



FINN IN THE HOUSE

Speeches February to June 2021



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Sunbury traffic lights

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan)
— My constituency question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. Minister, prior to the Premier's lockdown VicRoads spent 13 months installing traffic lights at the intersection of Gap Road and Horne Street in Sunbury. Local residents were greatly inconvenienced that entire time, many wondering if the government was trying to set a new world record for such an installation. They were relieved, and I have to say slightly surprised, when works finally concluded. I am sure the minister can imagine the shock of my constituents when the workers were back yesterday, with the accompanying traffic mayhem. Minister, how long will locals have to put up with this latest development?

Change or Suppression (Conversion) Practices Prohibition Bill 2020

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan)
— The Petition of certain citizens of the State of Victoria draws the attention of the Legislative Council that the Change or Suppression (Conversion) Practices Prohibition Bill 2020 places too little emphasis on protecting children from physical and emotional harm and over-emphasises their entitlement to choose their treatment for gender dysphoria.

Children under the age of 18 are not permitted to vote, purchase alcohol or cigarettes. Yet, this Bill permits children to choose serious, largely untested, medical treatments that can have irreversible effects. Under the threat of criminal sanction, it bans a 'wait and see'

approach or warning against irreversible medical intervention.

Promoting and protecting children's human rights is a complex matter. Decision-makers must carefully balance the rights of a child to make choices with what is in their best interest. Important questions must be asked about a child's capacity to provide informed consent and consider the significant risks associated with medical treatments for gender dysphoria.

Young people shouldn't have to carry the burden for consenting to their own treatment. Such decisions must involve open and honest conversations with the child, their family, health professional and community. This Bill risks silencing the loving and honest voices of family and community members.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Council vote against the Change or Suppression (Conversion) Practices Prohibition Bill 2020.

By Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) (3625 signatures).

A second petition presented on the same topic.

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan)
— The Petition of certain citizens of the State of Victoria draws the attention of the Legislative Council to the Change or Suppression (Conversion) Practices Prohibition Bill 2020. This Bill:

1. Will potentially make parents into criminals or domestic abusers, at risk of 10 years in prison, if they do anything less than fully support their young gender-questioning children in undertaking irreversible hormone replacement therapy.

2. Specifically names prayer as a criminal offence, also punishable by up to 10 years in prison.

3. Prevents same-sex attracted people asking for counsel to live faithfully according to their orthodox religious identity. Anyone counselling or providing pastoral support to help achieve this will be committing an offence and facing a potential jail term.

The Petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Council vote against the Change or Suppression (Conversion) Practices Prohibition Bill 2020.

By Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) (4101 signatures).

Olga Tennison

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan)
— Some people have a profound influence for the better on the lives of others. One such individual was Mrs Olga Tennison. Her generosity and support was directly responsible for the establishment of Australia's first research centre dedicated to autism in 2008, the Olga Tennison Autism Research Centre based at La Trobe University. Can I also say that I believe it to be the best in Australia. I recall the first time that I visited OTARC and the excitement I felt when viewing the work the centre was doing to assist families with autism. I have kept a very close eye on the wonderful work it continues to do. It really is an amazing place, an extraordinary place indeed.

It was with great sadness that I learned of the death of Mrs Tennison on 19 January. What an extraordinary legacy this extraordinary human being has left. Thousands will never forget what she has done, what she has contributed to so many. I offer my most sincere sympathy to Mrs Tennison's family and those that loved her the most. They can take consolation in the knowledge that she has made life better for many who otherwise would not have enjoyed that improvement. Olga Tennison, thank you. Thank you for all you have done. May you rest in peace.

Multipurpose Taxi Program

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan)
— I rise also to give Mr Barton's motion my support and to congratulate him on bringing this very important matter before the house today. It goes without saying of course that the Andrews government significantly botched taxi reform in this state, and many of the areas that Mr Barton has shown great enthusiasm for since he has been in this Parliament and indeed before are a direct result of the mess that the Andrews government made of the livelihoods of many people whose

lives and futures depended on the taxi industry. Many of them, as we know, were thrown out of work and were put in a situation where they had to sell their homes and where they had to suffer enormous financial hardship. In many instances their superannuation was gone. They had no future, no financial future.

It is just absolutely tragic. I have sat now I think on two or three inquiries into the taxi botch-up. Yes, Mr Leane said it was started by the Baillieu government. Indeed it was, but I tell you what, it was finished by the Andrews government—and did they finish it with an axe or what? It was quite extraordinary, just extraordinary, the way that it was conducted.

But the reason that I wish to have a word on this motion today is that I understand and I want to ensure that everybody in this house understands the importance of the multipurpose taxi program. I know myself from dealing with elderly constituents, dealing with elderly members of my own family, dealing with people with disabilities—some very severe disabilities, some confined to wheelchairs—that the multipurpose taxi program is in fact their lifeline. Without this program they would not be able to go out, they would not be able to visit their friends, they would not be able to go to their doctor and they would not be able to do their shopping. They would not be able to leave their home. That is something that I think is a matter that really should resonate with this Parliament, because it is an extraordinarily important service and I do not think it is given the credit quite often that is its due. My view is that it should be declared an essential service, because it most surely is that, as I say, for elderly people, for people with disabilities, for people many times who are ill. Without this program, they would be in deep and diabolical trouble. So it is important that this program works and that it works efficiently, effectively and with integrity. That is so important, that that is happening.

The fact that Mr Barton has felt it necessary to put this motion up today is in itself a sad reflection on the government. It is something that is beyond my understanding as someone who views these things from the perspective of people who need them. It is beyond my understanding as to why the government would not just give this

information to the Parliament. I mean, why? What are they covering up? What are they hiding? But then again, you know, this government is good at hiding things. This government is good at covering up; this government is good at lying. That is the simple fact of life. And here we have another instance, another case today of this occurring. As I say, I commend Mr Barton for putting up the motion, but, dear me, what a sad reflection on the Andrews government it is that he had to do that.

I urge all members to support this. I know that there will be members opposite who are not keen on supporting this, but I believe that they really have not got much choice at this point in time—and that is a very, very good thing because we have got a situation here where people in wheelchairs, people with severe disabilities, their lives depend on who is driving them around. If we do not know and we have no way of finding out how they are checked, how safe they are, how respectable they are—if I could use that old-fashioned term—if we have no way of deciding how safe these people are in the back seat of a taxi or an Uber, then we have got major problems. I think this is something that cannot be reinforced strongly enough: the safety of those people who use the multipurpose taxi program is paramount, and it must be paramount because we cannot afford to have people who will take advantage of the frail, the aged, the disabled—people with disabilities. I should not use that word disabled—people with disabilities.

We should not have a situation where people will take advantage of them in various ways. We can talk about ripping them off financially for the fare or much worse, and I do not have to go into detail about what would be much worse, but we can well imagine what some swine would do in those circumstances. We have to protect people who might be otherwise in danger, and it is so important that this motion is passed to ensure that we have access to the information so that we can be sure that people are safe in the back seat of the taxi or the Uber.

So I commend Mr Barton once again for moving this motion. I urge all members to support it. It should be I think, as they say in the classics, a no-brainer to pass this motion. I believe given the importance, given

the need for up-front knowledge, up-front information, this motion should be passed, and it should be passed with the unanimous support of this house.

COUNCIL | Constituency questions
03 February 2021

Derrimut Road duplication

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan)
— My constituency question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. I do not know if the minister has recently driven down Derrimut Road, but I certainly have. I was impressed by the improvements, I have to say, but was equally astonished as I drove along there by the sudden end of these improvements and the return to the single lane each way. I was again astonished when I heard reports the government has run out of money to finish the Derrimut Road duplication. Minister, Derrimut Road services one of the fastest growing parts of Victoria. Will you give a formal undertaking that the Derrimut Road upgrade will continue and give an estimated finishing date for the project?

COUNCIL | Adjournment
03 February 2021

West Gate Tunnel

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan)
— I wish to raise a matter this evening for the attention of the Minister for Planning, and those who have been paying attention will be aware that I have been expressing my very deep concern for quite some time about planning decisions surrounding the dumping of toxic soil at Ravenhall and at Bulla. I have also expressed my very grave concern, in particular with the Bulla dump, that housing is not far from the proposed toxic waste dump. We have seen housing developments pop up just 200 or 300 metres away from this Hi-Quality dump, as it is so called. 'Hi-Quality' is the name of the company, I should hasten to add, not a description of what they do. What I have been absolutely horrified to see over the summer recess is a new supposedly high quality—not related to the dump but another high standard—residential

development advertising its wares, and where might this residential development be? Right opposite the tip; right opposite the proposed waste dump—the toxic soil dump.

It is absolutely astonishing that any minister would allow a development opposite a proposed toxic soil dump. I mean, if you had to come up with a scenario where an environmental disaster was imminent, you could not come up with a better one than the one that the minister has put together in Sunbury Road. I do not understand what is going through his mind. I do not understand what is happening with the developments along Sunbury Road so very close to the proposed toxic soil dump. It is a disaster waiting to happen, and my very great concern is that for many years to come we are going to see people who buy homes there, who build there and who live there and their children suffering from some dreadful diseases as a result of this toxic soil. So what I am asking the minister to do is to ensure that no toxic soil is allowed to be dumped in Sunbury Road. The only way that we can avoid this disaster is to get it right away from the residential developments, and I am asking the minister to do just that.

**COUNCIL | Constituency questions
04 February 2021**

Millers Road traffic concerns

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan)
— My constituency question is to the Minister for Transport Infrastructure, and I refer the minister to major community concern about the impact on Millers Road of the West Gate Tunnel if and when it opens. Surveys conducted by Hobsons Bay council predict an extra 11 800 trucks per day on Millers Road when the West Gate Tunnel Project is completed. It does not take much imagination to understand the massive impact on locals of increased air pollution and greater danger on Millers Road. This is a matter that will impact many tens of thousands of people and needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency. Minister, what will you do to alleviate these community concerns?

**COUNCIL | Second reading
04 February 2021**

Change or Suppression (Conversion) Practices Prohibition Bill 2020

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan)
— In rising to speak on this bill today it occurs to me that what we see around here from time to time is quite amazing in its own way. I have been of the view for quite some time that if indeed we stay long enough around here we will see just about everything. I think today I might just about have seen everything, because what this bill has managed to achieve is in itself quite remarkable. It has created the most extraordinary coalition—and I mean I am talking about a broad coalition here—of opponents that I have ever seen on any issue in my time in this Parliament. The opponents of this bill include conservatives, civil libertarians, radical feminists, gay activists, a number of organisations representing medical professionals and an array of churches and religions that just might make this Australia's biggest driver of the ecumenical movement.

Can I just for a moment refer to some of the religions and the churches that have expressed opposition to this legislation. This is just some of them: the Anglican Church, the Catholic Church, the Presbyterian Church, the Board of Imams, the Seventh-day Adventists, Associated Christian Ministries, Christian Reformed Churches, Youth Alive Victoria; CRC Churches International, Crossway Baptist Church, Ethos, the Evangelical Alliance's Centre for Christianity and Society, Hindus, the Australian Christian Churches, the Coptic Orthodox Church, the Catholic Women's League, the Pakistani Cultural Society of Tasmania, Christian Schools Australia, the Australian Association of Christian Schools, the Institute for Judaism and Civilization, the Maronite Catholic Diocese of Australia, the Serbian Orthodox Church, the

International Network of Churches and the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils.

Now, I say that those are just some of the churches that have expressed opposition to this particular legislation. You have to wonder why this opposition is so strong, because this bill should not be controversial at all. This bill should be something that should sail through in about 5 minutes without any opposition, because none of us support the barbarity of the past that this bill seeks to stop. None of us support some of the practices that have been used on gay men and lesbians, what can only be described as torture, in the past—just appalling, inhumane and, as I say, just straight-out barbaric. None of us support that. Many of these ways of treating people of course are now illegal. We cannot use electrodes, which is a very good thing. There are a number of things that are illegal, and I would hope that most would use their common sense in ensuring that that barbarity of the past is well and truly gone. If this bill was just about that, I would be wholeheartedly supportive of it—but it is not.

This is an omnibus bill—the sort that this government is very fond of, where it puts in a good bit and it puts in a bad bit and you have got to take the whole lot. They have done it before, and they are doing it again now. Well, I think that is particularly dishonest of the government, and I am not going to allow them, as much as I can, to get away with it. Because this bill is an attack on basic freedoms. It is an attack on freedom of choice. It is an attack on free speech. It is an attack of freedom of association, an attack on freedom of assembly and an attack on freedom of religion. It is an attack on responsible parenting. I would like to think that my children could come to me with any issue at all—that they could sit down with me and we could talk about any and all issues, and I would be able to give them honest answers about my experience or how I felt on a given issue. What this bill does is actually criminalises that sort of openness between—

Members interjecting.

Mr FINN: Well, read the bill. Go and read the bill. I see Satan's little helpers over there getting very excited—but go and read the bill. Because that is exactly what happens, and parents and children deserve better. They deserve better

than this sort of legislation. I think it is just appalling. No parent should be criminalised for loving their kids—no parent should. I think it is despicable that this government put up this proposal today.

It is of course also an attack on doctor-patient confidentiality. Now, I have been told for as long as I can remember that the most important thing in life is the confidentiality, the relationship, between a doctor and his or her patient: 'You cannot interfere with a relationship between a doctor and his or her patient.' Well, here we have a bill, a government bill, which aims to do just that. I find it astonishing that this would happen. Every one of us should have the ability and the right to go to our medical practitioner and speak to him or her in confidence, without fear that they may be dragged off to jail. We all have that right—all of us, every single one of us. This bill actually takes that right away from a very vulnerable group in our society, and that is something that I find just appalling.

Equally we should—each and every one of us, if we are so inclined—have the ability to approach a priest, pastor, rabbi or imam to discuss matters that we feel may be appropriate to that relationship. It is extraordinary that we have a situation where if a minister, for example, were to say a few prayers in aiming to assist the decision-making process of someone, they could also be charged and they could also be criminalised. It is just beyond me. It is just beyond me how any government thinks it can get away with that. No government has the right to legislate anyone's prayer life. Get out of it. The government should just get out of that altogether.

Of course this bill is very much an attack on children. These children that we are talking about—many of them are quite young—would under this legislation be making decisions without the support or the advice that they need from their parents, from youth workers, from adults around them, who have the life experience that they need to help them in making decisions. We know that gender dysphoria is a condition that is dealt with very effectively by the medical fraternity. We do not need the sort of social engineering that this bill brings about. We have already seen a great number of children go to the children's hospital,

for example, confused about their gender.

Ms Terpstra: That's rubbish! Utter rubbish!

Mr FINN: Well, it is not rubbish at all. That is a fact. It has gone from half a dozen a year to well over 1000, as I understand it. That in itself is a worry. This bill is just going to add to that.

This is also an attack on the rights of gay men and lesbians to seek and to receive advice. This is just extraordinary. This government says it wants to protect gay men and lesbians, and it introduces legislation that does exactly the opposite. I have spoken to gay organisations within the last day that have expressed that very same view. That is something that they are appalled about, and they have urged me very strongly—and I am sure they have urged others very strongly as well—to vote against this legislation.

In a few weeks time, on 27 February, I will have been a member of the Liberal Party for 40 years. That is a very, very long time. On an occasion like this, it makes one reflect on why I joined the Liberal Party. It is very clear why I joined the Liberal Party: because I am committed to the protection and the promotion of freedom. That is what I am on about—freedom. Freedom is something that is so precious. It is so precious and it needs to be defended at all costs. This bill flies in the face of freedom on so many levels—on so many levels. Now, I will enthusiastically support the amendment put up by Mr O'Donohue because I think this bill needs to go back to the drawing board. We need to go back and have a talk to all interested parties. Let us go back and have a talk to the interested parties that were not consulted on this this time—the gay and lesbian community groups that were not consulted. There is an agenda at play here, which is all too obvious. It has nothing to do with stopping conversion therapy and the sorts of barbaric activities that I was talking about before. It has nothing to do with that at all. It is far more sinister and it is something that we should all be very wary of.

Now, we have all received, I am sure, a great deal of mail, emails and phone calls over recent weeks with regard to this legislation, and I want to thank every person who has sent an email or made a phone call. I appreciate them showing interest in

what we are doing in this place and I appreciate them showing interest in this state's future, because this legislation will have a significant impact on the future of Victoria. I want to congratulate everybody who has been involved, and I also want to congratulate the people who are out the front here on the steps on what is a relatively warm day—well, for this summer anyway it is a warm day.

Mr Leane: What are they calling for?

Mr FINN: They are praying.

Mr Leane: Are they praying for the same thing you are talking about?

Mr FINN: Minister Leane, they are praying for you, and I reckon you should go out and thank them because you may well need that prayer. I know I do. As I said, I will enthusiastically support the amendments moved by Mr O'Donohue, but I am unable to support and I will not vote for the Andrews government's attack on fundamental freedoms, on fundamental liberty, that this legislation is. I cannot and will not support this bill in its current form.

**COUNCIL | Committee Stage
04 February 2021**

Change or Suppression (Conversion) Practices Prohibition Bill 2020

*Contributions during the
Committee stage of the Bill*

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — Minister, I only have one question, and it may refer to clause 5.1, which you made mention of a little bit earlier. But what I am specifically asking—and I ask this because I suspect that in years to come a learned judge, possibly of the Supreme Court, will be looking at the Hansard transcript of the response to this question—is: what procedures exactly does this legislation ban?

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan)
— Thank you, Minister. What exactly is the position of the legislation with regard to those who seek advice—seek counsel—for their particular sexual disposition or queries with regard to religious or even parents' discussions?

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan)
— Yes, certainly, Deputy President. I am just wanting to know what the position of the bill is with regard to responses to requests for support or counselling—prayer, even. What does the bill say about a response to a request by an individual about counselling on their sexuality or indeed their gender?

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan)
— Minister, when you say 'cannot try to change them', does that mean that they must encourage them? What exactly do you mean by that? If, for example, somebody goes to them and says, 'I feel that I need a gender transition', and the person says, 'I don't think that's a very good idea', does that make them liable to be charged?

