasping. The trouble is that you cannot unionise volunteers; that is the problem. You cannot unionise volunteers so they immediately have a problem. This has been going on, as I said, for a number of years. In the Herald Sun yesterday a former colleague of mine in the other place, André Haermeyer, a former Minister for Police and Emergency Services in the former government, related the story of how he had to offer his resignation to stop a similar situation developing back in the year 2000. So this has been going on for a fair while.

You have to wonder what Jane Garrett, the Minister for Emergency Services, is going through at the moment. Whilst I have some obviously significant political differences with Minister Garrett, I have to say that my opinion of her has been lifted significantly over recent times. She is somebody who has shown a great deal of guts, to put it quite bluntly, in standing up to a bully Premier and members of a bully trade union movement who are trying to Shaft the CFA, so I commend Minister Garrett.

Whilst Mr Leane was speaking before I was attempting to get him to comment on why Ms Garrett was so very much opposed to the agreement that he was telling us was all fine and dandy, that the Premier was all fine and dandy and that the Deputy Premier tells us is all fine and dandy. I wanted to find out from Mr Leane — and if anybody wishes to enlighten us, I would be very pleased if they would — as I would really love to know why Ms Garrett has the sorts of problems that she does with this agreement when everybody else in the Labor Party seems, or most other people in the Labor Party seem, to think it is all wonderful and certainly will do no harm to the CFA or the volunteers at all. Ms Garrett is somebody who many in the Labor Party have now turned their backs on. She is somebody who is referred to as ‘She who was Emergency Minister’. She is somebody who is on the outer limits. It is disappointing. I have to say, to see members of the sisterhood in the Labor Party turn their backs on Minister Garrett in this way. They should be doing exactly as they want to and they do exactly the opposite when it is convenient for them — and they certainly are doing that on this occasion.

Ms Mikakos interjected.

Mr FINN — I am a feminist, absolutely; no question about that. I have three daughters. I tell my daughters there is nothing they cannot do.

Ms Mikakos interjected.

Mr FINN — They can speak for another 15 minutes if they want to; that is what I say to them. I just say in conclusion in supporting this motion that the CFA volunteers have my respect and they have my admiration. I salute them and the work that they do — not just, as I said in the Parliament yesterday, during the bushfire season but right throughout the course of the year. I live around the corner from a CFA station, and quite frequently I hear the siren go off and the truck hitting the road shortly thereafter. They are a magnificent group of people who make a magnificent and huge contribution to our society. They should be respected, and the Premier of this state should stop his war on the CFA.

Sunbury police numbers

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — The house may recall that in the last sitting week I raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Police. I raise this matter for the Minister for Police as well. The matter I raised in the last sitting week was to ask the minister to facilitate the transfer of Diggers Rest into the Sunbury police region.

Mr Morris interjected.

Mr FINN — Indeed, Mr Morris, it does make sense. But what I had not taken into account was something that the police association brought to my attention very, very quickly. Mr Iddles, so they say they are going through at the moment is nothing they cannot do.

Ms Mikakos interjected.

Mr FINN — No, I am trying to do something. I believe the minister referred to the Chief Commissioner sufficient police numbers to protect the Sunbury area and the people in it so that perhaps in future
we might be able to get to a situation where Diggers Rest can come into the Sunbury region. In the meantime we just need sufficient numbers to protect the people of Sunbury and surrounds, and I ask the minister to do that as a matter of urgency.

**COUNCIL | Constituency questions**
**9 June 2016**

**Sunbury municipality**

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — My constituency question is to the Minister for Local Government. I refer the minister to her response to my constituency question of 9 February 2016. While I am grateful for the history lesson — and I find the minister’s particular bent on recent events relating to the government’s big lie to the Sunbury community interesting to the say the least — her response in no way answered my question or went anywhere near doing so. I therefore ask again: what role did the member for Broadmeadows in the Legislative Assembly; the Labor councillor for Sunbury, Cr Ann Potter; and/or the Australian Services Union play in the decision to leave Sunbury shackled to the City of Hume?

**COUNCIL | Adjournment**
**9 June 2016**

**Larmenier school**

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I wish to raise a matter this evening for the attention of the Minister for Education. It concerns the imminent closure of Larmenier specialist school in Hampton East, Victoria. This is a school which caters for children with autism and similar disabilities, and it has a particularly good record. It has been operated from various sites throughout metropolitan Melbourne since 1976 and was originally set up by the Sisters of Nazareth.

The school is a unique model within the entire education system and serves to support and educate disabled children with severe social, emotional and behavioural issues. The school focuses on two key areas: enrolment and outreach support. Firstly, students are removed from their mainstream schools and enrolled at Larmenier for a set period — generally 12 to 24 months — in which time an intensive intervention program is undertaken to modify behaviour and to support the family and the mainstream school to finally enable a successful transition back to the child’s mainstream school.

