



# FINN IN THE HOUSE

**Speeches July 2010 to December 2010**



**Published by Bernie Finn MP**

Member for Western Metropolitan Region  
Acting President of the Legislative Council

277 Hampshire Road, Sunshine Victoria 3020  
Telephone (03) 9312 1212 • Fax (03) 9312 4598  
Email [bernie.finn@parliament.vic.gov.au](mailto:bernie.finn@parliament.vic.gov.au)  
Web [www.berniefinn.com](http://www.berniefinn.com)



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# Werribee Secondary College: International Baccalaureate

**Mr FINN** (Western Metropolitan) — I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Education. It concerns some correspondence I have received this evening from Sheridan Ingram, who is contesting the seat of Lalor for the Liberal Party in the forthcoming federal election. What an outstanding member of Parliament she would be. She would be a significant and vast improvement on the incumbent member.

The correspondence I received says:

I have just learnt that years of work by Steve Butyn, the principal, and staff of Werribee Secondary College to provide world-class education and integrate the school into the international community are to come undone by the inaction of Labor and the state education department.

Werribee Secondary College is a state school that has taken the initiative to improve the education opportunities and experiences of its students by investing time and resources over the last five years to achieve accreditation to offer the International Baccalaureate course. Werribee Secondary College has complied with all requests and guidelines handed down by the education department in relation to gaining the department's approval for offering the course, but left with no response.

After much hard work on the part of the school the International Baccalaureate accreditation was granted last April on the condition that the approval from the educational department would formally follow within 12 months. The approval has not been forthcoming and no explanation has been provided over the duration by the education department. The situation is now critical with the International Baccalaureate organisation left with no other option than to withdraw the accreditation —

this Saturday —

unless the approval from the education department is forthcoming.

...

The school has until 5.00 p.m. Friday to get the rubber-stamp from

the education department to keep the IB accreditation.

Come Saturday it is gone. It would be a huge loss for the people of the western suburbs; it would be a huge loss for the people of Victoria. Sadly the local Labor members, Tim Pallas, the member for Tarneit in the Assembly, and the Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, have taken the lead on handballing the issue between themselves and the education department. What is par for the course, and what we have come to expect from them, is nothing being achieved.

We are staring down the barrel, as is Werribee Secondary College, of this dreadful decision on Saturday unless the education department can get its act together over the next couple of days.

I ask the Minister for Education to intervene tomorrow in this matter as a matter of urgency to ensure that Werribee Secondary College is given the necessary support it needs from the education department to keep this most prestigious honour and to ensure that Werribee Secondary College is kept right up there at the forefront of education in this state.

COUNCIL | Second Reading  
27 July 2010

## Electoral Amendment (Electoral Participation) Bill

**Mr FINN** (Western Metropolitan) — I briefly join this debate this evening to express a couple of points of view which may or may not be heard in this Parliament at this time. It distresses me enormously as a member of Parliament and a participant in political life for pushing 40 years — would you believe it? It is a very long time — when I see the whole range of areas and what might be described as criteria for the people, whether they be young people or old people, whom ignorance cuts across. It could be age, it could be gender or it could be geographic configurations — a whole range of areas. They are people who just do not know anything about the political process and do not want to know anything about the political process. They would not know a senator from a sheep; they would not know a communist from a comrade. They just do not know what is going on in the parliaments of Australia. They do not know what is going on in areas that

decide their lives.

These places make decisions that will direct them as to how they live and, quite often, where they live. It distresses me enormously when I speak to people who are totally ignorant of how our government runs.

We as a nation have a fair bit to answer for because our schools have failed a number of generations in this area. The sooner we start to teach some real civics — if that is the classification — in schools so that young people understand what the system is about, the sooner we will be doing our country and ourselves a huge favour.

I was pleased to hear the previous speaker talk about compulsory voting in her last few words. I do not believe in automatic enrolment because I do not believe in compulsory voting. I believe the most important reform this Parliament could make in the area of voting is the abolition of compulsory voting.