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan)
— I want to go back, Minister, to a comment that you made to Ms Bath a few minutes ago, where you said that you were very keen to get the bill passed. That is obvious, but you said that you were keen to get the bill passed at the expense of actually telling us how it would operate. I would have thought that the committee stage is the ideal time to tell us how the bill operates. What I am asking is: what is your attitude to what you can and will not tell us on this particular bill in this committee stage?

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan)
— Minister, Ms Bath asked this question and you sort of fobbed her off, so I will ask it again: how is this bill actually going to operate on a day-to-day basis? If this bill becomes law, how will this law operate on a day-to-day basis?

**COUNCIL | Constituency questions
16 February 2021**

Bulla truck traffic

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan)
— My constituency question is to the Minister for Transport Infrastructure. Minister, as we all know, Victoria is currently subject to the third lockdown by the Andrews government in less than a year. Walking my dog yesterday in Bulla, in one of the rare moments of freedom we are allowed, I could not help but notice two things: firstly, the lack of cars and smaller vehicles on Bulla Road; and secondly—and maybe the first point accentuated the second—the number of dirty great trucks carrying massive quantities of soil, presumably to be dumped in Sunbury Road and presumably from the West Gate Tunnel Project. Minister, was the soil in the trucks roaring through Bulla yesterday from the West Gate Tunnel, and if so, how does it fit in with the government's lockdown?

**COUNCIL | Petitions
16 February 2021**

Change or Suppression (Conversion) Practices Prohibition Bill 2020

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan)
— The Petition of certain citizens of the State of Victoria draws the attention of the Legislative Council to the Change or Suppression (Conversion) Practices Prohibition Bill 2020. This Bill:

1. Will potentially make parents into criminals or domestic abusers, at risk of 10 years in prison, if they do anything less than fully support their young gender-questioning children in undertaking irreversible hormone replacement therapy.
2. Specifically names prayer as a criminal offence, also punishable by up to 10 years in prison.
3. Prevents same-sex attracted

people asking for counsel to live faithfully according to their orthodox religious identity. Anyone counselling or providing pastoral support to help achieve this will be committing an offence and facing a potential jail term.

The Petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Council vote against the Change or Suppression (Conversion) Practices Prohibition Bill 2020.

By Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) (21 signatures).

A second petition presented on the same topic.

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan)
— The Petition of certain citizens of the State of Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Council that the Change or Suppression (Conversion) Practices Prohibition Bill 2020 is a gross government overreach and an intrusion on the rights and freedoms of Victorians who do not share the views and ideological constructs imposed by the Bill on identity, gender and sexuality.

These gender and sexuality constructs go against mainstream Islamic teachings and hinders Victorian Muslims from freely practicing their religion. If the Bill is passed to become law, Muslims and other Victorians who don't adhere to its enforced identity constructs will be subjected to direct and serious harm.

Victorian Muslims including parents, teachers, counsellors, medical professionals and others who don't affirm to the identity constructs of the Bill could be subjected to jail sentences and hefty fines.

The Bill does not strike a balance between protecting same sex attracted people from coercion and aversion practices and giving faith communities (including same sex attracted individuals) the freedom of consciousness to practice religion. All Victorians should have a right to autonomously adhere to religious constructs of sexuality, gender identity and religiously sanctioned sexual conduct.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Council immediately halt the Change or Suppression (Conversion) Practices Prohibition Bill 2020 and that faith communities be consulted.

By Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) (2931 signatures).

COUNCIL | Members statements
16 February 2021

COVID-19

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — Victorians have had enough. They have had enough of Labor's lockdowns. They have had enough of wondering why the Premier of New South Wales can effectively control the Wuhan virus without shutting down her state while Daniel Andrews cannot. Victorians have had enough of being told our testing and contact tracing is gold standard, when we all know it is really a deeper shade of brown. They are sick of the lies, the spin and the bullsh*t they are being fed by a government that just will not tell the truth. They are sick of the incompetence. They are sick of the false bravado of a Premier who would be hard-pressed to run a bath. They call him Captain Stuff-up. They are sick of his arrogance and contempt for the people of this state. They are sick of his refusal to apologise for his mistakes. They are sick of Daniel Andrews and his circus of a government destroying their future. Victorians have not just had enough; they have had a gutful.

COUNCIL | Adjournment
16 February 2021

Small business support

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I wish to raise a matter this evening for the Premier. I have to say it has been a pretty tough weekend for a lot of people out my way—not just out my way but I am thinking right around the state. From pretty early on Friday afternoon I started receiving phone calls from constituents. Unfortunately I could not go and visit them, because of course I was isolating as I spent almost a week waiting for a phone call or a text that never came. Nonetheless I was taking phone calls from constituents, many of them small business operators, and some of them in tears because they had been expecting this last weekend to be one of the biggest weekends that they had ever had.

They were really looking forward to it. They thought, 'This is going to get us back on our feet'. So they had gone out and they bought many thousands of dollars of food, of drink and of decorations—a whole range of things—predominantly in the hospitality industry. And of course they were ready. They had the staff ready, they had the food ready, they had everything ready to go, and then the Premier stood up on Friday afternoon and pulled the plug—pulled everything from under them. There they were, left with thousands and thousands of dollars of produce and no way to pay for it. As a result, there are a number who are at this point in time facing bankruptcy, and that to my way of thinking is just so incredibly wrong—so very, very wrong.

Now, I notice that the Premier has promised financial assistance. I noticed that the Minister for Small Business in question time today promised financial assistance. What I am asking the Premier tonight to do is to provide that assistance, because there are small business operators right across this state who are hanging on by their fingernails. Some have actually let go as a result of what happened on Friday, but there are others who are just hanging on by the skin of their teeth, and they need help. They need support. The Premier says it is coming. I am asking him to provide it.

The other thing I am asking him to do the next time he decides to shut this state down—I have no doubt there will be other times that he will, because that seems to be his wont—is to think ahead of the impact that this will have on so many people. I ask the Premier to take that into consideration before he shuts us down the next time.

COUNCIL | Constituency questions
18 February 2021

Ambulance response times

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — My constituency question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, I had a constituent call me yesterday who was very distressed. He lives in Point Cook, of course a booming area in the west of Melbourne. He recently suffered a stroke. His son called an ambulance, which took 90 minutes

to reach him—this is in Point Cook. The ambulance, when it finally got there, took him to Werribee, where he stayed in the ambulance in the waiting bay for 3 hours. It was an appalling situation where the time elapsed between my constituent's stroke and receiving the appropriate and much-needed treatment was approaching 5 hours. It is nothing short of a miracle that he is still alive. I am not shocked by much anymore, but this case genuinely disgusted me. Minister, is this another example of the gold standard health care provided by the Andrews government to sick Victorians?

COUNCIL | Reference
18 February 2021

Economy and Infrastructure Committee

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I rise to speak on Mr Barton's motion today, motion 485, and commend him on putting this forward to the house and commend him indeed on the great work that he has done over a long period of time in supporting those in the taxi industry in particular but also those who are dependent upon taxis and have been dependent upon taxis for a very long time. Of course that very much brings into account the multipurpose taxi program users. As somebody who has had a great deal to do with the disability sector for a very long time, I know just how important this particular program is and how we have to get it right—and we do have to get it right because of the number of vulnerable people who are dependent upon us getting it right. If we get it wrong, we are going to put those vulnerable people in danger. Whether it be in financial danger or physical danger it does not really matter; they will be in danger, and that is something that we must at all times avoid.

I think we have discussed in this house, not so long ago as I recall, this very issue, and I am pleased to see that Mr Barton has followed that up with this motion today. As a member and indeed as deputy chair of the Economy and Infrastructure Committee I very much look forward to examining this matter, to making sure that we do have it right, that the

government does have it right. As we know, we can examine these things, we can make recommendations, but ultimately it is up to the government. I would hope that once we have been through this process the government will take our recommendations seriously to ensure that the safety of which I speak is across the board, that nobody is put in a situation where either they do not have the transport that they need or the transport that they need in fact poses a threat to them.

I have no intention of going on any longer. I sincerely hope that the motion is agreed to. I commend, again, Mr Barton on putting the motion up. The opposition will not oppose the amendment. We are very happy to accept the amendment and also very happy to support Mr Barton's motion today.

**COUNCIL | Motions
18 February 2021**

Small business support

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan)
— It gives me a great deal of pleasure to move motion 492:

That this house:

(1) expresses concern at the state government's mismanagement of support programs for small licensed businesses, noting that at least 293 businesses were incorrectly paid and have been ordered to swiftly repay the department despite serious impacts on the viability of these small businesses resulting from COVID-19 restrictions;

(2) calls on the Minister for Industry Support and Recovery, the Honourable Martin Pakula, MP, and the Minister for Small Business, the Honourable Jaala Pulford, MLC, to urgently meet with representatives of these impacted businesses; and

(3) given the purpose of these grants is to support vulnerable businesses facing severe impacts caused by the COVID-19 crisis, further calls on the government to pause their harsh clawback until these meetings have occurred, at which point the government would be in a position to craft a fairer regime.

What this motion goes to and is at the very heart of is a fair go for small

business in this state, and that is something that this government just does not seem to understand. They— but particularly the Premier—regard small business as the enemy. We saw that last Friday when with just a few hours notice he stood up and cancelled the weekend, cancelled the next five days in fact, even though small business operators right across the state had prepared for a huge weekend. We had Valentine's Day—and I know Mr Rich-Phillips was expending extensively on that event. The number of restaurants and pubs that had bought up big on drink and food and all manner of entertainment to have a wonderful weekend all of a sudden were shot. And Daniel Andrews shot them.

Business interrupted pursuant to order of Council of 16 February.

**COUNCIL | Adjournment
18 February 2021**

COVID-19

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan)
— I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Health. It concerns an experience that I had last week, that I may have conveyed to the house a couple of times, about being stuck at home for six solid days after having been tested for the Wuhan virus and being promised that I would receive either a text or a phone call. But that of course did not arrive, and then I ended up ringing the coronavirus hotline some six days later, when they finally told me that I was negative. I was feeling particularly negative at that point, it has to be said. A letter from a constituent has brought back all those memories. She said to me:

I thought you would love to know about the 'great work' of our 'gold class tracing system'

I received a call from DHHS (missed two of their calls and answered on the third) they then said they were calling to assess 'how I'm feeling' and to potentially 'let me out of quarantine' after being a close contact to someone who has tested positive....

I had never been told I was a close contact to anyone, never been contacted by DHHS and have not been quarantining. When I told her all of this she put me on hold for 3 minutes and said she's not sure how to

deal with this and she will call me back to discuss further but in the mean time I need to stay home ...

that was 4.5 hours ago and I haven't received a call back. My business was forced closed for the last 5 days and I have just rescheduled everything for tomorrow onwards.

Great contact tracing system we have.

Isn't it just! That last line is dripping with sarcasm. This is a system that is quite frankly stuffed. As I said, I experienced it last week. I read this email that I received yesterday. I have received numerous emails. I have had numerous personal contacts from people, either on the phone or in person, who have told me about the horror experiences they have had with this contact-tracing system and indeed with the testing system, and it is really getting way beyond a joke. I mean, Melbourne Airport, as you know, is in my electorate, as indeed is Sunbury, and we have had breakouts in both of those places in relatively recent times.

You would have thought that given what has happened in New South Wales, where they do have it under control, where they are doing a particularly good job—and I was in Sydney before Christmas and I saw firsthand just what a good job they were doing—this government would understand that they need to do the same thing. So what I am asking the minister to do is to pick up the phone to speak to Gladys Berejiklian to ask her exactly what he needs to do to fix this bloody mess.

**COUNCIL | Constituency questions
19 February 2021**

COVID-19 airport arrivals

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan)
— My constituency question is to the Minister for Health, and this email that I am about to read reflects a number of concerns from a number of my constituents. It says:

My daughter travelled to Sydney last Monday the 8th February. Upon arrival they were only allowed to leave the plane 20 passengers at a time. Arriving passengers were separated from departing passengers, and they were met by officials who

checked their entry permits, asked them where they had been, showed them the list of hot-spots in Melbourne and asked if they had been to any of these ... There were police present, and all of the workers were in full PPE.

While she was in Sydney, she received a call from NSW Health who asked her to get a COVID test and isolate until a negative result was received.

She had the test in the afternoon; by 7 the next morning she had the result. Upon flying back to Melbourne the next night, she:

... was greeted by no one. No permit check, no temperature check, nothing!

Minister, how could you be letting this happen to people in my electorate?

Ms Symes: On a point of order, President, without casting a view on the actual matter that Mr Finn has raised, can I just confirm that the constituent you are referring to is in fact your constituent?

Mr FINN: As I understand it, yes.

Ms Symes: I only make the point as I had a constituent in my electorate with the exact, exact wording that you just read out, so I was just seeking—

Mr FINN: President, what I can say is that Tullamarine airport is certainly in my electorate.

**COUNCIL | Second reading
04 February 2021**

Education and Training Reform Amendment (Miscellaneous) Bill 2020

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — What a delight it is always to follow Mr Melhem, because I always sound so much better when he is finished, and that is a very good thing indeed. I rise to speak on the Education and Training Reform Amendment (Miscellaneous) Bill 2020. I think I have got that right. I hope I have got that right. This is a bill that the opposition will not oppose at all. In fact it is a very

important piece of legislation because this is a piece of legislation that refers specifically to the role of teachers in our schools. My view on this is very clear, and that is a good teacher cannot be beaten. If we could put good teachers into every position in the state and Catholic and independent systems, we would not have a problem in the world. A bad teacher on the other hand can go a fair way towards destroying lives. It never ceases to amaze me that you get some teachers who seem more concerned about telling kids about what their political views are than actually preparing them for life by teaching them the important things like the three Rs. That might be something that is a bit alien to members opposite but reading, writing and arithmetic is extremely important.

I have to say it does concern me enormously when I see kids leave school—sometimes even leave university—and they are semiliterate. And I have to wonder how you can do that. I really have to wonder how you can go through 12 years of school and maybe two, three, four years of university and nobody picks up that you are actually semiliterate. I do not know how that works.

But fortunately that does not happen to all, and in my own case I can share a personal experience with you. Back in the dim, distant past I was attending a Catholic school in the country and I was in that situation. I had completely fallen through the cracks, and a teacher—who later married my second cousin in fact—pointed out to my parents that things were not going as well as she would like with my education. My parents took me to the local state school, Alvie Consolidated School, down near Colac in case you are wondering. There was a teacher down there who I have spoken of in this chamber before, a bloke called Ken Dunne, who was just an extraordinary teacher, the sort of teacher that you would really like to think could be, should be, would be in every classroom in the state because if he was, we would have outstanding results on every front.

Ken Dunne got hold of me and he taught me things that I had not been taught before, or perhaps I had been taught before but I actually learned them that time, and that is a hell of a difference. For example, I will never forget his interesting way of teaching me how to read. At that stage my

reading was pretty abysmal and I really was not up to scratch at all. He taught me how to read by walking into class one day and holding up the Sporting Globe. I am sure Mr Leane will remember the Sporting Globe—it was the pink paper that came out I think twice a week from memory, Saturday and Wednesday. He held up the Sporting Globe and he said, 'Royce Hart has done his knee', and I of course was mortified. How old was I? I was about nine or 10 at the time, and Ken Dunne came out and held up the Sporting Globe and said, 'Royce Hart has done his knee'. Of course Royce Hart at that point had not done his knee, but I did not know that because I could not read it. So I actually had to learn to read to find out that Royce was okay, and that is fair dinkum, ridgy-didge.

I mean, that goes to show some of the imagination I suppose that goes into teaching somebody. You have got to find out what makes them tick, I suppose, before you can make that tick go faster, and that is what Ken Dunne did. Ken has unfortunately left us now; he left us a few years ago, and I went to his funeral up in Castlemaine. He went on to be a councillor up in Castlemaine and a prominent businessman up there as well, and he will always be, in my mind, one of the great influences on my life. I can say without fear or hesitation—I plead with members opposite not to hold this against him—that without him I would not be here. I can guarantee that because I would not have been able to fill in the application form—by the time he got to me I was pretty much in a bad way. Teachers like Ken Dunne I would like to think we would have more of, I really do.

I am not saying that teachers are bad—there are a lot of very good teachers about—but I am just saying that it is so, so important that we do encourage good teachers, that we do reward good teachers, and I think that is something that we should have a closer look at in terms of rewarding them. I think that we should reward good teachers. We should reward teachers on the basis of merit. If they are doing the job, if they are getting the results that we expect, they should be paid more than the ones who are not. I think that would be a fairly reasonable thing. If somebody is getting results, if somebody is a good teacher, they should be paid for being a good teacher. If somebody

is not such a good teacher, well, then they perhaps would not be paid as much. That is something that I think all governments should consider at some point. I have no doubt the teachers union will go absolutely feral, but it does not take much for the teachers union to go feral. That is an unfortunate fact of life, and we have seen that. It does not matter whether it is a federal election, it does not matter whether it is a pay dispute, it does not matter what it is—the teachers union will go feral. That is something that we have come to expect, and they never let us down. If ever there was an organisation that brings into disrepute the trade union movement, it is certainly the teachers union.

But to get back to what I was saying before, the role of teachers in children's lives is absolutely vital. I see from my two 15-year-old daughters, who are still at secondary school, the important role that teachers play in their lives, whether that be for good or bad. They tell me how good a teacher is or how a teacher is perhaps not up to scratch. It is very interesting to hear them and their friends talk about the various teachers. You know you have got a good teacher when kids actually look forward to the classes that that teacher teaches, and that is something that I think is almost a truism. I hear it from my two 15-year-old daughters every day. They are in separate classes now, but they report back, whether it be deliberate or not, on the various teachers that they have at school, and I get a fair idea of who is doing a good job and who is not.

It is really important that we have a standard that everybody adheres to because, as I said before, we cannot have a situation where kids are leaving school or university only semiliterate. We cannot have a situation where they can barely read, they can barely write and in many cases they can barely count—seminumerate as well. I remember some years ago up in Sydney in fact—so this is not just a Victorian thing, this is Australia-wide—a bloke who was an employer pulled out a file and showed me what would have been 100 job applications from kids for a job that he had advertised, and he said, 'Take a look at these, will you?'. And going on the job applications, I can honestly say to you I would not have employed any of them. It was embarrassing; it was

cringeworthy. I could not believe that anybody would be able to go through school and have that level of literacy. I mean, it was appalling. There was no grammar in many of them, the spelling was atrocious. There was no concept of a message being conveyed. It was absolutely dreadful. When I got back to Melbourne, I made it a point to go and see a few employers and ask them the same question about some of the applications that they get for jobs, and they told me the same thing, and that is really, really sad.