Secondly, the school, with its knowledgeable and expert staff, also provides outreach support to Catholic schools within the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne. This outreach includes education and upskilling for staff and provides support to the teachers and families through parent support group meetings conducted each term. Both of these components are crucial to the school’s viability and in ensuring it secures funding each year. The problem is, as has been explained to me by parents of children who attend the school, that on 12 August this year Catholic Education Melbourne has announced the school will close and teachers will be let go on 26 August. This seems to me to be an absolute tragedy, and it is obviously causing enormous grief for parents and students alike.

I know that there is nothing that we can do in this place nor the minister can do to impress upon Catholic Education Melbourne the need to keep this school open — I am well aware of that — but I really think that once this asset is lost, it will be very, very difficult indeed to replace, and I see enormous potential for this school in the state education system. We need more resources, not less, for families with children with autism, and if Catholic Education Melbourne will not keep this school open, and I think it is pretty clear that it will not, the government, I believe, should buy it and make it a very, very exciting and viable part of education for children with autism here in Victoria. So I ask the minister to direct his department to open discussions with Catholic Education Melbourne to purchase Larmenier specialist school so it can continue providing a very important extra service for families with children who have autism in Victoria.

**COUNCIL | Questions without notice**
**21 June 2016**

**Country Fire Authority chief executive officer**

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — My question is to the Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade representing the Minister for Emergency Services. Given the short time frame, it appears that there is a high likelihood to have been significant ministerial involvement in the appointment of the new CEO of the Country Fire Authority (CFA), so I ask: did the minister or the Premier direct the incoming CFA board to appoint Frances Diver as the new chief executive officer of the CFA?

**Supplementary question**

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I thank the minister. I am particularly looking forward to the answer to that one. Did the minister, the Premier or any staff in their offices talk to Frances Diver about the CEO role at the CFA prior to Lucinda Nolan’s announcement of her resignation?

**COUNCIL | Adjournment**
**21 June 2016**

**Australian Labor Party**

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — There was a time when the people of this state had some respect for the ALP, but that is all now a distant memory. It goes back to a time before the Premier of this state cancelled a vitally important piece of infrastructure to Victoria and billed the Victorian taxpayers $1.1 billion, not build the east-west link. It goes back to a time before the factional hit that set up then Minister Somyurek and left him lying face down in the cabinet room. It goes back to the time when the then minister Jane Garrett tried to do her job and was bullied into offering her resignation as a result. It goes back to before the Country Fire Authority board was sacked and this wonderful volunteer organisation that has done so much for this state was handed lock, stock and barrel into the hands of the United Firefighters Union.

Before all that Labor had some respect in Victoria. What really destroyed any respect anyone might have for Labor is its decision to direct second preferences in the Senate in the current federal election to a party that was formed to fight Christian influence in society and has recently declared war on the Catholic Church. The founders of the once great Australian Labor Party must be turning in their graves. By openly embracing religious bigotry Labor has sunk to a new low, one from which it will not easily rise again.

**Point Cook police resources**

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Police in another place. I have many times raised concerns about the number of criminal activities in the western suburbs. Once again tonight I was horrified to see on the television news activities in Point Cook that involved loons; that involved violent, vicious assaults; and that involved threatening the burning down of houses and general lawlessness. This, unfortunately, I am told, is nothing new. Unfortunately for the good people of Point Cook, they had some difficulty in actually getting the police there. If you are being attacked, if you are being harassed in the way that we talk about, then clearly you need the police, and they were unable to get there.

It is not surprising we have the sorts of crime figures we have seen over the last year rising significantly. For example, in Hobsons Bay, in the western suburbs, they got off well; they were the lucky ones. There was an increase of only 3.1 per cent. 

Honourable members interjecting.
Mr FINN — ’Only’ in inverted commas. Moonee Valley is up 5.7 per cent, Brimbank is up 10.8 per cent, Maribyrnong —

An honourable member interjected.

Mr FINN — Yes. Well, Brimbank — that is just mainly the council! Maribyrnong is up 14.1 per cent, Hume is up 18.4 per cent and Wyndham is up a massive 19.8 per cent. That is something that I find totally unacceptable for the people of the western suburbs. Something has to be done.

Something has to give here. Something is just not right. I believe the thing that is not right is the fact that we have very, very few police, comparatively speaking, given a very fast growing population.

What I am asking the minister to do is provide sufficient police for the western suburbs. I am asking the minister to provide sufficient police so that lawfulness can be restored in the western suburbs — throughout the west and particularly for the good people of Point Cook.