I believe that forcing somebody to the ballot box under the threat of a fine is a blight on democracy. It is about time we as parliamentarians took that on board. If we have a right to vote we should also have a right not to vote. We see that in the United States of America, we see that in Great Britain — we see that in so many of the major democracies around the world, where people — —

**Mr Barber** — You have a right; you do have that right.

**Mr FINN** — I know what Mr Barber is getting at. We are not compelled to vote; we are compelled to either show up at the polling booth on election day or in some other way have our name struck off the roll during the course of an election. I know what Mr Barber is saying.

**Mr Barber** — Fifteen minutes every four years.

**Mr FINN** — I know it is 15 minutes every four years. If I could do it more than once I would, believe me, but I do not.

**Mr Barber** interjected.

**Mr FINN** — Some of your mates, Mr Barber — or should I say Minister Barber? — perhaps vote more than once, but that is something that I will not go into.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mrs Peulich) — Order! The member will address Mr Barber by his correct title.

**Mr FINN** — I am sorry, Acting President; I am just getting in early. I am feeling a bit clairvoyant tonight and am just getting ahead of myself. I am concerned that people who are compelled — —

**Mr Barber** interjected.

**Mr FINN** — What are you talking

## Electoral Amendment (Electoral Participation) Bill ...

about, Mr Barber?

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mrs Peulich) — Order! Through the Chair.

Mr FINN — Certainly, Acting President. The minister over there is taking my attention.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mrs Peulich) — Order! Mr Finn is flouting the direction of the Chair.

Mr FINN — I apologise. I believe it is an attack on human rights to force people to do something that they have no interest in and no knowledge of. It is not just an attack on human rights — quite frankly, it is dangerous. We have all seen people — and those of us who have stood at polling booths for hour after hour on election day have seen them — who roll up at about 5 minutes to 6 in the evening and who have perhaps been at a hotel throughout the course of the afternoon and really do not have a clue about what they are doing or where they are. They show up purely to avoid the fine. We have all seen these people. They might draw a bit of a chuckle from us — until we sit back and realise: these people can decide elections. These people can decide who the Premier is, who the Prime Minister is, who will govern us for the next three or four years — and that is not funny. That is very dangerous.

We owe it to ourselves, to our families, to our state and to our country to ensure that only those who are interested and motivated enough to get up and go out to vote should be allowed to do so. We should not force people who do not want to vote, or who do not know what they are doing, to go to a polling booth and fill out a ballot paper. It is the equivalent of, for example, your car breaking down in the street, you going into the nearest pub and pulling a drunk off a bar stool and saying, 'Come and fix my car,' refusing to listen to the drunk saying, 'But I know nothing about fixing cars,' and you saying, 'Well, fix it anyway.' Except on this particular occasion we are not talking about fixing just a car; we are talking about who runs our country or who runs our state — something that is far more important.

I believe the violation of human rights that is compulsory voting has to go. I believe that is something that should be a priority of any government.

To the argument put forward by some that nobody will vote, I say: if that is the case, so be it. If they get a government that they do not like, they will certainly vote the next time, and they will be voting for the right reasons. It will not be because they are forced to a polling booth under the threat of a fine; they will be voting because they want to vote; they will be voting because they

are informed; they will be voting because they are motivated to vote. These are the reasons people should be voting — not because they are going to get a \$50 or \$100 fine or however much it may be.

As I said to the house before, this is a serious matter. I believe it is something that should be addressed as a matter of urgency by the next government, whether it be a Liberal-National coalition or a Labor-Greens coalition government, and whoever might be ministers in that government. I close my remarks there. I just wanted to make the point that compulsory voting is wrong. I believe it is evil.

I believe it is counterproductive, and I believe the sooner we get rid of it, the better it will be for all of us — for our country, for our state and for those of us who live in it.