It is great that a child or a young adult has a great education and is able to read and write and is able to count, but that should not give them a great advantage over the other kids who cannot. Everybody when they leave school should be able to read, should be able to write and should be able to count and do those basic arithmetic things. It seems to me that governments—not just this one, but governments over the years—have lost the plot a bit in this regard. I am loath to use a cliché, but when we hear 'back to basics,' it is not such a bad idea. We have got this situation here in Victoria where kids can tell you how they can change gender but they cannot tell you how to spell their own name.

Ms Terpstra: Oh, come on! You were doing all right until then.

Mr FINN: Well, that is the truth. If you do not want to hear the truth, that is unfortunate, but I will tell you the truth—that is what is going on out there. Kids are being mixed up and their brains are being totally confused by all manner of things, when they should be being taught the basics of what is going to get them through life. How do you get through life? How do you get a job? How do you even fill out a licence form when you get a drivers licence if you cannot read and you cannot write? These are things that the government, I am hoping, at some stage might actually concentrate on, because we need to do that. We hear the government talk about fairness all the time. Well, let me tell you, it is most unfair to those kids to put them out into the world when they cannot cope with the basics, when they have not achieved what we would expect all of them to achieve.

Ms Terpstra: On a point of order, Acting President, I just would like to perhaps remind the member opposite in his contribution that this bill is actually about the Education

and Training Reform Amendment (Miscellaneous) Bill 2020 that has to do with regulation of the Victorian Institute of Teaching. I notice his contribution is much more broad and wideranging than the context of the bill, and I would ask him to be relevant to the bill.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Bourman): Mr Finn, if you can just come back at least roughly to the bill, that would be good.

Mr FINN: I am talking about the quality of education, the quality of teachers and education, and that is what the bill is about.

Ms Terpstra: No, it's not.

Mr FINN: That is what the bill is about, so that is what I am talking about. It is a fairly thick bill—not as thick as Ms Terpstra, but it is a fairly thick bill nonetheless. It covers a lot of areas pertaining to education, pertaining to teacher quality, and that is exactly what I am talking about. If you do not talk about results, if you do not talk about the end product, then what goes before does not matter.

As I said before, you have got to have teachers who care, teachers who are totally and absolutely committed. We have a great number of those teachers, I know, but we have a few that we could do without. Unfortunately some of them are more intent on teaching their kids how to vote Labor or Greens or whatever silliness that they might be involved in rather than teaching them how to spell their name. I think that is a bit sad, and as I was saying before, it is very unfair to those kids who get through 12 years of education and they know how to put number 1 in the Labor Party box or give out Labor how-to-vote cards, and that is about it. It is very sad for them. It is very unfair. I am hoping that this bill might do something about it—I am not overly confident, but I hope so—and the opposition will in fact support this legislation.

**COUNCIL | Constituency questions
02 March 2021**

Bulla hill road dangers

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — My constituency question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. Last week I was driving down Bulla hill in Bulla when I saw a major

danger to motorists. On the other side of the road there was a sizeable pile of sludge. If any motorist heading up the hill had driven around the bend to be confronted by this sludge and had actually hit it, a tragedy may well have occurred. The sludge was clearly spilt from one of the hundreds of trucks now ferrying building waste to the Hi-Quality landfill in Sunbury Road. This is not the first spill on the Bulla hill, and I greatly fear what lies ahead if they are allowed to continue. Minister, what action will you take to protect motorists in my electorate from these sorts of incidents?

COUNCIL | Members statements
02 March 2021

West Gate Tunnel

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan)
— The people of Melbourne's west are keen to know the answer to one question: what the hell is going on with the West Gate Tunnel? The project has been cursed from its exceedingly dodgy conception. Let us not forget that Daniel Andrews was out telling the electorate about the \$500 million western distributor—'shovel ready' it was, you might recall, Mr Davis. At the same time he was doing a deal with Transurban to build the white elephant currently under construction. That is shysterism. The cost of this project has blown out by billions, and now it is two years late. I fear to think what the cost will be if this thing is ever finished.

Traffic havoc in many parts of the western suburbs is now a way of life as a result of the construction. It surely is only fair that locals are told how much longer they will have to put up with this. The toxic soil debacle is ongoing. Both the government and Transurban knew of the toxic soil issue years ago but did nothing. Now we see people in Ravenhall, Sunbury, Bulla and Bacchus Marsh expected to cop this poisonous crap in their neighbourhoods. And do not get me started on the role of the EPA in all of this. It is just an outrage. We deserve answers on this flawed project and its disastrous construction. The Andrews government has a responsibility to provide those answers.

COUNCIL | Second reading
02 March 2021

Public Health and Wellbeing Amendment (State of Emergency Extension) Bill 2021

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan)
— I rise to speak on the Public Health and Wellbeing Amendment (State of Emergency Extension) Bill 2021, and I sincerely hope that everybody was listening to Ms Shing. I hope that everybody was listening to her contribution in this Parliament today, because she told us exactly why this legislation should not be passed. Her arrogance on display today is just like the arrogance of the Premier, just like the arrogance of the government, that think they know it all and the rest of us do not matter.

Remember very early on when the Premier leaned over to the Leader of the Opposition in Parliament and said, 'You people are just irrelevant'. That is his attitude. He thinks the opposition is irrelevant, he thinks the business community is irrelevant and he thinks the people of Victoria are irrelevant. This is all about his power, and more specifically it is about his power to lock us down. That is what he is mainly concerned about. He has already done it three times. Today we decide if it will happen again, and again and probably again.

He has got quite a record, this bloke, this Premier of ours. He oversaw a hotel quarantine debacle, that led to over 800 people dying who otherwise would not have died. His contact tracing has been found to be abysmal. The whole hotel quarantine debacle has to be seen to be believed, and of course you have got the inquiry that was set up basically to establish that nobody did anything. I knew as soon as I saw the terms of reference what was going on. This was an inquiry that was set up to clear the Premier, so the Premier—as well as a number of other ministers; one minister did

not actually make it through the inquiry—could stand up and say, 'I don't remember. I don't know'. If anybody believes that, I have got a bridge in Sydney to sell them. There is no way that a man like Daniel Andrews, a man who is a control freak, who runs everything personally, did not know what happened with the hotel quarantine.

So here we have a man who is asking us for permission to give him extended power, basically for the rest of this year, almost until Christmas. What a prospect. Of course the three lockdowns that we have had so far have been absolutely and totally devastating. I recall spending many, many, many hours—many, many days in fact—on the phone last year during the lockdown speaking to people, whether they were people with families who were going through mental health crises or whether they were businesspeople who had lost everything and were just absolutely devastated, people who thought that there was no future. This is what this lockdown, what Daniel Andrews, did to people. They thought they had no future.

Large sections of this state were absolutely devastated, and no more so than the City of Melbourne. I hear the Lord Mayor talk about the City of Melbourne saying, 'Oh, it's great. It's going marvellously well'. I do not know what city the Lord Mayor is in, but she is certainly not in Melbourne, because anybody who walks through the City of Melbourne, as I do frequently, will see the empty shops. They will see the signs 'For lease'. They will see so many businesses that have hit the wall. And behind every business that has hit the wall, every small business that has hit the wall, is a personal tragedy, the tragedy of a businessman or woman, of a family, who have lost everything. I would not be proud of that if I were the Premier. I suggest the Premier should go out and have a look through the city—go for a walk through the CBD and have a look at what he has done to this formerly great city of Melbourne. Now he wants another nine months. We are currently living and have been living for almost a year under the constant threat of lockdown, and the Premier wants nine more months at this point.

We all know what is going to happen if he gets his way today—15 December will come along, and he will want to take it into 2022. We have this extraordinary situation

where the Premier has only one weapon; the only arrow in his bow is lockdown. Now, we have seen overseas, we have seen interstate, that lockdown is not the answer. Lockdown can be as devastating, if not more devastating, than the virus. We cannot accept that this is the future of Victoria going forward. Because if this is the future of Victoria going forward, we have no future. Nobody will invest in this state. Nobody will build businesses. Nobody will employ people. Already we have seen thousands and thousands of people flee this state since they were actually able to get out. They have gone to New South Wales, they have gone to Queensland, and I have to say at the moment, particularly if this legislation gets through, you can hardly blame them. Because we have been through the world's longest lockdown—the most severe and the longest lockdown in the world—here in Victoria, and it is purely because we have a Premier who is both power-hungry and incompetent. If he was competent, he would know how to handle this thing without destroying the place, but he did not, so he has destroyed the place. It is just absolutely extraordinary.

I was up in New South Wales, up in Sydney. I had a couple of days off—and that was all I had, I tell you—over the Christmas break. Just before Christmas I was up in Sydney when the Northern Beaches cluster erupted, and the Premier up there, Gladys Berejiklian—and I have to say I am not necessarily her greatest fan—handled it perfectly and certainly handled it far better than anything that we have seen here in Victoria. It does not matter about the Premier's negligence. All he has to do is look to New South Wales. All he has to do is ring the Premier of New South Wales and ask her how to do it, because she knows. She knows. She does not lock everybody down. She does not shut all the shops up. She does not put the entire state at risk as a result of her policies. Why can't we do in Victoria what they do in New South Wales?

Now, I have always been a proud Victorian, an exceedingly proud Victorian, and it hurts me to compare to New South Wales and come in lacking. It disappoints me, it saddens me, but not as much as it will if this bill is passed and Daniel Andrews once again locks us down, once again shuts us up. Every one

of us can recall being locked in our homes for 23 hours a day—23 hours a day. We were granted clemency by the great man, who allowed us out to go for a walk one hour a day. Now, he has done it before; who is to say he is not going to do it again if this bill is passed today? If I were a betting man I would head down to the TAB and I would have a few bob on that being exactly what is going to happen, because that is why he wants this bill passed. It is just extraordinary.

I had quite a bit to do with the Flemington flats situation because of course it is in my electorate. I was having contact from people who had been locked up in their flats. Remember there were thousands of people locked up with barely any notice at all; the Premier just got up at a press conference at 3 o'clock on a Saturday afternoon and announced that thousands of people were going to be locked up in their homes, they would be under police guard, and that is the way it was going to be until he decided otherwise. Those people in those units, in those flats, did not know when they were going to get out. Many of them did not have enough food to last. You know, the thing that really distressed me more than anything else about that is that many of the people in those flats in Flemington came from countries where democracy is not a given, where freedom is not a given. They came to Australia to be free. They came to Australia to get away from exactly what Daniel Andrews ended up doing to them. How must they have felt? How must they have felt, thinking that they had finally found the land of the free, that they had finally reached freedom at last, and here they were, with barely any notice at all, locked in their homes at the pleasure of the Premier of Victoria? What an appalling, disgraceful, despicable decision that was, and one, as the Ombudsman points out, that we should never, ever repeat.

The big question is: do we trust this government? Are we prepared to trust this government with another nine months of state of emergency? Not on your nelly. I cannot find anybody, apart from members opposite, who would trust this government, certainly not the people who have been writing to me in droves over the last week, begging me not to vote for this legislation. Well, I am here to tell them—I am very pleased to be able to tell them in

fact—that I will not be. That should come as no surprise to anybody. There is no way that I or anybody on this side of the house is going to give Daniel Andrews a blank cheque to do whatever he wants to us, to anybody, over the next nine months. This is a democracy. If he has urgent issues, let him come to this Parliament and let him explain to members of this Parliament exactly what the situation is. It is not like it is a war. The virus cannot hear. The virus is not going to take a different course of action because of something Daniel Andrews told the Parliament. Let him come back. Let him bring us into his confidence. Let him bring Victorians into his confidence, because the one thing that Victorians are furious about is that they have been ignored and they have not been told the truth. And they are angry. In fact I have been shocked at how angry some of the people that I have had contact with are, and members opposite will be surprised to learn that I have actually removed a number of posts on my Facebook page because some people were quite forthright in what they would like to do to the Premier. So I felt that it was important that I remove those.

It is important that we have parliamentary overview. This Parliament is important. The Premier—I know he thinks he is important. I know he thinks he is more important than all of us combined. I know he thinks he is more important than every Victorian combined, but he is not. This Parliament takes precedence. This Parliament should have a say in who is locked down and who is locked up. They called it a lockdown, and in fact we were locked up. This Parliament must have a say. Bring it back here, every month if you want. Let us discuss it, let us hear what you want and let us decide whether it is worth it. It is not a big ask. What is a big ask is being locked down potentially for another nine months. That is not on.

COUNCIL | Adjournment
02 March 2021

Ticketmaster **accessible seating** **tickets**

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan)
— My adjournment for this evening

is addressed to the Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers, and I raise with him a matter of some concern. As those who have attempted to use the Ticketmaster system will know, it can be a challenge even for those of us who are able and well to know what to do with these ticketing systems. But for those with disabilities it can be a real challenge at times. For that reason Ticketmaster has an accessible phone number for people with disabilities, which is great. The trouble is that during this COVID period it is closed. So basically what is happening is that a lot of people with disabilities are not able to access tickets to go to the sorts of games or theatre or whatever they might want to go to, and that is a major problem.

I have received an email from a constituent who says that she wanted to get tickets to the women's football, tried to ring the Ticketmaster accessible phone number and then discovered that it was not available during these COVID times. She is not happy, and I do not blame her one little bit. Now, I am aware that Ticketmaster is a private company, but I am hoping that they will also have to abide by the laws which preclude discrimination against people with disabilities. As this constituent of mine said in her letter:

Why is the Ticketmaster excluding a person with a disability from purchasing tickets?

Why are they allowing Ticketmaster to do this? Why is the State Government allowing this behaviour?

I reckon they are particularly good questions, and what I am asking the minister to do tonight is to intervene in this particular matter—to take Ticketmaster to one side and advise them of the law, advise them of their obligations under the law and ensure that the accessible phone line, the line that is most often used by people with disabilities, is opened as a matter of urgency. It is just not good enough that people with disabilities miss out on what many others of us take for granted. So I am asking the minister to intervene to provide information to Ticketmaster to ensure that they do the right thing by people with disabilities and that they do in fact put back in operation their accessible phone number for tickets—and do it as a matter of priority.

**COUNCIL | Constituency questions
03 March 2021**

Derrimut Road duplication

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — My question is also to the Minister for Transport Infrastructure. I had previously directed this to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, but apparently this road is not a road that the minister for roads has responsibility for. So I will, as I say, refer it to the Minister for Transport Infrastructure. I will say I do not know if the minister has recently driven down Derrimut Road, but I certainly have. I was impressed by the improvements, I have to say, but I was equally astonished as I drove along by the sudden end of these improvements and the return to the single lane each way. I was again astonished when I heard reports the government has run out of money to finish the Derrimut Road duplication. Minister, Derrimut Road services one of the fastest growing parts of Victoria. Will you give a formal undertaking that the Derrimut Road upgrade will continue and give an estimated finishing date for the project?

**COUNCIL | Motions
03 March 2021**

Small business support

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — Acting President Gepp, it is indeed a great thing to see you back in the chair and looking hale and hearty and looking forward to a great year for the Tigers ahead, I am sure. It gives me a great deal of pleasure to move:

That this house:

(1) notes the devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on small retail and other businesses in strip shopping centres in metropolitan Melbourne, and in particular central Melbourne;

(2) calls on the Andrews Labor government to urgently release:

(a) a package of measures to support Melbourne's central business district, particularly businesses and jobs in the retail and hospitality sectors; and

(b) a support package to prevent further decline in metropolitan strip shopping centres and revive these centres as local community activity and employment districts.

I do not think it has to be said that the lockdowns that we have experienced here in Victoria over the past year have had a devastating impact on many sections of the community, few more so than the small business sector. Big business seems to have got by quite well, as big business has a tendency to do, but small business has been hit hard. I just have to go to a local shopping centre—and I spend a lot of time visiting shopping centres in my electorate and visiting constituents in the shopping centres in my electorate—and I am horrified at what I see constantly, where the businesses that have just been holding on are letting go. They are going to the wall. They have held on for as long as they possibly can, but now they are in a particularly bad way and they just give it up.

As I said yesterday in the debate on the state-of-emergency legislation, these are not just businesses that we are talking about, these are people who, in many cases, have put their lives into building a small business. These are families who depend on the income from that business to pay their mortgage or to pay their rent, to send their kids to school, to pay off their car, to go on holidays—to do all the things that many of us who get paid on a regular basis take for granted. There is something that perhaps members of the government here in Victoria do not actually accept, and that is that a pay cheque every week or every fortnight for a small business operator is not a guarantee. I recall when I ran my own business some years ago that when I first began it was in fact quite a harrowing experience waiting for the money to come through to see if we could pay the electricity bill or the gas bill or indeed buy food for the family. And there are hundreds of thousands of families throughout the state who feel the same way. The reality is that the lockdowns during the pandemic impacted their ability to survive, both as businesses and as family units, and the pressure on them has been absolutely enormous.

Now, I am aware, tragically, of a number of people who could not take that pressure anymore and decided that they just could not live anymore, and they took unfortunate

actions. It is just tragic that that happens, and that of course is a tragic reflection on the dreadful, dreadful times that we have just been through. There have been—and will be—a number of people who are untold victims, I suppose, of this pandemic. We talk about the 800-plus who died in the nursing homes, but I am putting money down that we will not talk about those who could not take it anymore and ended their own lives. Unfortunately I suspect we might not ever know the full numbers of those people who have done that. They have done that because, I am assuming, they have given their heart and their soul to something for such a long period of time and all of a sudden it has disintegrated before their eyes.

This has happened right across the state. There does not seem to be much difference between country areas, metropolitan areas or indeed the city itself. The CBD, central Melbourne—it is heartbreaking to walk through the city. I love Melbourne. I have always loved Melbourne. I think I always will love Melbourne. To walk through the CBD now, to see all the empty shops, to see all the signs up saying, 'For lease'—you know, there are some streets where every second shop is empty in the CBD in Melbourne. It is just horrifying that this has occurred.