COUNCIL | Economy & Infrastructure Standing C’ttee, 23 June 2016

Melbourne Regional Landfill

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change. I am sure the minister is aware of Cleanaway’s proposal to build what will be one of the biggest tips in Australia, one that I am sure will be able to be seen from the moon. This is a proposal that has generated enormous opposition throughout the western suburbs in places like Deer Park, Caroline Springs — as I am sure Mr Melhem over there is only too aware — and surrounding areas.

I can understand why, because the current tip is only a fraction of the size of what is proposed, is a stinking hole in the ground which is causing enormous grief for residents of nearby suburbs. Many will say that tip should never have been built there, and I have to agree, but the fact is that it has been built there within dry-retching distance of residential housing. It is something that people should not be subject to in their own homes.

The campaign continues against the current tip. The campaign against the extension of the tip is very strong. Many, many thousands of people are supportive of that campaign, but some local residents have come to me and have a more far-reaching approach to this. They are wondering what will happen if indeed the planned extension goes ahead and the landfill is used. Will Cleanaway just get up and walk away, or will it attempt in some way to rehabilitate this enormous piece of land? So they have asked me to ask the minister to investigate and report on how much Cleanaway has put aside for the rehabilitation of this particular land.

I think it is bad enough that people face the appalling trench from this stinking hole in the ground for many years to come, so I think it is only a reasonable and fair thing that they be given some assurances that when Cleanaway is finished with the hole in the ground it will not just walk away but that it has put away substantial sums of money to rehabilitate the land. So I ask the minister to investigate and report back on exactly how much Cleanaway has put aside for this purpose.

COUNCIL | Adjournment 22 June 2016

Infrastructure projects

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I also commend the chair, Mr Morris, and my fellow members of the committee. We did meet frequently, it has to be said, and we did extensively examine a number of infrastructure issues. I thought it particularly interesting to hear the comments from Infrastructure Victoria that it in fact could not examine any piece of infrastructure unless it was asked by the government to do so. I suppose in this Danocracy that we live in that is something that we have come to expect, but I think the comment from Mr Leane today sums it all up. He has summed up the attitude of this government.

As people are wondering what impact the western distributor will have on their lives, as people are wondering what impact the sky rail will have on their lives, this government regards investigation of these issues as ‘good sport! Good sport! That is the attitude of this government towards the people of Victoria. To government members it is all just a bit of fun. I can assure you, President, that the opposition members of this committee will continue to investigate and to work very hard to get to the bottom of exactly what this government has in mind with regard to these infrastructure projects.

I personally want to know what is going on with the western distributor. I have asked, and asked and asked, and I still am none the wiser, because nobody can give me an answer and no minister will appear before the committee to give me the answers that we need. I assume they will not appear because they do not want to have good sport.

COUNCIL | Constituency questions 23 June 2016

Sky rail policy

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — My constituency question is to the Minister for Public Transport. I thank the minister for her answer to my question of 12 April regarding her intention or otherwise of using sky rail in the City of Moonee Valley. Sadly, she has failed to answer the question. Indeed, she has failed to even try to answer the question. This is a very important matter that potentially impacts on thousands of people. On behalf of those constituents, I ask: will the minister categorically rule out sky rail as a means of replacing level crossings at Puckle Street, Moonee Ponds; Park Street, Essendon; and Buckley Street, Essendon?

COUNCIL | Adjournment 23 June 2016

Bendigo Special Development School

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Education. I have to say at the very beginning that this is a very serious matter. It is one that I gave considerable consideration to before deciding to raise it tonight. It follows a meeting that I had with disability advocate Julie Phillips last week, and it concerns the Bendigo Special Development School and allegations that first came to my attention last year that children with autism were being locked in cages at that particular school. Since then an investigation by Justitia has been conducted and a report released on 18 March this year.

The allegations that have been brought to my attention I believe require another investigation — an investigation that is independent of the department and indeed independent of the minister’s office. We need this at more than arm’s length from the department because — I hate to say it — I think it has a vested interest in ensuring that certain things do not come out. We also have a situation where guarantees were given about confidentiality, only to have those guarantees withdrawn. When those guarantees were withdrawn, certain witnesses, including teachers, withdrew their allegations and their testimony to the inquiry.

Perhaps most important is that there were a number of matters that were not investigated and a number of allegations that were not investigated for reasons that are not clear to anyone, including that in classrooms there were numerous cages made out of pool fences and fitted with locks; that some children spent 50 per cent of their time in a cage in the classroom; that external pens — read ‘cages’ — were locked; that at least two students were tied to chairs; and that one child was restrained in a pusher and was strapped when travelling in a vehicle in something akin to a straitjacket. These are allegations that could not be more serious. We are talking about children who are extraordinarily vulnerable, who cannot defend themselves in many instances and who certainly need the protection of the state in this instance.

I ask the minister to instigate another inquiry, an independent inquiry, so that we can find out the truth about what is going on at Bendigo Special Development School.
FINN IN THE HOUSE

Speeches February to June 2016

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