**COUNCIL | Questions without Notice  
27 July 2010**

## Minister for Environment and Climate Change: comments

**Mr FINN** (Western Metropolitan) — My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Environment and Climate Change, Mr Jennings. I refer the minister to a health report by the Terminate Tulla Toxic Dump Action Group which reveals abnormally high cancer rates among households neighbouring the toxic waste landfill opposite Melbourne Airport. I further refer the minister to his comments to the ABC which dismissed the fears of residents living in Tullamarine, Westmeadows and Gladstone Park when he said:

Many people have moved into this locality whilst the landfill was operating. So many people have exercised the choice to live there.

All the health issues you have just identified now are a feature of daily life for unfortunately thousands of people around the world, whether they live in a landfill or not.

Will the minister now apologise for these appalling and uncaring remarks, or is this just another example of the Brumby government's arrogant and out-of-touch approach?

Hon. J. M. Madden interjected.

Mr Finn — I will just see if he answers this one.

Hon. J. M. Madden interjected.

The PRESIDENT — Order! The minister will cease interjecting.

Mr JENNINGS (Minister for Environment and Climate Change) — I thank Mr Finn for his question. He probably does not appreciate that I will be quite fulsome in my answer to him, because I want to take the opportunity he has afforded me of clarifying the context in which I gave an answer —

Mr Finn — You were out of context, were you?

Mr JENNINGS — I can guarantee the member that I was out of context, because in fact what he has just attributed to me as a continual sentence was in fact two separate sentences, two separate ideas that were given in response to two different questions that were asked of me by the ABC. I think from my vantage point it probably demonstrated reasonably poor form from the ABC in editing my responses. I thank Mr Finn for the opportunity to give him, in the order in which they were asked, answers to the questions that were asked of me.

I was asked a question about the health statistics that had been compiled by the local action group. I thank its members for compiling the information, I thank them for their concern about the issues and I thank them for their continuing determination in trying to assess the real health status of their community and whether there is a risk associated with living in this locality with the existing landfill.

In fact that was the spirit in which I answered the question: to say unfortunately, regardless of circumstance or station in life or whether they live near a landfill or not, cancer affects people around the world and exists in our community. Then I went on to say that the reason we are commissioning our own survey — agreed to by the Environment Protection Authority with the Cancer Council Victoria — is to take health statistics that have been compiled by the local community and verify them through a statistical analysis of the prevalence of the illness pattern in that community.

That is the context in which a sentence was then construed and joined with another question and answer that was part of this interview where I was asked whether I would choose to live near the landfill. My answer to that question started off by saying there are many reasons why all of us in our community choose to live or end up living in an area, and some of it has to do with our family connections, where we work, the affordability of the housing stock or the community in which we live. Then it is important to understand that many people have lived in this

community for decades. Then there is the quote Mr Finn attributes to me, that it is also important to note that some people choose to move into this neighbourhood during the operation of the landfill. That was in the context of everything that I had said previously about the circumstances of people living in communities and staying in communities, including people who arrive in the community.

Then I went back to restate the importance of validating the health statistics to know what the real morbidity pattern of this community is compared to what you would expect in a community. At every turn I appreciate the fact that people from all walks of life, unfortunately, have to endure the rigours of cancer and other illnesses. Some of those people live near landfills and some live a thousand miles from landfills, but they still have these health conditions. What it is important for us to do is to see whether there is a coincidence between living close to this landfill and the health status of the community. We have commissioned that work and will follow it through. I am personally supportive of that work and will continue to be supportive of it.

That is a more complete understanding of how I responded to those questions in the media, regardless of how they were cut and spliced and put together to give a different impression to Mr Finn's community.

#### *Supplementary question*

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I take note that the minister fully blames the ABC for the situation that he finds himself in with regard to these comments, and I invite him to join me in my campaign to have that particular organisation privatised. I ask the minister by way of a supplementary: given that a good number of people in the Gladstone Park, Westmeadows and Attwood areas have taken deep offence at the comments he made, will he attend a public meeting — which I am happy to hold on his behalf — to meet with local people and give a personal assurance to their faces that he does not disregard their health needs?

Mr JENNINGS (Minister for Environment and Climate Change) — In the first instance I have some confidence that Mr Finn will distribute my answer to his question fulsomely to his community and set a foundation for a very positive engagement between me and the community. If he is of sufficient goodwill to build a bridge between the statements I have made in answering his question and his community, then I will come back to him and see about this public

meeting.