I do not think that the government fully understands the impact that this has had on people. I do not think the government has any idea, in fact, what small business operators have gone through during the course of the lockdown. I do not think that the government has any understanding at all of the needs of small business or the pressures of small business or what has happened to small business and those who rely on small business to survive over the last 12 months. Of course it is not just families, it is not just owners, because small business is the biggest employer in the country. You know, we have got big business and, as I said, they have survived pretty well. They know how to look after themselves, and good on them. I have never believed that we should go out of our way to support big business because they are more than in a position to do that themselves, but small business is a different thing altogether.

You know, there are hundreds and hundreds of thousands of people who rely on small business for their employment. Apart from

the owners of the small business and the operators of the small business, there are the employees who have lost their jobs as well in so many instances. I have spoken to a number of people who have lost their jobs over the last six, seven, eight months. They are in a position where they do not quite know what they are going to do. You know, some of these people are in their 50s, and unfortunately in this country at the moment when you get to 50 they throw you on the scrap heap. Irrespective of how much experience you might have, irrespective of how much knowledge, how much intelligence or how much common sense you might bring to the table, you get to 50 and people say, 'Well, we don't really want that sort of person here anymore.' And that is very sad, but there are a lot of people out there who have worked in small business all their lives and who are now in a situation where they are unemployed and cannot find a job. They cannot find a job because a lot of the businesses that would normally employ them are not there anymore.

I recall not so long ago walking down Elizabeth Street. There was a suit store almost opposite the Commonwealth Bank on Elizabeth Street. That suit store had been there for as long as I can remember, and I have been going to the CBD for a very long time. That suit store had been there for a very long time. I was walking down Elizabeth Street, and I said, 'I'll just have a look and see what they've got in the window.' There was nothing in the window. The suit store was gone. They had gone out of business. That is just one of so many that are no longer there, and of course their employees were gone as well. So members opposite should not just think about small business operators being victims of this; it is employees, some if not many of whom would be union members—and that might be something that will attract the attention of the government, because that seems to be the only thing that they care about at all.

I think it is vitally important that we get these businesses up and running again. As we know, there was recently a five-day shutdown at just a few hours notice, and a number of businesses that were hanging on by their fingernails at that point threw their arms in the air, gave up and walked away. They

are not coming back—they are not coming back. If anybody thinks that just because you enter lockdown everything will go back to normal the day after next, they are having a lend of themselves. That is not the way things operate. It is certainly not the way small business operates, and it is not the way that we are going to see victory over the situation that we currently have in Victoria. It just staggers me when I see and I hear members of the government get up and talk about how the government is spending billions of dollars on this and billions of dollars on that: 'The government's doing this, and we're going to employ this many.' The fact of the matter is, the only way we are going to have recovery in this state or in this country is through a thriving private sector. It is the only way that we are going to recover.

I wish that the government would take this on board. I heard the Treasurer, Mr Pallas, the other day, or not so long ago, talking about how the recovery is going to be led by the government; it is going to be almost a public float, as it were, of the economy, led by the government. But that is not sustainable. You hear members of the government talking all the time about sustainability, but the fact of the matter is that what they are proposing, what they are talking about, what they are trying to do is not sustainable. And the fact that we now have or will have very shortly somewhere around a \$155 billion debt indicates to anybody who is even mildly paying attention that it is not sustainable.

We need to get people back in business. We need to get business going again, particularly small business in this state and in the CBD. Melbourne was such an exciting place. It was such a thriving place not so long ago. Now, even if you go down Little Bourke Street, you are struggling to find somewhere to eat. It is one of the culinary capitals of the South Pacific, and you are struggling to find somewhere to eat. So many businesses need the support to stay open. Some businesses, as I say, are gone—gone forever—and that is tragic. But there are some businesses that, with a little bit of help, with a little bit of support from government, will hang on. They will be able to employ those who otherwise would be without a job. They would be able to pay tax and make their contribution to the world.

You have got to remember with that \$155 billion debt, the only way that we are going to pay that off is through taxes. But if nobody is paying taxes and the debt keeps going up, we are going to find ourselves very, very quickly—if indeed we are not already—in a situation where we are gone for all money as a state. I remember vividly back in 1992, certainly in the late 1980s and the early 1990s, when we all thought Victoria was a lost cause. I tell you what, back then it was positively healthy compared to what we are looking at now. I never thought I would see a premier who would make Joan Kirner look good, but Daniel Andrews does.

If it was Daniel Andrews's idea to repatriate Joan Kirner and to restore her to her rightful place, he has done a damn good job, because compared to him, she is a champion—she was a champion, a great premier. And back in those days small businesses were fearful every day. Every day small business operators would open up wondering if indeed their own banks were going to last the day. It was a pretty dreadful time. But what we have now in Victoria and what is coming, I fear, is even worse. That is why we must throw our support into small business. If we are going to spend vast amounts of money, let us put it where it will pay the most dividends. Let us give it to those who will actually provide for the state's future. Let us give it to those who will provide jobs, who will pay taxes, who will be ongoing contributors to our society. Let us do that, because if we do not, the state will go face down and, I fear, not come up.

Michael O'Brien is going to have a really tough job after the next election. He is going to have a really tough job, and Louise Staley as Treasurer will have an equally tough job—certainly one that I do not envy, I have to say, because the debt and the difficulties that the Liberal-Nationals government will face after the next election will be quite horrendous. It is all very well for members opposite to sneer, because they know—we all know—the Premier and the Treasurer will be out of here. Daniel Andrews and Tim Pallas will be out of here. They will be on their \$250 000- or \$300 000-a-year pension.

Mr Leane interjected.

Mr FINN: It is going up a bit—a half-million-dollar pension. Thank you, Minister. They will be well

looked after. As for the rest of Victoria, do they really matter? That would be the attitude of the Premier and the Treasurer: do they really matter? Mr Pallas will have his new Lexus, probably a bigger one than he has got now. He might even be able to afford his own chauffeur. But one thing that we do know, one thing we can be absolutely certain of, is that the people of Victoria—the workers, these people who the government says they represent—will be struggling because of what this government has left them.

It is beyond my comprehension to understand why they would not be propping up small business operators in shopping centres, in strip shopping centres, in shopping malls across this state, because that is the future. That is the future. Putting good money after bad into government programs—and do not get me started on the West Gate Tunnel—that are not going to pay us, that are not going to give us any real return on a long-term basis, is nonsense. It is nonsense to do that. We have to invest in those areas of the economy that are going to give us the biggest bang, and that is most surely small business. Small business is the future of this state, it is this future of this country, and if we do not invest in small business and ensure that it is a thriving small business sector, then we have not just failed small business, we have failed every single Victorian.

So I ask the government to take this on board—because it is something that Victoria needs, desperately needs—to get in there, to support small businesses, because if we do not it is going to be a very, very sad future for Victoria. So I ask all members to support this motion today. I had not intended to move this, but I am glad that the opportunity arose, and I did, because it is something that I feel very passionate about. As a former small business operator, it is something that I really feel strongly about. Because small business operators are people who put themselves on the line. They put their homes on the line, they put their futures on the line and they are the heroes, and the heroines, of our economy. They are not just the engine room; they are heroes and heroines, and each and every one of them—as far as I am concerned, and as my father would have said once, their blood is worth bottling. They are just magnificent

people, and we as a Parliament and you as a government have a responsibility to ensure that they are allowed to get on with their job, to protect what they have and indeed to make their contribution to the future of Victoria.

**COUNCIL | Motions
03 March 2021**

Small business support

Right of reply

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — Thank you, Acting President. I am sure that Mr Gepp will be delighted to know that he has been cut off to allow me to speak in the house in response to this debate today.

I think there is one thing that we can all agree on, irrespective of our political bent in this house today, and that is that the lockdown, the result of what we saw last year, has been absolutely devastating for small business. I know I have used that word 'devastating' far too often, but it describes exactly what is going on or what has happened to small business in this state. I think that is something that we can all agree on—that small business operators and their staff are suffering, from one end of this state to the other.

We have heard members of the government get up here and say, 'We are spending this, and we are spending that, and we are spending something else'. They love to quote how much they are spending. I have got news for them. It is not working. So how about we go back to the drawing board, we find out what small business needs and we try and provide that for them? Instead of, up here on high in Spring Street, telling small business people what they need, how about asking them and then providing some assistance in that regard? That way we might actually have some hope of keeping them afloat, of keeping them alive—those that have survived to this point.

Small business is the lifeblood of our economy. It means jobs. It means prosperity, and I am not just talking about for the operators. I am talking about for the entire state. I am talking about for the entire nation. Without small business, we would as a nation have sunk a long time ago. I think that given that small

business has suffered probably more than anything else—in fact I can say with certainty small business has suffered more than anything else, because of the lockdown that we saw last year, the longest lockdown in the world—it is amazing when you look at it that anybody survived at all. I mean, to have their doors closed at very little notice at all, to be shut up for months and months on end without any income at all, it is amazing that any of them actually survived. But some did. Some have reopened, and they are the ones that we now must ensure get some of the support that they need. Let us face facts: small business generally speaking do not ask for support. They do not ask for money. They do not want money. They do not want government interference. They want government to get out of the way and let them get on with their job. They want government to allow them to get on with the business that they are good at, and generally speaking that is something that I am very happy to support.

As Mr Atkinson said before, quoting the great Ronald Reagan, ‘Government is not the solution ... government is the problem,’ and that is more than often the case. But on this occasion, I have to say that we need to direct a bit more support—perhaps not a bit more, perhaps just directed in the right ways. Let us ask the question, ‘What do you need?’ Let us ask small business what they need, and then we can direct the assistance to the areas that they identify. I think that is very, very important. This government unfortunately has a reputation for not listening, for not asking, for having consultation that involves, ‘This is what you are doing.’ That has been the case right across the state now for the past five or six years, and that is unfortunate indeed.

But here is an opportunity to assist a group in the community that we desperately need to be strong and we desperately need to be powering ahead. Here is an opportunity to assist them. But first we must ask them in what ways can we assist them, because we might actually be spending a lot more money than we need to spend. The government might be spending a lot more money than it needs to spend. We need actually to find out where the money needs to go and direct it to that particular place.

So I urge members to support this motion. This should not be a highly contentious or political motion. This is a motion supporting small business, and I sincerely hope that every member of the house, whatever their political perspective might be, will support this motion and support small business.

Motion agreed to.

**COUNCIL | Adjournment
03 March 2021**

Tarneit train station

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan)
— I wish to raise a matter for the Minister for Public Transport, and it concerns Tarneit station in my electorate. It concerns also a communication that I have received from a constituent, Mrs Wendy Bitans, who is well known to me and is well respected in the local community. Mrs Bitans has written to me with a number of suggestions on a number of areas, but in particular I refer to one. I quote from her missal to me, and that is:

The ticket office is at the East end—

of Tarneit station—

instead of being in the middle of the platforms so that passengers can choose which end to board and alight from the train.

It is not good, she is absolutely convinced.

There’s a scramble at Spencer Street to get in to the last carriage, as that’s the one that is closest to the exit when you arrive back at night, tired. The number of passengers trying to alight all at once increases the journeys’ times, travelling back to Geelong. “Old” stations, built in the previous century always had ticket offices in the middle of the platforms. And the car parking is woeful ... not nearly enough spaces—we were instructed by pamphlets on the counters last year, to leave our cars at home and take a bus to the Tarneit station. All well and good for those living south of the rail line. There’re no buses at all for those of us who live north of the station. Yes, it is a long walk indeed and takes 10 minutes to return to

my car if I can squeeze it in at the Derrimut Road end of the station when I arrive off peak in the morning. The new shopping centre south east corner of Leakes and Derrimut roads only allows for 3 hours’ parking. And it’s quite a long walk to the station from there.

So there we have it—a number of deep concerns that Mrs Bitans has pointed out, I would suggest to you, from personal experience but also on behalf of many people that she speaks to on a daily basis, because she is a very popular member of the local community. She hears what people have to say, and people want to tell her, and she has passed this on to me. So I am asking the Minister for Public Transport to take on board what Mrs Bitans has said to me about the Tarneit station and to do something about it, because this is a rapidly growing area of Melbourne, one of the fastest growing areas in fact in Australia. It is clearly something that does need urgent attention, so I would ask the minister to do Mrs Bitans a favour and also do a huge favour for the local community and do something about the parking at and the design of this particular station.

**COUNCIL | Constituency questions
04 March 2021**

Bulla public toilets

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan)
— My constituency question is to the Minister for Local Government, and I ask this question as a matter of urgency. Minister, Bulla has no public toilet. It used to have toilets, but I understand that Cr Jack Medcraft was instrumental in having Hume council remove them for reasons that are, I have to say, totally beyond me. But that is Jack Medcraft for you. Locals want them back. Bulla has a delightful recreation area—an oval, a playground, tennis courts and the Tullamarine Live Steam Society’s magnificent miniature railway. In fact it is worth a visit on Sunday if anybody is short of anywhere to visit. This area often attracts large crowds, particularly families, and as every parent will testify, the need for toilets where children are involved is paramount. When kids have to go, they have to go. If the Jack McKenzie Community Hall is not open, there

is no public access to toilets, and that is truly a deplorable situation. Minister, will you speak to Hume council and ensure they return these much-needed facilities to the Bulla Recreation Reserve? I ask you to do it at your earliest convenience.

**COUNCIL | Constituency questions
16 March 2021**

Anzac services

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan)
— My constituency question is for the Minister for Veterans. Since I was first elected to this Parliament I have had a close relationship with veterans organisations. Over the years I have been a regular attendee at many dawn services, Remembrance Day services and social gatherings organised by RSL sub-branches in Sunbury, Keilor East, Moonee Ponds, Williamstown, Sunshine and a variety of others. Anzac Day is without doubt the most important date on the calendar for those of us wishing to thank and pay tribute to those who have paid the ultimate price for our freedom. RSL sub-branches across the Western Metropolitan Region are desperate to know if their normal Anzac commemorations can go ahead next month, after the disappointment of last year's cancellation. Minister, will you tell the RSL members in the west if their traditional Anzac services can resume this year, and when?

**COUNCIL | Petitions
16 March 2021**

Tarneit West train station

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan)
— The Petition of certain citizens of the State of Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Council that the Tarneit community cannot wait until 2027 for the delivery of the Tarneit West station project. Thousands of commuters use Tarneit station on a daily basis. Due to the population growth in and around the Tarneit area, the current Tarneit train station can no longer cope with commuter demand. The Tarneit West station project is currently due to be delivered by 2027. This critical infrastructure is required now, with project completion within

the next two years. The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Council call on the Government to deliver the Tarneit West station project as soon as possible rather than make the community wait until the completion date of 2027 for this critical infrastructure project.

By Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) (461 signatures).

**COUNCIL | Members statements
16 March 2021**

Hume City Council

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan)
— I have often said that good local government is one of the best things that any community can have. Just as easily, bad local government can destroy it. Jacksons Creek ward in the Hume City Council is a case in point. Recently elected councillor Trevor Dance has been a real bolter. His activity in representing the good people of his ward is to be highly commended. He has been vocal on council in ensuring the needs of Sunbury and Bulla are addressed expeditiously. Ten out of 10 so far for Cr Dance. On the other hand, councillors Jack Medcraft and Jarrod Bell have done exactly the opposite. Not only have councillors Medcraft and Bell not represented their communities properly, they have actively opposed the proposals to support locals put forward by Cr Dance. Cr Medcraft and Cr Bell have failed—and failed miserably—those who have placed in them faith to do the right thing by them. I strongly suggest Cr Medcraft and Cr Bell should start fighting for their ward residents or get the hell off council altogether. With Josh Bull alleged to be representing Sunbury and Bulla in the other place, the last thing locals need is another couple of duds like Jack Medcraft and Jarrod Bell representing them on Hume council. They are indeed lead in the saddlebags.

**COUNCIL | Constituency questions
17 March 2021**

Toxic soil: health impact

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan)
— My constituency question is to the Minister for Health. There are major concerns as to the health impacts of toxic soil that the Andrews government appears to be committed to dumping near residential housing in Melbourne's west. The people living near Ravenhall and in Sunbury and Bulla are deeply worried about the highly dangerous PFAS and what it will do to them and their families. They have a right to know if the government of the state knows what dangers these people will face, and they have a right to know if the Andrews government actually cares if they and their families will face serious health problems in years to come. Minister, you are ultimately responsible for every health issue in this state. Have you sought from your department advice on the possible health effects of poisonous toxic soil on those living near the Ravenhall tip and Hi-Quality in Sunbury Road, and if you have received such advice, what is it?

**COUNCIL | Constituency questions
18 March 2021**

Bulla Bridge

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan)
— My constituency question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. I have raised this matter with the minister now on a number of occasions and I fear greatly that we may well be running out of time. The Bulla Bridge is currently subject to traffic loads it was not built to withstand. It was built in 1869 when the sort of heavy traffic, including hundreds of massive trucks, it now carries was inconceivable. The bridge links Sunbury and the Macedon Ranges to Melbourne Airport, where thousands of residents are workers at, of course, the airport. The collapse of this bridge would obviously impact vehicles on it at the time, but it would also disrupt the lives of many thousands who rely on that bridge daily. Minister, is it possible to, at the very least, impose a cap on the weight of trucks now using

the Bulla Bridge? Action on this is needed now.

COUNCIL | Petitions
29 April 2021

Dohertys Road, Truganina, bus service

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan)
— The Petition of certain citizens of the State of Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Council that there is currently no public bus service along Dohertys Road, Truganina. The community has grown significantly and so has the demand for better public transport infrastructure in the area. Limited bus services add pressure on an already overcrowded Tarneit station car park. A new bus route along Dohertys Road covering Albright, Ellarook, Westbrook, Element and Rothwell estates is desperately needed. Alternatively, existing bus routes could be altered to service this area. The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Council call on the Government to work with Public Transport Victoria to introduce a new bus route or alter an existing bus route along Dohertys Road, Truganina to provide service to Albright, Ellarook, Westbrook, Element and Rothwell estates.

By Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) (340 signatures).

COUNCIL | Members statements
29 April 2021

Anzac Day

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan)
— It is great to be here in Bright, and I must look up the pumpkin seeds and see what I can do with those. Anzac Day of course is a sacred day for every Australian, and over the past two weekends I have joined with thousands across Melbourne's west to show respect, gratitude and love to those who sacrificed their lives for our freedom. This nation owes those heroes a debt that can never fully be paid.

Sadly this Anzac Day was overshadowed by an image that will stay with me and millions of others for the rest of our days. Never did I think I would see the face of a

veteran, a man who risked his life for Australia and lost mates on the battlefield, locked out of the Shrine of Remembrance by the erection of a fence. He and his comrades were denied their right to pay their respects at the dawn service, yet a few hours later across the park almost 80 000 people gathered at the MCG to watch a game of footy. What sort of priorities are these? No veteran should ever be refused entry to the shrine, much less on Anzac Day. The level of disgust I still feel for what happened at the shrine on Sunday is quite overwhelming. Whoever is responsible for the erection of that fence should resign or be sacked. This was a disgrace. It was an outrage. It should never happen again.

COUNCIL | Constituency questions
29 April 2021

Toxic soil community protest

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan)
— My constituency question is to the Acting Premier. A large crowd of locals will gather on the Village Green in Sunbury at midday this Sunday to protest against the Andrews government's plan to dump toxic soil at a site on Sunbury Road. Many thousands of locals are desperately concerned about the impact of carcinogenic PFAS material on their health and that of their families. To make matters worse, this material will potentially be dumped literally across the road from new residential developments. My constituents in Sunbury and Bulla have previously objected to this soil being dumped in their communities but have so far been ignored by the Premier, the Minister for Planning, the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, the Minister for Transport Infrastructure and two health ministers. I am speaking at the rally on Sunday, and I ask the following question in the hope I can relay the answer to locals on that occasion. Acting Premier, will you listen to the concerns of my constituents and act to ensure their health and lives are protected from the threat of poisonous, toxic soil?

COUNCIL | Motions
29 April 2021

Belt and Road Initiative

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan)
— In rising to support the motion put today by my friend and colleague Mr Davis I want to make it very clear to members opposite and in particular to Ms Shing that what we are pursuing is a Victoria-first policy. What we are concerned about is that the Belt and Road Initiative—and we have been concerned about this from day one—leaves and left Victoria at a distinct disadvantage. The BRI was about giving an enormous benefit to a foreign country. It was about giving enormous benefit to a foreign government at the cost of Victorians. That is not something that we on this side of the house can possibly condone.

We congratulate the Prime Minister, the foreign minister and the federal government for canning this scheme, because it was a bad deal—it was a crook deal—for Victoria. You just have to look at the reaction by the Chinese government—yes, the Chinese communist government. We call them a communist government because that is what they are. They call themselves communists. That is what they are. They always have been—well, since the 1940s anyway. The fact of the matter is the reaction of the Chinese communist government has been nothing short of out of control. These people have shown a total lack of maturity in dealing with the fact that the BRI has been ditched. They have accused us of all manner of things now, and we have, I suppose, over the last few years got used to that.

We remember what the reaction of the Chinese government was when Prime Minister Morrison suggested there be an inquiry into where the Wuhan virus came from. We remember the Chinese government at that time went quite troppo with all sorts of threats. And we have suffered not as much, actually, as we had thought we would, because whilst the Chinese government's intention was clearly malicious towards many of our products and many of our producers, Australians and Victorians very quickly became very much on top of the need to find other markets and to find other

buyers of our products. We have done that very, very successfully, so the intent of the Chinese government was not met to the extent that they wanted, and they no doubt will be exceedingly disappointed by that.

Now, I just want to make one point. I have been accused, as have some others, of some sort of racism because I am against the BRI, because I am against the Chinese communist government having an advantage over Victorians. Nothing could be further from the truth. We have to make the differentiation, the clear differentiation, between the Chinese government and the Chinese people. Chinese people, good; Chinese government, bad. That is the differentiation. And whilst the Premier clearly has a very different view, I think if you go out and you talk to the people of Victoria, you will find that they indeed have the view that we were selling out to China. I have been absolutely staggered at the vehemence with which so many people have opposed the BRI. So I welcome the actions of the federal government. I thank them, and I congratulate them. They got Victoria out of a very, very nasty spot, and indeed we should all thank the federal government for that. I would hope that the Chinese government in future will display a more mature attitude, an attitude which would enable us to deal with them in a decent and a reasonable manner. I urge members to support this motion. I think it is a very good motion. I congratulate Mr Davis on having put this motion to the house today, and I will be supporting this motion fulsomely and wholeheartedly.

COUNCIL | Address to Her Majesty the Queen, 04 May 2021

His Royal Highness The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — There is an old saying that goes, ‘We don’t know what we’ve got till it’s gone.’ It should not be at all surprising to see the wave of worldwide appreciation that

has been shown towards Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh, and his service to his Queen, to the commonwealth and indeed to every nation in the commonwealth, and of course that very much includes Australia. As has been mentioned, he was here many, many times. In fact he chose, along with Her Majesty, to send his eldest son to Timbertop I think, if I recall, down near Geelong. That, as Prince Charles has recalled, was one of the great highlights of his life. So Australia was very much a part of the Prince’s thinking from a very early time.

When I heard the news of his passing, despite the fact that he obviously was of advanced years and the fact that he had been ill of late, I was shocked. It was a very great sense of personal sadness when I heard the news. It was at half-time during the Friday night footy in fact that the news came through, and all of a sudden that football match did not seem to mean quite as much as it had previously done. He had been a constant in my life. Both he and the Queen had led the commonwealth since before I was born. He has been there, along with Her Majesty, all of my life, so to think that he is no longer there is quite a shock and, as I said, did cause a great deal of personal sadness to me.

Now, I never met Prince Philip. I did, however, meet his eldest son some years ago. But I feel that if I had met the Duke, we would have got along quite well because he did have a great sense of humour, and those of us who have a sense of humour know that that sometimes gets us into a little bit of trouble. I think that Prince Philip and I may have been able to swap stories as to the occasions on which that had occurred to each of us.

Prince Philip also had very little time for political correctness, and that is something that, as members know, I have spoken out against frequently. He was in Australian terms a character, and that is why Australians so warmly embraced him and indeed so deeply mourned him when he passed away. It should also be pointed out to the house that he was one of the very early feminists, because in fact he gave up his life in the navy, a career that he loved so dearly, so that his wife could follow her career. That is something that perhaps not many think about, but somebody pointed that out to me just after he passed, and it is true.

Prince Philip gave up everything that he had so that Queen Elizabeth could continue with what she had set out upon.

His commitment, his loyalty and his service make him one half of the most remarkable team in human history. I think we will be struggling to find another one, to tell you the truth. I cannot begin to imagine how Her Majesty will miss Prince Philip after over seven decades together, and my heart goes out to her and to her family. We will all miss him, and we thank him for the work and service that he gave. I very strongly support the motion, and my most sincere condolences go out to Her Majesty and to the rest of the family. May God bless the Duke of Edinburgh and keep him forever.

**COUNCIL | Constituency questions
04 May 2021**

Toxic soil health claims

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — My constituency question is to the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change. Residents of Sunbury and Bulla have again expressed their deep concern about PFAS-contaminated soil that the government wishes to dump at the Hi-Quality site on Sunbury Road. As the government intends to dump this poisonous material opposite residential housing currently being built opposite Hi-Quality, the local community is deeply worried about the health implications. The member for Sunbury claims it is harmless and there is nothing to worry about. Minister, do you endorse Mr Bull’s assessment of the toxic soil the government wishes to dump?

**COUNCIL | Members statements
04 May 2021**

West Gate Tunnel soil

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — It was my very great pleasure this past Sunday to speak on Sunbury’s Village Green in front of a massive crowd gathered to protest against the Andrews government’s plan to dump toxic soil in their, and indeed in our, community. I was joined by the

Shadow Minister for Environment and Climate Change, Bridget Vallence; Dr Catherine Cumming; Cr Trevor Dance; and my old sparring partner in this place Colleen Hartland, but this time we were actually on the same side. I should also congratulate Chris O'Neill and his team for organising the rally. They did a great job.

The Sunbury and Bulla communities are fired up to fight the government's plan. The roar from the crowd on Sunday made it very clear that locals are not going to take this lying down. They also made it very clear that they are furious—furious is an understatement—that the member for Sunbury has deserted them in their time of need. The anger is palpable in Sunbury and surrounds. The government should prepare itself to face the fury of communities that it has dismissed and it has ignored. This will not be pretty. I will not stand by and watch while any area in Melbourne's west is treated so despicably. Our health and the health of our families are every bit as important as the health of those on the other side of Melbourne. We will not tolerate being treated as second-class citizens. I assure the government and this house that we have just begun to fight.

**COUNCIL | Adjournment
04 May 2021**

Point Cook police station

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I wish to raise a matter this evening for the attention of the acting Minister for Police and Emergency Services, and it concerns the suburb of Point Cook, which has long been in need of a police presence and in particular a police station. Every time I go to Point Cook, which is quite often, I hear directly from the residents, and they are very, very keen for a police station to be established in Point Cook asap. It was just a few weeks ago that I was in Point Cook hosting the Leader of the Opposition, Mr O'Brien, who visited Point Cook with me, and one of the issues that came up again and again was the need for a police station in Point Cook. The problem is that Point Cook is quite a significant suburb. It is a suburb with

a significant population. But if there are any troubles there—and from time to time there are—they have to rely on a police car or police vehicle coming from Werribee.

Mr Davis: You can't get in on the roads.

Mr FINN: As Mr Davis says, you cannot get in on the roads, because Point Cook was built without any infrastructure being put there, as we saw when I think Justin Madden was the minister. He allowed all the stamp duty to be collected by the state government without returning any of it to the people of Point Cook, and I am constantly amazed at how the Labor Party allowed so many people to build houses there—and some of the houses are magnificent houses, I have to say. But it just astounds me that the former Labor government allowed this suburb to be built without the sort of basic infrastructure that most of us have just come to expect. But on this occasion what we need is a police station for Point Cook, and what I am asking the acting police minister to do is to speak to the Treasurer, Mr Pallas, and ask him to provide the money that would enable a police station to be built and manned of course, or personned—I am not sure what the word is these days—

A member: Staffed.

Mr FINN: staffed, thank you very much—for 24 hours, because the people of Point Cook have had enough. They are sick of the fear. They are sick of being neglected by this government, and it is long, long overdue that this police station be built in Point Cook and provide the people of Point Cook with the protection that they deserve.

**COUNCIL | Constituency questions
05 May 2021**

Toxic soil threat

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — My constituency question is to the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change. Minister, I refer to your government's plan to dump poisonous toxic soil in the Sunbury-Bulla community. The national environmental management plan has described PFAS as being highly soluble in water and able to, I quote:

... readily leach from soil to surface water and groundwater, where they can move long distances to enter creeks, rivers and lakes and

become part of the food chain, being transferred from organism to organism.

Minister, who has investigated this potential hazard and signed it off as acceptable to dump toxic PFAS-contaminated soil only metres from Deep Creek, threatening human beings and endangered animals and almost certainly contaminating a number of waterways?

**COUNCIL | Motions
05 May 2021**

Payroll Tax

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — If I was a small business operator in this state and happened to tune into this debate today, I would by this stage be at Tullamarine airport lining up to go to perhaps New South Wales, perhaps Queensland, to relocate, because what I would have heard would have been representatives of the government of this state with no understanding whatsoever of the impact of their policies on small business. Despite what Mr Gepp says—and Mr Gepp on a lot of things is very correct; he is a good Tigers man, and there is nothing wrong with that—my concern is that he has gone down the same path as Mr Pallas, and that is that in order for us to recover we need a government-led recovery. There is only one way that any state or any nation can ever recover, and that is through private enterprise, and in particular small business.

Without a strong small business sector you have nothing—you have no taxation, you have no jobs, you have nothing. And that is something, sadly, the opposition, the government rather—just getting carried away there—does not seem to understand. That is rather sad. In fact we heard from Mr Erdogan that the bigger the tax, the better off we all are. Well, how good is one of your old-style socialists in action: 'The bigger the tax, the better off we all are.' Well, I know about 6 million or 7 million Victorians who would dispute that, because I think even the strongest trade unionists, even the most committed of trade union members do not want to pay any more tax than they have to. They do not want high taxes. I think they would be almost as appalled by what the government has said today as small business operators would

be, because they do not want to be paying taxes. They want to keep what they have earned. They work hard for their money and they want to keep that, and that is fair enough. That is the basis—one of the bases anyway—of the Liberal Party: if you work and you earn money, then you should be able to keep as much of that as is humanly possible.

Now, I know and I accept, reluctantly it has to be said, that taxation is necessary. I am not a fan of it. I am not a fan of it, but I accept that we do need taxation. But we have a situation in this state where the Andrews government seems to think that taxation is their money to do with as they want. Therefore we have seen huge spending, we have seen huge waste, we have seen so much thrown away, and as a result Victorians are not just suffering now but will suffer for generations to come. We have a government in this state that has blown out the debt to at least \$155 billion—155 thousand million dollars. It may be more than that, but that is a conservative estimate at the moment: \$155 billion. My grandkids and possibly great-grandkids are going to be paying for that. What sort of government does that—spends up big, has all the fun it can have and then says to your kids and your grandkids and your great-grandkids, ‘You can pay for that. Don’t worry about what’s coming, we live for the moment’? It is the ultimate in selfishness that we have seen from this government.

This motion from Mr Quilty is a welcome one. This motion speaks from a similar view that I have, and that is that payroll tax is a tax on jobs. I am all in favour of as many people having jobs as possible, and members opposite should be as well, because if employers, particularly small business people, do not employ workers, then they do not have union members. You have got to have a job to be a union member. That is why they do not like volunteers, because volunteers cannot be unionised.

Mr Ondarchie: No, they pay them.

Mr FINN: Well, sometimes they do. But that is the bottom line. I think that for any government to be taxing small businesses for the privilege of employing someone is close to insanity. If I had my way, I would abolish this tax completely. I would abolish this.

Members interjecting.

Mr FINN: Mate, I would have. Brother, if I had been given the opportunity, I would have. I would have, do not worry about that. I did not exactly have my hands on the steering wheel in the last government I can assure you, and more is the pity.

A member: It’s never too late!

Mr FINN: Yes, that is true. And I was absolutely delighted when the opposition leader, the next Premier of Victoria, Michael O’Brien, announced just a couple of weeks ago that we are raising the threshold on payroll tax, meaning that a whole range of small businesses across the state will not be paying payroll tax and indeed a whole range of jobs will not be subject to this tax. That is a very, very welcome move and I am sure it will be welcomed right across Victoria by everyone—a very, very good move indeed.

In the last few minutes that I have I just want to outline my view on what we should do in the taxation area. My view is that we should have a revolution in taxation in this state. Now, back in I think it was 1939—you might remember, Mr Acting President—there was a temporary removal of income taxation powers from the states. This was a temporary measure for the war. Now, in case anybody had not noticed, the war has been over for a while, and we had a good win. You would have to say that. What we need to do is to go back to where we were. We need to give the states back those taxation powers and what we need to do is abolish three-quarters of the federal government, because three-quarters of the federal government we could very, very easily do without. I could start listing the departments. If I had time, I would, but let us start with the ABC—

Mr Davis: Eight cents a day.

Mr FINN: Eight cents a day, and the rest. Really, it is only defence, foreign affairs, trade; there are probably less than 10 departments that we actually need. The rest we can do without, and those powers can be relocated to where they should be constitutionally, and that is with the states. I think that is something that will save not just Victorians but Australians a lot of pain over coming years.

I think that the closer government is to the people, the better off the taxpayers and indeed the people are, because people can actually be in contact with their representatives.

These people who suggest that all power should be centralised in Canberra are off with the fairies. Every decision that is made has to go through Canberra? No, thank you. I have worked in Canberra. I could not wait to get out of the joint. Canberra is the single biggest mistake in the history of this nation. Whoever thought of Canberra, they should have hanged him. Honestly, it is just unbelievable, the damage that that place has done to this nation. In fact he has probably gone now, so they should dig him up and hang him anyway. But it is just appalling what has happened as a result of the coming together of power in Canberra. To expand that, to extend that, is just a nonsense; it is quite stupid.

So I put that forward for consideration, particularly by members of the government—that we would like to return powers to the states that they need to have, that they once did have, and that we might actually like to respect the constitution and the powers handed to the states in the constitution. On that note, I do say that I will support Mr Quilty’s motion—I am delighted to—and I urge all members of the house to do likewise.

COUNCIL | Motions
05 May 2021

Electoral Reform

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — Well, I had not intended to speak on this motion, but given the change of circumstances, I will. I listened to Ms Garrett with a great deal of interest. Clearly there is some sort of domestic disagreement between the Greens and the Labor Party on this, and I am not going to get involved in that. I will let them sort it out between themselves. But I do welcome this motion because this is a great opportunity to see democracy in its purest form, where members from various parts of the political spectrum come together in this house and beat the living tripe out of each other. It is going to be something to be seen, to behold, and I for one have no intention of holding it off any longer.

West Gate Tunnel soil

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan)
— My adjournment matter this evening is addressed to the Acting Premier, and I must tell the Acting Premier that many of my constituents are bewildered. Absolutely gobsmacked, they are, that despite the fact that they have supported the Labor Party for, in many cases, generations in the western suburbs, they are being treated as second-class citizens by the current Labor government. They cannot understand why their loyalty has been repaid with a government that clearly has no respect for them or their families. The issue revolves around the dumping of highly toxic soil in the west of Melbourne. As I am sure the house will remember, the first place that was suggested was Wyndham Vale, and the member for Werribee, the Treasurer, Mr Pallas, was very keen, apparently, to have that soil dumped at Wyndham Vale.

Mr Davis: On VicTrack land.

Mr FINN: Indeed. I understand that as a shareholder in Transurban he would have had a lot of interest in ensuring that that soil went to Wyndham Vale. When it was pointed out to him that he had a margin of about 3 or 4 per cent, he decided that perhaps it was not such a great idea after all.

Ms Crozier interjected.

Mr FINN: Well, do not get started on the youth justice. What a disaster. What a debacle. And then it was decided the soil would go to Ravenhall and to Bulla and Sunbury. Now, the people living around the Ravenhall tip, God almighty. I feel so sorry for them. They have had to put up with so much for so long, and now they have to put up with PFAS. It is just a disgrace. It is despicable the way that they have been treated. To have this highly toxic soil dumped near residential housing in Ravenhall is just appalling, and it is just as appalling at Bulla. That of course is actually closer to Sunbury than it is to Bulla. Indeed a new residential housing development is immediately across the road. Can you believe the Minister for Planning, who gave the approval for the housing estate, is the same planning minister who gave the

approval for the toxic waste dump across the road? Can you believe that? It is quite astonishing.