**COUNCIL**  
**28 July 2010**

## Reference

On the motion of Mr KAVANAGH (Western Victoria) — I move:

That this house —

(1) notes that on 20 May 2010 the Herald Sun reported on the recently released 2007 annual report of the Consultative Council on Obstetric and Paediatric Mortality and Morbidity which showed that 54 out of 181 late-term foetuses who were aborted for 'abnormalities' survived late-term abortions but all of them in the period studied died 'postnatally';

(2) further notes that babies born after around 22 weeks of gestation have a significant chance of survival which increases sharply with each further week of gestation to, at around 26 weeks, achieving a very high chance of survival if given even minimal care, and that the death of every one of these babies in the period studied therefore suggests that they were neglected to death, if not deliberately killed; and

(3) therefore requires the Family and Community Development Committee to inquire into, consider and report on the postnatal deaths of babies born alive in Victoria after failed abortions, with particular reference to the 2007 annual report of the Consultative Council on Obstetric and Paediatric Mortality and Morbidity.

#### **Mr FINN** (Western Metropolitan)

— First of all, I commend and congratulate Mr Kavanagh on bringing this motion to the chamber today. As we are discovering, it is not an easy thing for any member to do knowing the vilification and abuse one often faces when raising these particular issues. Over the last four years I have discovered that Peter Kavanagh is a man of great courage. He is showing that courage again today, and I commend him for it.

So far in this debate there seems to have been some confusion from both Mr Tee and Ms Hartland about the difference between an abortion and an early birth. For example, at our major maternity hospitals we have a sort of schizophrenia — I am loathe to use that word, but I suppose that is what it is. On one floor of the hospital we are desperately trying to save babies who are as young as 25 weeks; on another floor of the hospital we are killing babies who are as young as that. The distinction must be made. I regret there has been a degree of confusion on the part of two of the speakers in

this debate so far.

This is a matter that causes me enormous distress. I get particularly distressed when I hear people say that babies with disabilities should be killed. I am the father of a child with a disability. When our four-year-old twins were in utero we were told one of the twins would in that likelihood be a carrier of or a victim of Down syndrome. We were offered the usual option. Thank God we did not countenance that for a moment, because that little girl is now, I have to say, the light of my life. If we had done what so many others do in that circumstance, we would have killed one of the most delightful little girls who has ever walked the earth.

In my view the assumption that the disability of those in utero should be given an automatic death sentence is totally wrong. It shows an enormous disrespect not just of those children before they are born but of all people with disabilities. If you are prepared to kill children who have disabilities, what does it say about your attitude towards older people with disabilities?

People who say they would be prepared to kill a child with a disability are saying that anybody with a disability is, at the very least, a second-class citizen. I reject that entirely.

Having said all that, it should be pointed out that this motion is not about the substantive issue that we all seem to have been dragged into after all. This motion is about a referral to the Family and Community Development Committee. This motion is an attempt to find out what is going on. It is an attempt to find out the facts so as a Parliament we can make decisions about what is going on. It would allow Ms Hartland, Mr Tee or anybody to give evidence at those hearings so we can be properly informed of what is happening in our hospitals and clinics. That is what this motion is about. It is not about saying it is wrong to kill babies; it is not about saying it is a good thing to kill babies. It is about a referral to a committee so we can at great length and in great detail look at the facts.

These are the facts as Mr Kavanagh has presented them; these are the facts as Ms Hartland has presented them. That is what we are doing here today.

I have to ask why anyone would oppose that. Why would anybody vote against an attempt to find out the truth? Information is empowerment — that is almost a truism. Education on any issue enables us to make decisions because it puts us in a position to know what we are talking about.

At the moment we are basing our discussions on one report and one

## Reference ...

newspaper article. This motion is about finding out exactly what is going on — the details about why these things are happening, if they are necessary and what are the events surrounding these deaths. I again express my consternation that anybody would not want to find out the truth. The truth is precious, particularly during an election campaign, when it is not readily available. It is important.