Mr Davis interjected.

Mr FINN: Well, Josh Bull has said bugger all to this point, I have got to tell you. Sorry, he has said nothing to this point, I have to tell you. My constituents would like to know and would like an explanation from the Acting Premier of why they are being treated as second-class citizens, and if they are not, they would like him to show that they are not discriminated against by dropping these plans for the toxic waste dumps.

Toxic soil waterway threat

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan)
— My constituency question is to the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change. I refer the minister to the Andrews government's plan to dump toxic PFAS-contaminated soil in the Sunbury and Bulla communities. Water from Deep Creek is utilised in a number of ways. One is to water crops and livestock. The dumping of poisoned soil poses the very real risk of bioaccumulation in both plants and animals, with a direct threat to humans who consume these products. Has the calculation of the risk of contamination of the waterways and livestock by PFAS, affecting the livelihood of farmers and those consuming their produce, been conducted? If not, why not? And can the minister outline what action the government will take to prevent PFAS contamination leaching from the soil into local waterways?

Point Cook Road

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan)
— I wish to raise a matter this evening for the attention of the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and I wish to bring to the minister's attention the ongoing nightmare that is Point Cook Road. Particularly for residents of Point Cook and Sanctuary Lakes it is

literally a nightmare night and day. This road was not built for the sort of population that we now have in those areas. Seabrook and Altona Meadows of course are also affected, although they are a little bit closer to the freeway. The situation is that particularly those residents in Point Cook and Sanctuary Lakes can travel for up to an hour during peak hour just to get to the freeway, and then, if they are travelling to the city, they have to line up once again for anything up to an hour, sometimes an hour and a half, to get into the city. It is absolutely ludicrous. We need a solution to this as soon as possible. We have the very strong prospect that people living in that area can be travelling 25 hours a week without really going anywhere, without reaching their destination. It is so nonsensical it is not funny.

Point Cook and Sanctuary Lakes are great places to live, but as I say, Point Cook Road is an issue that should have been addressed a very long time ago. It is getting worse by the day, and I know that it has been a very big issue in the local area now for some years. Given that the government apparently is flush with funds, given all the borrowings that it has been involved in, my view is that now is the time to solve this particular problem. So what I am asking the minister to do is speak to the Treasurer, Mr Pallas, who apparently represents a part of that area, and ask him—in fact not just ask him but ensure—that the funds are made available for the Point Cook Road problem to be solved. As I say, this has been going on for far, far too long. The time has come for action. I am asking the minister for roads to ensure that that action is imminent, and if he were to do that, he would be a hero in Point Cook, in Sanctuary Lakes and right along all of those suburbs that are serviced by Point Cook Road. So I am asking the minister to do that, and I very much look forward to some happy announcements in the budget coming up later this month.

Contaminated soil dumping

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan)
— My constituency question is to the Minister for Health. PFAS is a material that has already been proven to be deadly. It is carcinogenic with the capacity to have lethal impacts on those it comes into contact with. Residents of Sunbury and Bulla and those living around the Ravenhall tip are deeply concerned about their future and that of their families as the Andrews government prepares to dump soil contaminated with PFAS in their communities. They are fearful of the health impacts this will cause them now and well into the future. Minister, is there any guarantee you can offer my constituents that their lives, the lives of their spouses and the lives of their children will not in any way be threatened by the gross negligence of the Andrews government?

Medically supervised injecting facility

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan)
— I rise to congratulate the people of Melbourne's west on showing considerable determination last week. Last Wednesday evening I attended a sizeable rally in the Nicholson Street Mall in Footscray, along with Dr Crozier, Dr Cumming and a number of other doctors from all over the west. It was a very clear message sent to the government that we do not want a drug-injecting room in Footscray. That was very loud, very clear. There was no argument at all. That was the message that was sent.

West Gate Tunnel soil

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan)
— The following day Ms Crozier—Dr Crozier—again was with me when we spoke to an even bigger crowd on the steps here at Parliament House. They had come in from Sunbury, from Bulla, from Bacchus Marsh, from Ravenhall to oppose the government's plan to dump PFAS-contaminated soil in their communities. They are very afraid of what will happen to them. They are very afraid of what will happen to their families and what will happen to a number of people in their communities in years to come. As we have seen at Fiskville, this PFAS material does cause cancer. We do not want it in our community, and the people who gathered on the steps last Thursday morning made that very clear. It is also worth pointing out to the government that this is not the end. We will continue to fight until they scrap this appalling plan.

Zero and Low Emission Vehicle Distance-based Charge Bill 2021

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan)
— I rise to speak very briefly on this piece of legislation, the Zero and Low Emission Vehicle Distance-based Charge Bill 2021. I would really love to meet the individual who came up with that name because I think they have got a big career ahead of them in government. If somebody can come up with a name like that, then I think they have probably got it made.

This is almost an amusing juxtaposition that we find ourselves in, because we have a government which prides itself on pushing against climate change—even though there is nothing we can do about it, but they do it anyway—but at the same time they put a tax on vehicles which apparently are supposed to stop climate change.

Now, if you can work that out, please let me know. I am very, very keen to know. On the other hand, over there we have the Greens—well, not just at the minute, it has to be said; they seem to have vacated their position altogether at the moment. I do not think the Greens' credentials are exactly what they used to be, it has to be said. I am sure at some stage Dr Ratnam will come in here, and she will tell us how much the Greens love electric vehicles. The trouble is the Greens do not like electricity, so we have got this extraordinary situation where we have got the government taxing something that it is trying to promote and we have got the Greens supporting something but opposing what actually makes it run. Look, if anybody can make any sense of this at all, please let us know, because this environmental push from the Greens, from the Labor Party and from a whole range of people is a tad confusing from time to time.

The only conclusion we can come to—Mr Hayes may care to listen to this—is that this government will tax anything. It does not care; it will tax anything. It has never seen anything that it did not want to tax. It has never seen a tax that it did not want to impose. This is a government that is totally out of control financially and so totally beyond its depth that it will tax anything—and that is a warning. I think this legislation today is a warning to every Victorian: you could be next. If the government is prepared to tax one of its greenie friend things, then it will be prepared to tax just about anything. You know, that is what we have seen in Victoria over the last week: we have seen a government that is totally committed to tax. That is what it is all about—and of course, why not? This government is a classic socialist government—a high-spending, high-taxing government—and to hell with small business, to hell with the people of the state and to hell with anybody in fact except those who are in the government pushing their ideological line.

I join Mr Rich-Phillips in the very erudite comments that he made on this legislation. I am, as a Liberal, naturally opposed to taxation, and that is something that a lot of people do not realise—that we, as Liberals, want low taxes. That is one of the things that we stand for: low taxes. For the government—this socialist left government—to be promoting taxes and to be imposing taxes in

the way that they are irks me. It irks my colleagues, and I have absolutely no doubt at all it irks the people of Victoria, because eventually they are the ones who will have to pay. It does not matter whether it is a tax on this, it does not matter whether it is a payroll tax, it does not matter whether it is stamp duty, it does not matter what it is that the government wants to push up, eventually the people of Victoria—the hardworking people of Victoria—will have to pay.

It is rather sad to see a government which I suppose, probably going back some years ago now, regarded itself as the party of the battlers. It is now no longer the case. As I say, it has not been the case for a very, very long time. I see Mr Barton over there. His story is a classic example of how the ALP has deserted working men and women in this state. We have been through, with Mr Barton, his story many times, and I am sure we will go through it many more times before we are finished, but it is clear to anybody and everybody who takes even a passing interest in what we are talking about today that we cannot help but notice that this government is not a government of workers. This government, this ALP government, has dumped the workers in a very, very unfortunate substance from a very great height, and they continue to do that. This is a government of rich mates. This is a government of mates who they look after come what may, whether they be multinational companies, whether they be trade union officials or whoever they may be. They will be looked after if they are mates. If they are not mates, to hell with them. That is the attitude of this government, and that to my way of thinking is very sad, because I do remember—and it is showing my age, I have to say—a time when the Labor Party did have some claim to being representative of workers and of working people. No more—that is no longer the case.

This legislation shows the attitude of the government over the past, I suppose, couple of years, but particularly over the past week. I can fully understand why the people in the suburbs, the people in the regional cities and towns and the people throughout country Victoria have had a gutful of the Andrews government, because quite frankly, I have too.

**COUNCIL | Adjournment
25 May 2021**

Events Industry

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan)
— I wish to raise a matter this evening for the attention of the Treasurer. It is a matter that has come to my attention over the last few days and that gives me a great deal of concern. I have been particularly worried over the last 12 months about the events industry in this state, particularly in Melbourne. The events industry has suffered a great deal, as you might expect, over the past 12 to 18 months. They have not been able to operate at all. They are a vital part of the Victorian economy—a \$12 billion industry—and it is most important that we keep them afloat, we keep them healthy and we keep them able to contribute still to the economic health and jobs that they produce in this state.

What the industry is asking for is government-backed COVID-cancelled event insurance to get more events to happen again. Now, that seems like a pretty reasonable thing, because of course many of these events do cost a great deal of money to get underway. To have the prospect of one falling over at the last minute is pretty horrifying and can be absolutely devastating for operators, who could find themselves out of pocket to a very, very large extent.

The other thing of course that the events industry needs—so they tell me—is direct financial support so that the most at risk in the event industry's businesses can survive the next six months. I think that is really important to so many people because, as I said, given the events of the last 18 months, there are a lot of businesses that are hanging on by their fingernails. And given, as I said before, that this contributes many billions of dollars to Victoria, as this industry does, I think it is really important that the government take that into consideration. It is, I have to say, very surprising that the government did not actually take that into consideration last week when the Treasurer brought down his budget. I remember back in the 1990s, in the Kennett days, when it was just getting underway, how exciting it was to see it getting up and flying. Now to see it on the ground

and not in the flashiest of shape is quite distressing.

So what I am doing this evening is I am asking the Treasurer to provide government-backed COVID-cancelled event insurance to help the industry and also to provide some direct financial support to the most at-risk event industry businesses so that they can survive over the next six months. It is a crisis time for them, and they need help.

**COUNCIL | Constituency questions
26 May 2021**

Melbourne Airport rail link consultation

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan)
— My constituency question is to the Minister for Transport Infrastructure. The airport rail link is a much-needed and long-overdue addition to Melbourne's infrastructure. Nobody can argue with that or indeed seeks to. Locals in Sunshine and Albion have, however, expressed concern about a planned flyover which would take this rail line 50 metres above Albion station and Ballarat Road. They are angry that they have not been consulted about this and extremely disappointed that the option ditches the promised upgrade of Albion railway station. Now, I know, as indeed we all know, the minister is not a huge fan of consultation, but I am strongly of the view that my constituents have an excellent case that they be heard. Minister, will you put the planned sky rail on hold until such time as residents of Albion and Sunshine are consulted? As Albion and Ardeer Community Club president Neil Head said, 'It will be there forever, it's really important we get it right now'. I hope the minister agrees.

**COUNCIL | Adjournment
26 May 2021**

Werribee East Employment Precinct

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan)
— I wish to raise a matter this evening on the adjournment for

the Minister for Planning. Now, the minister would be aware, I am sure, of the history of the Werribee East business precinct, a precinct that the previous government had proposed as a business, educational and largely employment precinct. It was going to be a very, very exciting part of Werribee's future and indeed a very, very exciting part of the City of Wyndham's future. And when the then Premier, Mr Baillieu, and the then planning minister, Mr Guy, came out to Werribee some years ago to announce it and then indeed to launch the precinct, there was a great deal of excitement at that time among locals and among those who had very, very high hopes that this would be something that was going to be a real game changer for Werribee and indeed for Wyndham. Now, that excitement continued until the election. And then it all died. And I am not exactly sure why that happened. I am not exactly sure what Mr Andrews did as Premier to stop that excitement. I am not exactly sure what Mr Andrews did as Premier to stop that precinct from happening. But surely enough it did die a thousand deaths at the hands of this government.

There is very real concern by senior people in the Wyndham area that the government is preparing to sell the land—a fire sale, if you will—for housing and to consign the Werribee East precinct as a piece of history that never will be. And that would be a tragedy. It would be a tragedy if that were to be the case, because this project, this precinct, has the potential to really spring Wyndham ahead of the pack. Indeed there were many people back in those days talking about Werribee being the Parramatta of Melbourne as a result of the Werribee East precinct. I think it is very, very sad. Anybody who has been to Parramatta, as indeed I have just late last year, will know that Parramatta is challenging the Sydney CBD as a major business precinct. What I am asking the Minister for Planning to do is not just give a guarantee that he will not sell the land that has been set aside for the Werribee East precinct but actually go ahead and make sure that it is kept for this project, kept for this precinct. It is vitally important.

**COUNCIL | Constituency questions
08 June 2021**

Lockdown impact on sole traders

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — My constituency question is to the Treasurer. From Werribee to Williamstown, from Sunbury to Seddon, sole traders have been hit hard by Labor's lockdown 4. Quite staggeringly, sole traders across Melbourne's west are ineligible for government support if they are not registered for GST or earn less than \$70 000 per annum. Those who need it most are denied help. Treasurer, is this just a way of avoiding payments to a most needy section of the business community in Melbourne's west? Treasurer, what action will you take to ensure small sole traders in my region receive urgent government support, and when can we expect to see that money in the hands of those sole traders who need it?

**COUNCIL | Members statements
08 June 2021**

COVID-19

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — It is hard to believe that this government has no idea of how much pain it is causing. Comments by ministers in the Andrews government give the strong indication that they regard this latest lockdown as a minor inconvenience to Victorians. They appear to have no idea what lockdown 1, lockdown 2, lockdown 3 and now lockdown 4 have done to communities across the state. Can they really be so insensitive as to have no regard for the damage these lockdowns have caused to the point of promising more if Labor stuffs up again? How can senior members of the Andrews government have no comprehension of the devastation they have wrought upon small business men and women and their employees? How can they be so remote from reality that they do not understand the mental anguish suffered by children locked away from their classrooms and their friends, to say nothing of parents

forced into quite often traumatic experiences of homeschooling? As for our beloved city of Melbourne, it may well never recover. It is simply heartbreaking. We had hoped this appalling government had learned from its many and costly mistakes. Clearly it has not, and Victorians—so many Victorians—are paying for it in blood, sweat and many, many tears. Lockdown must never happen again.

**COUNCIL | Second reading
08 June 2021**

State Taxation and Mental Health Acts Amendment Bill 2021

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — In rising to speak on the State Taxation and Mental Health Acts Amendment Bill 2021 I cannot help but make the observation that we have here in Victoria a government that works on the basis that if you cannot lock it down you tax it. That is what they are doing. That is how they are destroying this once-great state of Victoria. We have seen the impact now of four lockdowns with the promise of more to come if they stuff up again, and of course we have seen an overload of new taxes from this government to cover a variety of their sins.

I am somebody who understands the importance of good mental health. I obviously have a particular interest in that regard as to how it impacts those with autism and those families with autism, because they are very closely linked in many cases, so I am very aware of the need for government services which provide what is needed to cater for people's good mental health. My concern is that this government is using mental health as an excuse to raise money. Now, if that is happening—and I strongly suspect it is—that is despicable, that is disgraceful and that is probably even worse than some of the things that we have seen over the last couple of weeks here in Victoria.

The great irony is that one of the great causes of mental health problems is a collapse in the economy, businesses going to the

wall, people losing their jobs. These are the things that are impacting and have always impacted very greatly the mental health of Victorians, Australians and people around the world. Yet we have a government that keeps giving us these lockdowns, which are sending businesses to the wall. They are sending businesses broke. We are seeing people losing their jobs in very large numbers. Yet they want to impose more taxes to pay for something that they largely themselves are creating—quite extraordinary. Some might say, as some of my friends interstate say, only in Victoria would you have such a thing occur, because quite frankly Victoria is not what it used to be. I well remember, having been born and raised in Victoria, having spent all my life here, apart from a few months when I was in Sydney—I could not wait to get out of there, I can tell you—

A member: Gladys is doing a good job.

Mr FINN: Well, Gladys is doing a very good job. Premier Berejiklian is doing a very good job in Sydney, particularly with regard to the Wuhan virus. Speaking of the Wuhan virus, I must tell the house of a letter that I received in response to a constituency question that I had raised with Minister Foley a few weeks ago. In that constituency question I pointed out to him that I had been stuck at home for six days after having a virus test. I said this was really not good enough and asked what he was going to do to ensure that other constituents did not have to go through the same thing. Well, he did not answer the question, which is something that we have come to expect from Minister Foley. What he did was from that point on give me a stern lecture about referring to it as the Wuhan virus. So he does not care about people waiting for an extended period to get their test results back, but you call it the Wuhan virus and he is out there looking after his Chinese mates, his communist mates.

That is the tragedy of the government here in Victoria, controlled by the pro-Peking Socialist Left, who, quite frankly, as we have seen with the Belt and Road, are more than happy to put the interests of a foreign power, a hostile foreign power, before the interests of their own state. And if that is not an act of treason, if that is not an act

of treachery, I do not know what is. It concerns me, or it did concern me until the Prime Minister stepped in and ripped up that deal, and I congratulate him most warmly for doing that—and not just on behalf of me or even members of my own party but I think on behalf of every Victorian, because wherever I went up until very recently people were very concerned about the Belt and Road. We have to wonder what Mr Andrews has signed us up to with regard to further belts and roads, with regard to further deals with communist China, because we know that he has signed us up to something. But like everything else with this government, they do not tell us; they do not bother telling the people exactly what they are doing.

Mr Ondarchie interjected.

Mr FINN: Well, in certain instances I think they do. I think they are being dishonest in fact in keeping these details from the people. We are seeing at the moment a lot of orders coming every day from the press conference as to how we live our lives, and when we dare ask, when somebody dares ask, for the public health advice as to what is the basis for these orders, well, there is no appearance, Your Worship. They do not want to tell us—they will not tell us—and that is something that is also impacting a lot of people's mental health, because they are living a restricted life. Many of them are not working. Many of them have lost their businesses, and they are not even being told why. They are being told by the Acting Premier and by the Minister for Health—and it must be very, very difficult, in fact I know it is very, very difficult, to listen to anything the health minister has to say, but we are being told every day by these jokers—that we have to do this and we have to do that. But they never, ever tell us why, and I fully understand how this impacts on people's mental health. It is quite extraordinary that they would seek to add taxes to a state which is already groaning under the weight of lockdowns and earlier taxes. It is extraordinary that they would seek to do that at the expense of the mental health of the people they say that they want to help. Work that one out. As I said earlier, only in Victoria under Daniel Andrews.

I never thought, I have to say, I would ever see this again. I remember speaking in the other place back in the 1990s, when I was

the member for Tullamarine in the Kennett government—

Mr Ondarchie: I remember that.

Mr FINN: Yes, I remember it very, very fondly. I recall speaking then about the jokes that were told interstate about Melbourne and about Victoria—for example, things like, 'What's the capital of Victoria? About 27 cents'; jokes like that. Victoria, wherever you went, was the laughing-stock of Australia. It was embarrassing. It was horrifying. Guess what? It is happening again, and who is doing it? Daniel Andrews, James Merlino and Martin Foley—that crew. They are leading us again into a period where we are the laughing-stock of Australia, and it is just unbelievable to think that this could happen twice in your lifetime, much less twice in a political lifetime. It is very, very difficult indeed to understand that.

What people in the mental health field want is ongoing and constant support. That is what they want. They are not going to get it from this bill. What they want is a commitment from government to back them up in the research, in the work that they do in this very, very important area, not some excuse to whack another tax on people. And that is what this is—another excuse to whack a tax on people. How much will actually get to the mental health field? How much will get to psychiatrists and psychologists on the front line? Who would know? If it is anything like this government's previous record, precious little I would suggest, because this government is renowned for the redistribution of wealth within its own coffers. We know that socialists are committed to the redistribution of wealth, but here we have them redistributing their own wealth. It takes us back to the time of John Cain and Joan Kirner, when Gas and Fuel were paying the wages of the tram drivers and the SEC was paying the wages of the train drivers and it was all over the place.

It is happening again. What we are seeing here today is a classic Labor con, and by God they are good at it. You have to admit this: Labor are not good at much, but they are really good when it comes to conning people. It does not matter whether it is over the Wuhan virus, it does not matter what it is—they are really, really good at scaring people, they are really, really good at conning people. And here we are in this

Parliament today and you have to say, 'Here we go again.' This is Labor. It does not matter whether it is 1991 or 2021, this is Labor. This is what we have come to expect from the ALP, and they never let us down. This is the way they operate. This is the way they do things.

I say to those people—I am sure in their hundreds of thousands, if not millions—who are tuned in this afternoon listening to me speak that they have my heartfelt sympathy for having to put up with this government. There are people out there who have not got anything left. There are other people out there who are hanging on, business owners who are hanging on by their fingernails, and here are the government saying they are going to whack us again with another tax. That is the answer to everything as far as Labor is concerned: whack another tax on people. It does not matter whether it wipes them out or not, another tax is the answer.

That is the Labor way. This is a classic extreme-left, tax-and-spend government. That is what they do. Look over the last six or seven years at how much money they have spent—the blowouts, the cost to the economy, the cost to Victorian taxpayers. Before Daniel Andrews sat behind his desk he blew \$1.3 billion by cancelling a road that we still desperately need and, as Ms Bath said earlier, a road which in fact would now be operating if it had gone ahead at that time. I am sure there are a good number of people in both the east and the west of Melbourne who curse Daniel Andrews every day.

Mr Ondarchie interjected.

Mr FINN: Even Mr Melhem. Indeed Mr Melhem did agree, was very supportive of it, as indeed Mr Shorten was.

Mr Ondarchie interjected.

Mr FINN: Yes, Bill Shorten was very supportive of it. There are a whole range of things that people in the state are deeply concerned about. A high-taxing, big-spending government is most certainly one of them. But I tell you what: the other thing they are particularly terrified of is another lockdown, and this government is more than capable of delivering just that.

West Gate Tunnel soil

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — It gives me a great deal of pleasure to move:

That this house revokes Hume planning scheme amendment C248, pursuant to section 38(2) of the Planning and Environment Act 1987.

I do not know about other members of this house, but sometimes I go back to my lodgings after a long day's sitting and I think, 'What have I achieved today? How have I made people's lives better by being in the Parliament today?'. Some days that is very easy to answer. Some days I can very cheerfully say I have done A, B or C and I can very happily pat myself on the back to a degree. Other days not so much. Today every single member of this house has an opportunity to do a community of tens of thousands of people a huge favour. Today you can make the lives of people who live in Sunbury and Bulla so much better by passing this motion.

I would ask you to consider Sunbury Road just at the minute. It is a hive of activity. I do not know how many of you get out to Sunbury—

Mr Ondarchie interjected.

Mr FINN: Well, there are a lot of trucks, there is no doubt about that. But beyond the trucks, Mr Ondarchie, there is a hive of activity. We have three new residential developments going on there. One of those residential developments has a wonderful view of a site that is being proposed as a waste dump for this toxic soil. Immediately across the road from the toxic soil dump we have a new residential development that is being built as we speak—probably not as we speak, because it is pouring outside, but that is the situation. We have this incredible situation where the government has approved three new residential developments and a dumping pit for carcinogenic PFAS material all in the same area—all in the same area. This is insanity. This makes no sense. It is dangerous. What on God's earth people were thinking of when they supported this and when they allowed this to happen, I do not know.

And, you know, the government is promoting this. The EPA, which claims to be the Environment Protection Authority, should change its name to the Environmental Destruction Authority, because what we have seen from the EPA over the last six or seven months is shameful. The political interference in that body makes it totally irrelevant to the environmental needs of the local area in Sunbury and in Bulla or indeed anywhere else in the state. The EPA—you might as well pull the plug on it, close it down and start again. It is a disgrace.

Let us consider what is being proposed to be dumped in Sunbury Road at the Hi-Quality facility opposite these residential developments. It is PFAS. Some of you, I am sure, have heard of PFAS. Others might not have. It is highly carcinogenic. It is in fact poison. It is the same stuff that caused all the problems at Fiskville, and now they want to bring it to Sunbury. Quite extraordinary. Now, some people, including the Acting Premier, have said it is safe. I ask you: what is a safe level of PFAS, and how do we know that we have a safe level of PFAS? Do we find out in three or four or five years when we have a cancer cluster in Sunbury, when we have a cancer cluster in Bulla? Is that when we find out if this is safe or not? That is a question that I do not want to know the answer to. I do not want to find out in four or five or six years by the number of kids that have got cancer in Sunbury or in Bulla. Colleagues, that is what we are debating today. That is the crux of what we are debating today. Are you prepared to support this motion and protect those people who may well come down with cancer as a result of this material being dumped across the road and indeed in their neighbourhood?

I have to at this point in time declare a personal interest. I have lived in Sunbury or Bulla for pretty much the last 25 years, and my connection with Sunbury goes back a very long way, almost 50 years. So I have a very, very close personal connection with this area. And my family, my wife and my children—we all live in Bulla. We do not want this in our neighbourhood. Nobody in Sunbury or Bulla wants this in our neighbourhood.

I have got to tell you I am absolutely staggered—and I do not want to make this overtly political—

and extraordinarily disappointed by the performance of the member for Sunbury in the other place.

Mr Ondarchie: Who?

Mr FINN: Well, exactly. He has been negligent, in my view, in his attitude towards this issue. He has turned his back on his constituents and he has walked away. He does not want to know about it. That, to my way of thinking, is something that not just he but indeed the entire government should be ashamed of, very much should be ashamed of. But this is a matter that we all should take very, very seriously indeed even if Mr Bull does not. I tell you what, if I were Josh Bull, I would not want to be walking the streets of Sunbury at the minute because there are a lot—

Mr Ondarchie interjected.

Mr FINN: Not that he ever will, that is true. But there are a lot of people in Sunbury who are very, very, very, very angry with him.

Now, one of the issues that we face, apart from the whole prospect of this carcinogenic material being dumped near homes and near schools, is the dust that we will have to put up with. Anybody who lives in that part of Melbourne will tell you that it is one of the windiest places. That is why the airport is nearby, because the wind helps the planes lift off. That is why they build airports near windy places. That is what we face in Sunbury Road. The wind will pick up the dust and it will distribute it everywhere. It will distribute it at the new developments. It will distribute it at the Goonawarra estate. It will distribute it in other parts of Sunbury—at the schools, at the shopping centres. It will pick it up and carry it onto cars that are travelling down Sunbury Road. As members might be aware, that is thousands and thousands of vehicles on a good day. Not so many at the moment but that may be about to change, although I am not putting a huge amount of money on that. That dust is something that we will all breathe in—carcinogenic, poisonous dust. We will all breathe it in. Is that going to be good for anyone? Can somebody from the government get up here and say, ‘This is going to be good for your health’? Because we have heard from the government over a long period of time now that health is a priority over everything. Well, if health is a priority over everything, they will support this motion. They will support this motion if that is what their belief is.

We are also going to see, if this proposal goes ahead, significant leaching into waterways, because we have creeks—Deep Creek is one that springs to mind immediately—that will contain PFAS and that will flow into the Maribyrnong River and then into Port Phillip Bay. It will not be just the waterways; it will be the banks, it will be all of those areas surrounding those waterways, including the market gardens in Keilor. We are going to be poisoning one of the food bowls of Melbourne with this PFAS material. As I said before, it absolutely staggers me that anybody could seriously put this proposal forward that we dump this material in Sunbury Road where it will leach into the waterways and poison waterways for many, many, many kilometres around.

I am bemused, I have to say. I am bemused by people who in years gone by claimed to be keen environmentalists—people who say that they care about the environment, that they care about having a clean environment for us all. I am staggered and I am amazed that those very same people are now supporting the destruction of the local environment in Sunbury, in Bulla and indeed beyond. What they are doing—and this, coming from the Labor Party particularly, quite astonishes me—is they are putting the profits of a multinational company, Transurban, ahead of the health, indeed the lives, of people in Sunbury and in Bulla. That is what this government is proposing. I am just so livid. I am furious that they would do that to people in my area. I am furious that they would do that to my family. It is indeed a despicable act of negligence on the part of this government and one I believe they should reconsider immediately, and it is not too late, because there are other options available. This is certainly an easy way out for the government to a very large extent, but there are other ways to remove the toxic soil that they need to get rid of.

I am not one easily given to getting down on my knees and begging, but if I have to on this, I will. I will because this is just so important not just to my family, not just to my friends, but to an entire community, to tens of thousands of people—maybe hundreds of thousands of people—right through the north-west of Melbourne. This is absolutely important to their future, to some

even to their survival. This is not something that we should take lightly, and I would ask members to take on board my comments today and ask themselves if they will take personal responsibility for what happens as a result of this vote. I ask them to consider how they will feel if in four or five or six years we see a cluster of kids with cancer coming from Sunbury and Bulla. I ask members to consider if they will take personal responsibility for what occurs as a result of them voting this motion down today, if indeed that is going to happen.

This is, as I said, an exceedingly important motion, arguably the most important motion that I have moved in this Parliament in my time here. This will have, if this motion is defeated, far-reaching consequences—consequences that I do not even want to think about, that are horrifying, that are scary. I do not want the sorts of things that we are talking about to happen, so I beg the government, I plead with the government, and members in the house today to support this motion, to support the people of Sunbury, to support the people of Bulla and to support the people of the north-west of Melbourne. Members, I ask you all: please support this motion.

**COUNCIL | Constituency questions
09 June 2021**

Footscray drug-injecting room

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — My constituency question is to the Minister for Health. The people of Footscray and the wider inner west remain deeply concerned about the prospect of a drug-injecting room in their community. After the debacle in North Richmond, locals are genuinely afraid of the impact such an injecting room will have on their businesses, their families and indeed their way of life. Locals are not in any way convinced by government assurances that such a facility will not happen. They remember the monstrous lie told to the people of Richmond before the drug-injecting room was established there. Will the minister provide any and all plans his department has prepared to allow a drug-injecting room to be opened in Footscray or anywhere in the inner western suburbs of Melbourne?

West Gate Tunnel soil

Right of reply

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan)
— Well, Ms Garrett obviously did not hear my contribution earlier, because I did not even mention the West Gate Tunnel. What I spoke about was my constituents. What I spoke about was the threat to their health, indeed the threat to their lives, of the dumping of carcinogenic—which, if members opposite would like to know, means it causes cancer—toxic soil opposite new housing estates in Sunbury, just up the road from new housing estates even just a little bit closer to Sunbury, just up the road from Bulla, just up the road from thousands and thousands and thousands of my constituents, because that is what this motion is about. It is not about the West Gate Tunnel. It is not about infrastructure. It is about the lives, it is about the health, of tens of thousands of my constituents. Now, members opposite can go ‘Oh’ as much as they like, because clearly one thing we can draw from this debate today is that members of the ALP do not give a stuff about the health of the people of Sunbury or Bulla. They just do not care. And I have to say: it is a pretty poor effort on the part of this government.

But even they, in the midst of their contempt for the people of Sunbury, have admitted there is a risk. There is a risk, but they are more than happy to take it, because none of them live near Sunbury. None of them are going to have to worry about getting cancer or their kids getting cancer. This is something that they do not have to worry about. No care, no responsibility—that is what this government on this issue is all about, indeed on a lot of issues.

Now, Mr Melhem got up before and said that the government consulted widely. Why then is the Hume council trying to stop this in the Supreme Court? Why is the City of Melton in the Supreme Court trying to stop this as well? That is your level of consultation. They did not speak to anybody except those who they knew would support what they wanted to do. They certainly did not speak to local people, and the

very, very big crowd that turned out in Sunbury just a few weeks ago and indeed again just a couple of weeks ago on the steps here on budget day, will testify to the fact that they did not get an opportunity to have their say. There was no consultation with them. If you are on the government side, you get a say. If you are not, forget it, they do not want to know. And that is an indictment, a dreadful indictment, on the government.

The fact of the matter is that over the 18-month period of this dumping there will be an extra 251 000 trucks on Sunbury Road—an extra 251 000 trucks over the 18-month period. That is horrendous. As someone who uses Sunbury Road quite often, it is bad enough now. It is horrendous now. But this government does not care about the extra, as I say, 251 000 trucks that will be on the road.

It is all very well for the members of the government, many of them from the other side of Melbourne, to get up with their talking points from the Premier’s office. And they get up and they read them all out—oh, they are all so clever. But they do not, and they refuse to, talk about the threat that this project, the threat that this soil, poses to the people of Sunbury and to the people of Bulla. And again, it is because they just do not care. You know, if people in Sunbury get cancer, if people in Bulla get cancer, it is no skin off their nose. They just do not care, because none of them live anywhere near the area. That is something that they will live with. They just do not care.

Lives may well depend on the vote that we are about to take here today. And I repeat what I said earlier: are members here voting on this motion today prepared to take personal responsibility for the cancer cases that will occur or may occur if indeed this motion is defeated today? Are you prepared? Are members of this house prepared to take responsibility for the human carnage that may well result if this motion is defeated? I urge the house to support this motion.

COUNCIL | Adjournment
09 June 2021

COVID-19

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan)
— I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Acting Premier, and I refer the Acting Premier to his

statement earlier today regarding the partial lifting of the lockdown that Victoria has been subject to for the past almost two weeks. In particular I refer to his decision to keep gymnasiums locked up across the metropolitan area, and I understand there are some restrictions in regional areas as well. It is my very firm view that gyms are pretty crucial to the physical and mental health of many thousands of Victorians.

I have to admit I am a regular gym user myself, and I see a lot of people there who if the gym was not there would not get any exercise at all. That is something that we should not be encouraging, I would have thought. It should not be encouraged at all. But we have to accept, and I am hoping the Acting Premier will accept, that gym users are as a general rule fitter than the average person. As a result of that they would be more resistant to disease, and that would include the Wuhan virus.

I do not know of any evidence to suggest the virus is more easily transmitted at the gym than otherwise. I do not see any reason gyms should be still closed when everybody else—not everybody else, but most people—opens up at midnight tomorrow night. I should also ask the Acting Premier if indeed there is any evidence to suggest that the gym is some sort of hotbed of virus activity. If so, he should present that evidence to us, and I am very happy to have a look at that and make a—

Mr Ondarchie: ‘Gym’ Merlino.

Mr FINN: Thank you very much. I am very happy to have a look at that. If the Acting Premier can convince me, I am very, very happy to accept that. But in the meantime, and failing that, I ask the Acting Premier to revisit his decision and ensure that gymnasiums are open for business as of midnight tomorrow night. There are, as I say, many, many thousands of Victorians who are depending on that happening.

COUNCIL | Constituency questions
10 June 2021

Gym access

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan)
— My constituency question is to the Acting Premier. Many thousands of people across Melbourne’s west are demanding they be allowed to resume their regular exercise at

local gyms. Some sections of the west have high levels of diabetes, obesity and mental illness, and it is an obscenity that people suffering these conditions are prevented from doing one of the best things possible to fight their disease. It is a well-established fact that gyms are a major contributor to good physical and mental health. My constituents are being denied the opportunity to avail themselves of a good workout. Minister, as of midnight my constituents will be able to go to the pub. They will be able to go to a brothel—indeed it is one of the very few opportunities for exercise as they will not be able to visit their local gym. Acting Premier, this situation needs to be rectified. When will you allow common sense to prevail and open gyms in my region?

**COUNCIL | Second reading
10 June 2021**

Budget Papers 2021–22

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I think it was around about the middle of last year when I heard the Treasurer of this state utter words that made me realise that we are, and we are going to continue to be, in deep and diabolical trouble as a state. Those words by Tim Pallas were that he wanted this to be a government-led recovery from the lockdown. I thought at that time: does this man actually know anything about wealth, creation of wealth or where it comes from? Does he know anything about this at all? Because if he did, to suggest that government can lead a recovery is quite a nonsense. For us to recover as a state, we need private enterprise. We need businesses. We need small businesses. We need strong small businesses. Instead we have seen a government which over the past year—more than a year now—has used lockdowns as a weapon to smash small businesses across this state. It is shameful and it is suicidal to Victoria to allow this to happen. I just cannot figure out how a responsible government—or, should I say, a government that claims that it is responsible—could take the actions that it has with the impact that they have had on small business across this state. Small business in Victoria is an endangered species,

and it is going to continue to be an endangered species as long as the current government continues with the attitude and the policies that it has.

There is one thing that I think we need to sort out right at the beginning, and that is: we are not talking here about government money. This is taxpayers money. This is not Daniel Andrews's or James Merlino's or even Tim Pallas's; this is money that is owned by the taxpayers of Victoria. Government is charged with the responsibility of spending it, and you would hope that it would exercise that in a responsible manner. Unfortunately they have not done that in this budget—they did not do it in the last budget. In fact this latest budget is a grossly irresponsible budget. There will be members opposite, I am sure, who will take this as a pat on the back: this is a socialist budget.

Ms Stitt interjected.

Mr FINN: Comrade Stitt is over there. She has got the party hats out—they are all red, by the way. She has not been so excited since Stalin's birthday, when they had a party in the caucus room, I understand. That is the problem that we have here in this state—we have a government that is no care, no responsibility, just all ideology; that is all that it is about. And the debt that we have accrued will be still being paid off by my grandkids and by my great-grandkids—I have not got any grandkids at the minute, so it is going to be paid off for a very, very long time. The children of today look at the Andrews government, and they see a legacy of debt, they see a legacy of payment and they see a legacy of poverty for them for many years to come.

As I say, the only plan the Andrews government has is tax and spend. It has no plan for recovery. It does not really care, because soon we know the Premier will be gone from here. He will be gone from this place. Mr Pallas will be gone from this place. It will not matter. They will not care. They will go to their very rich superannuation, and the rest of Victoria will be stuck with what they have done. I am not sure whether it was Churchill or Reagan or just who said it, but it is a very good quote: 'No government has ever taxed its way to prosperity'. I am hoping that Tim Pallas might hear that quote somewhere and it might stick in his brain. 'No government has ever

taxed its way to prosperity'—that is the truth. But in Daniel Andrews's Victoria, we have tax, tax, tax and more tax—and when they finish taxing us, then they lock us down. We have had four lockdowns and more tax increases and new taxes than you can poke a stick at, yet it was the Premier of Victoria who stood out here on the steps of Parliament, looked down the lens of the camera back prior to the 2014 election and said—promised solemnly—that there would be no new taxes under an Andrews government. There is a word for the Premier. Unfortunately it is unparliamentary so I cannot use it. But he is not a man who is given to the truth. He is not a man of his word, particularly in this instance when it comes to taxation.

Now, I want to speak briefly about what has happened to Melbourne—to the centre of Melbourne, to the CBD in particular. I love Melbourne, I have to say. It is a great city. I am not fond of the weather sometimes, but it is a great city and it has always been quite an exciting city—until now. It is a city now that is dying and it may well be on its last legs.

Members interjecting.

Mr FINN: Members opposite should go down and have a look at what has happened down there. Go down the stairs, go down the steps of Parliament and walk across Spring Street, walk down Bourke Street and you will see the empty shops, you will see the empty restaurants, you will see the 'For Lease' signs everywhere. You will see what you have done to our city, to our beautiful Melbourne. You will see what you have done with your lockdowns. First option every time: lock the thing down, put everybody out of work, shut down small business. First option every time, and as a result Melbourne may well be terminal as a city.

We have in this state a government that is totally incapable of running anything properly. We have a Melbourne City Council which has got more fruit loops in it than a packet of breakfast cereal. These people have got absolutely no idea what is going on. Our Lord Mayor—I do not even know why she bothers. Honestly, I do not know why she bothers. We could clean out the Melbourne Town Hall and turn it into—I do not know—a hostel for the homeless or something like that. It would be a far more effective use of public space than looking after the current Melbourne City Council,

that is for sure. When you have got a combination of lockdowns, increasing taxation and—just to make sure that Melbourne city is completely killed—the government wanting to put a drug-injecting room in the CBD, that is your combination for the end of Melbourne as we know it. That, to my way of thinking, is tragic because this was a great city. This was the most livable city in the world. As we know, it is now down to number eight, and I would suggest to you it is dropping like a bullet. If we are in the top 100 this time next year, I will be very surprised, and I find that absolutely tragic—that this government would allow that to happen to our capital city. It is an absolute tragedy.

We know that the economic credentials of this government leave a fair bit to be desired, and I am understating things there somewhat. This government has lost our AAA rating. We know that interest rates will not stay low forever. We have a monstrous debt that we will not be able to pay off in generations. I just wonder: in a little while, long after Daniel Andrews and Tim Pallas have gone to collect their super, we are going to have to face realities, Victorians. Interest rates will be back to reasonable and normal levels and we are still going to have this debt. We cannot rely on Beijing forever. This seems to be the attitude of the current Premier—when you are in trouble turn to Beijing and they will help you. That is not going to work. This state, as a result of the economic irresponsibility and incompetence of this government, is heading into major, major trouble. You just have to look at the major projects in this state and the \$22 000 million of blowouts of some of the projects that we have in this state and, I have to say, the corruption involved, particularly with regard to the West Gate Tunnel Project.

There is no doubt in my mind that at some stage in possibly the not-too-distant future IBAC will investigate what happened with the West Gate Tunnel, and I will be happy to see that happen—that is, of course, if IBAC is not starved of funds first. We know that a government that has got something to hide would do that. But we had a situation here with the West Gate Tunnel where before the 2014 election the Premier—the then opposition leader—was telling Victorians about his \$500 million western distributor

and what a marvellous project that was and at the same time he was dealing with Transurban to come up with the monstrosity that we have now. You have got to wonder what happened there, what went on there. I remember as chairman of the Economy and Infrastructure Committee we probed this at length and asked people at length about what happened, whether it was people in Transurban, people in the government. Of course ministers refuse to front committees anyway; bureaucrats would come along, including Jeroen Weimar, who has gone on to bigger and better things now. He is the chief spin doctor on the COVID front, but back then he was spinning for the government on public transport. Quite frankly we were told lies by some of these people, and it is something that I am very hopeful will be exposed for the crooked deal that it is. I am hoping that that revelation will come in the not-too-distant future.

Victoria used to have the cheapest, most reliable energy in Australia. It was our big plus. It was our big drawing power: 'Come to Victoria. We've got electricity to burn.' Well, we do not anymore, and that is as a direct result of the Andrews government forcing their ideology onto the electricity companies. Now we are in a situation where we cannot offer anybody as an incentive to come to Victoria cheap or reliable electricity, and that is indeed a major blow for our state.

Finally, you would have to say that—well, it is obvious, isn't it?—people are leaving Victoria in droves. And can you blame them? Everywhere I go people are telling me they cannot wait to get out, they cannot wait to leave, they cannot wait to go to New South Wales and they cannot wait to go to South Australia. They cannot wait, and that is what is happening. We are going back to the days of Cain and Kirner. Victoria does not have much of a future under this government. I hope this government finishes soon.

**COUNCIL | Adjournment
10 June 2021**

COVID-19

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan)
— I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Acting Premier. As the Acting Premier would be aware,

I have been very vocal in support of reopening gymnasiums in this particular lockdown and the ongoing lockdown tomorrow. I have received correspondence from somebody else who is in the same situation, and he is the operator and owner of the Croc's Playcentre in Hoppers Crossing. I have known Geoff Davis a little bit from time to time, and he has dropped me a note and has said:

We continue to remain closed.

Our rent is 20k a month. We've been given 7k. What a disgrace! I'm expected to just find the additional \$13k to pay my rent, after already being forced to close for 8 months last year. It's just not there. And then we have rent, no wages for myself, my casual staff get nothing ...

Yet schools are deemed safe. Cafes are deemed safe. Yet our business—which almost combines both—is unsafe. How? We have an 1100sqm facility, masks inside, QR Codes, sanitisation stands, sneeze guards at our front counter—all at our own cost. Yet we are not safe? How is this possible?

That is a particularly good question. He says:

You head 30mins to Geelong, and 100 people can pile into a brothel. How can a brothel, 30 mins away, allow 100 in ... yet we cannot allow parents in for a coffee, and kids in for a play. Even a 4sqm policy would help us. A cap of 50 patrons will do nothing to help us recover.

Who is giving this health advice? It's plain wrong and defies all logic.

I have to say that I agree. So what I am doing tonight is asking the Acting Premier to make an announcement tomorrow that play centres will be allowed to open as of tomorrow to ensure that kids can get together with their friends and that their parents can have a cup of coffee or a cup of tea or a scone maybe while their kids are playing, and I think it is only a fair and a reasonable thing to do. Some of these decisions are just absolutely beyond any common sense at all. So I ask the Acting Premier to make that announcement first thing in the morning.

Toxic soil community anger

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan)
— My constituency question is to the Acting Premier. Many of my constituents are very, very angry with the government. They feel that they have not been listened to when they put forward their objections to the dumping of carcinogenic toxic soil in their neighbourhoods. The people of Sunbury, Bulla, Ravenhall, Caroline Springs, Deer Park and surrounds feel that they have been ignored by a government that puts profits of a multinational corporation ahead of the health of locals in Melbourne's west. Despite representations to the Premier, Acting Premier, Minister for Transport Infrastructure, Minister for Health, Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change and a bevy of so-called local MPs, they feel their pleas have been dismissed without proper consideration at all. Acting Premier, what evidence can you provide to my constituents to convince them that they are wrong?

COVID-19

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan)
— The Petition of certain citizens of the State of Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Council that gyms are an essential service for mental health, physical health and wellbeing. The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Council call on the Government to create and implement a COVIDSafe Plan for Victorians to attend gyms in a safe and secure manner.

By Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) (1529 signatures).

West Gate Tunnel soil

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan)
— I have said this before and I

will say it again now: Melbourne's west has had enough. Recent polling figures back up what I have known for quite some time: my constituents have had a gutful of a government they know treats them as a second- or even third-class citizens. They will no longer tolerate being taken for granted by the ALP. They will no longer tolerate being used and abused by the Andrews Labor government. The people of Melbourne's western suburbs are incandescent with rage about what happened in this place last sitting week when government members lined up to deliver condescending speeches basically telling my constituents how fortunate they are and to shut up and do as they are told. They will never forget the actions of the three Labor members of this house who betrayed their responsibilities to their own constituents in the west by voting to dump carcinogenic toxic soil in their neighbourhoods. A revolution is growing, the likes of which we have never seen before. It is coming. Those members of the ALP who have taken their seats as a God-given right are in for one hell of a shock. They will receive their just deserts from an electorate in November next year they have treated with such total and despicable contempt.

Williams Landing short-stay accommodation

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan)
— My adjournment this evening is to the Minister for Local Government, and it concerns correspondence that I have received today from Brad of Williams Landing. Now, Williams Landing is a relatively new suburb in the west of Melbourne, and it is largely populated by young families—couples buying their first home, having their families and building their lives together. It is very exciting to see so many young couples building something that they can look back on when they are as old as I am and say, 'We did this together.' It really is a wonderful thing.

What concerns me enormously is what Brad told me today. I will not

give the address, because I do not think that would be appropriate, but I am certainly happy to pass it on to the minister. There is an Airbnb in this particular suburb, Williams Landing, that has been frequented, let us say, by people seeking pastimes that might not be necessarily conducive to happy family life. It seems that this Airbnb is being used as an illegal brothel, and it is in the middle of a residential area, in the middle of a residential street. The house next door has two young girls who live there. There is a nine-year-old boy across the road; there is another little girl next to them, another six-year-old girl. I mean, it is absolutely appalling that we have the situation where somebody would set up a brothel in a residential area, and I just cannot begin to imagine what these people would have to face every day. You know, they tell stories of parties at 3.30 in the morning—during lockdown, I might add—where people ran amok after the party, ringing doorbells and screaming and carrying on like yahoos down the street.

It is something that really cannot be tolerated. It cannot be tolerated. The trouble is that, when these people went to the Wyndham council to get this thing closed down, the Wyndham council was not interested. That does not surprise me greatly, I have got to say. What I am asking the minister to do is to get on the phone—he probably needs a hotline to the Wyndham council—get onto the Wyndham council and if he can, if he has to, direct the Wyndham council to close this illegal brothel down.

Melbourne Water purchasing policies

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan)
— My constituency question is to the acting Minister for Water, who I understand is Mr Wynne. I recently visited Mr Ludwig Schwall at his Alpha Pumps factory in Sunshine. Mr Schwall is justifiably proud of the standard of his products and the workmanship that goes into them. As he explained to me, his

rotor pumps, drive shafts, coupling rods and other products are of a superior standard to products produced overseas—and at a lower cost. It is therefore mystifying that Alpha Pumps has been unable to find a market for its wares with Melbourne Water for quite some time. Minister, can you explain why a government instrumentality sends money overseas by its purchase of these products offshore in preference to buying local, superior and less expensive products made in Sunshine, Victoria?

COUNCIL | Second reading
23 June 2021

Public Health and Wellbeing Amendment (Greater Transparency and Accountability) Bill 2021

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — The bill currently before the house that Ms Crozier has put up, the Public Health and Wellbeing Amendment (Greater Transparency and Accountability) Bill 2021, is to my way of thinking a no-brainer. It seems to me that 85 per cent of the population of this state, according to the latest poll, regard it as a no-brainer as well. It is a very simple thing, and I do not intend to speak for very long on this bill because I think the arguments are very straightforward and are very easily understood. Victorians want to know what is going on within their government. That is all they want to know, and that is why this bill has been brought before the house—because Victorians want it. They want to know why they have been locked down four times already. They want to know why we have been locked down more times than any other state in Australia. They want to know why so many lives have been so lost. They want to know why so many lives have been destroyed. They want to know why so many

businesses have been smashed, and a good mate of mine wants to know particularly why he was prevented from holding his father's hand as he died. I think that is fair enough. I think it is the basic right of every Victoria to know the answer to those questions, and this bill will present the information that we need, that 85 per cent of the population of the state want.

We saw last Friday night 7000 people down at alphabet park in Geelong, and they were all squeezed up together. I mean, there was this huge ground that holds, what, 30 000 people or whatever, and it was about \$20 million or thousand or something to build, and there they were. They were all squeezed up together on the wing. You have got to say to yourself: where was the medical advice on that? But apparently it had nothing to do with the medical advice, it had everything to do with the need to employ people to look after the crowds. That is what we understand.

You see, this is the sort of thing. The contradictions are all over the place. We do not understand what is going on. We can have 50 people in a brothel, but you cannot go and see your mum—unless of course she is working at the brothel, but that is another thing altogether. There are so many contradictions in this whole thing, and we just want to see the medical advice that backs up the actions that are taken by government. And I do not understand why the government would not want the public to see that medical advice. I do not understand why. I mean, I would have thought that the government would be really keen to explain in full what it wants to do. I would have thought the government would want to bring the Victorian community with it—not stand on high and preach from the mountain top but actually bring the Victorian community with it. That is what I thought it would want to do. But we have this extraordinary situation where it will not, and you have got to ask: why can't Victorians see the information that is their right to see? Why can't Victorians see that information? Why the cover-up? It is not as if the virus can read—or can it? I do not know. I understand it cannot read. It is not as if by telegraphing your punches the virus is going to do something else.

Mr Ondarchie interjected.

Mr FINN: It is just ridiculous, Mr Ondarchie. What the government is saying, what the Premier is saying and what the Acting Premier is saying is, 'Trust me. I'm a politician.' That is what the Premier and the Acting Premier are saying to the people of Victoria. Well, guess what? I have got news for the members of the government or indeed members of the opposition: the public do not trust politicians, and they certainly do not trust this government. What this government needs to do is to come clean, to open up with the people of Victoria and just tell us what we need to know, and everybody will be happy. And why the hell wouldn't you? If you have got nothing to hide, open it up and share it with people. Sharing information is a vital part of this war that we are involved in, so why not? Why wouldn't you do that? I very strongly support this bill. I commend Ms Crozier for bringing this before the house, and on behalf of the overwhelming majority of Victorians I sincerely hope this legislation is law and very, very soon.

COUNCIL | Constituency questions
24 June 2021

Sunbury former university campus site

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — My constituency question is to the Minister for Planning. On many occasions over the past decade, perhaps even more, I have raised the issue of the future of the former campus of Victoria University in Sunbury. During that time I have been given a number of assurances it would be put to use for the good of the community. None of these assurances have yet come to fruition. I regularly drive past the site and see the buildings, some of significant historical value, fenced off and slowly disintegrating. It is a disgrace that this exceedingly important site is allowed to fall apart. Minister, what genuine assurance can you now give to my constituents that the long-neglected buildings on Jacksons Hill in Sunbury will soon be put to the benefit of the local community?

West Gate Tunnel soil

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I began this particular sitting week on Tuesday by saying that my constituents were very angry with this government. Well, Mr President, let me assure you that if the reports tonight in the Herald Sun are correct and the carcinogenic toxic soil is indeed heading to Sunbury Road, the tsunami of fury that the government is about to receive is something that they will never forget. Let me assure the member for Sunbury—the useless member for Sunbury, I should say—his career is over. He can forget it.

The PRESIDENT: Mr Finn, I ask you to withdraw what you called the member.

Mr FINN: That he is useless? Okay, I withdraw that he is useless, but everybody knows he is.

The PRESIDENT: Mr Finn!

Mr FINN: Okay. The fact of the matter is that the people of Sunbury and Bulla will fight this. We have been fighting this, but the fight is just starting. I cannot begin to tell you the anger that I feel toward this government and the betrayal of this government of the people of Sunbury and Bulla as they attempt to dump carcinogenic, cancer-causing PFAS material in our community. How dare they! How dare they put the people in my area, my constituents, in danger. How dare they threaten the lives of their children. How dare they threaten so many across our local community.

This is a disgrace. This is something that, let me assure you—and I assure you again—we will fight. We will not stop fighting, and we will fight hard. I have known the Sunbury community for close to 50 years, and I know that

that Sunbury community is very, very capable of putting up a fight. I have seen it many, many times before, and I am about to see it again. I am about to see it again, because what we are fighting for is just so important. We are fighting for life itself, and that is indeed very, very important. What I am asking the Acting Premier to do this evening is to intervene to ensure that that carcinogenic toxic soil from the West Gate Tunnel Project is not dumped in Sunbury Road but indeed is properly treated and sent elsewhere. We need to protect my local community.



FINN IN THE HOUSE

Speeches February to June 2021



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