It is something that we, as elected members of Parliament, must seek at all times. Mr Kavanagh is to be commended on his attempt to refer this matter to the Family and Community Development Committee so that we can find out the truth of this matter.

This matter is not about abortion. I want to make that very clear: this is not about abortion. That debate will continue, I promise you, Acting President, until a decisive victory for babies has been achieved. However, this debate today is not about abortion. It is about whether we should have an inquiry into what is happening to newborn babies — babies we can see, touch and hold; tiny, fragile babies in need of warmth, nutrition and our protection. That is what we are talking about. Even the Victorian law, horrific as it is, gives these babies the same rights as the rest of us. Those babies are recognised under Victorian law as members of the human race. Even the most enthusiastic proponent of the abortion laws that were passed by this place a couple of years ago would admit — and indeed has admitted — that those babies are human beings.

I think about our little girls, who are now almost five years of age. They were born at 33 weeks — although to look at them now, you would not believe it — and they are not much bigger now — —

Mrs Coote — The rabbits!

Mr FINN — The rabbits indeed, Mrs Coote! They were not much older than some of the babies we are talking about in this debate. I suppose this makes the issue very personal for me. I offer my apologies now in case I get a bit emotional during the course of the debate, but it is something that hits home to me in a very personal way.

I have here an article written by former Labor staffer and now, I suppose, Australia's pre-eminent journalist and commentator, Andrew Bolt. I was going to read all of the article, but I will not go into the details and will just read some extracts from it that refer to the coroner in the Northern Territory to whom Mr Kavanagh referred — the other Mr Cavanagh, whose name starts with a C. I will go through the events described

in the article in case anybody thinks Ms Hartland is right — that late-term abortions do not happen and it is all just a dreadful mistake on Mr Kavanagh's part.

I will briefly read some of the findings that Andrew Bolt recorded in his column in the Herald Sun of 27 August 2004 — coming up to six years ago:

Jessica Jane, 21 weeks in the womb, was aborted on the night of 13 July 1998, after her mother was given a labour-inducing drug. Carrie Williams, an experienced midwife, was on her own for the delivery of the foetus, which in most such abortions is killed by the trauma of the contractions.

I am sure members could imagine that that would be the case. The article continues:

Cavanagh's findings — that is, Coroner Cavanagh —

go on: 'She placed what she assumed to be the foetus in a kidney dish and took it from the mother's room. She heard the baby cry, which shocked her.'

I think most of us would understand that in this situation. The excerpt continues:

A distraught Williams told the inquest: 'That then left me in a very big moral dilemma. I didn't know what to do ...

'The baby I had taken into a delivery suite, into what we call the clean-up area and because the baby was making noises, I could not just leave it like we do with some, in a kidney dish, and I put it into a warm rug and put a drape over the top of it so at least it was warm.

'During all this time, I'd been back and checked it about every 10, 15 minutes ... I wasn't sure what to do. I was actually getting quite frustrated ... I rang (the doctor who'd induced the abortion) and ... I said: —Doctor Cho, the baby is alive—'

His response is quite chilling:

He said to me, his exact words were, 'So? I will see her in the morning,' and hung up.

That was in Darwin before the passing of the horrific abortion law in 2008 here in Victoria. But I challenge anybody to say that that sort of thing is not happening here in Victoria.

I challenge Mr Tee or Ms Hartland to get up here and tell us that they know that none of the babies who were mentioned in this report were in exactly the same situation as baby Jessica Jane six years ago in the Northern Territory.

The fact of the matter is that under these laws that were introduced a little under two years ago, Melbourne has become the late-term abortion

capital of Australia. That is the simple fact of the matter. The Royal Women's Hospital has told us that its late-term abortion rate has increased 600 per cent since the passing of the laws. I find it impossible to believe that with the increased numbers of late-term abortions, not just at the Women's but at a number of hospitals and at one particular clinic that finds itself in the news for all the wrong reasons at the moment, there are not more Jessica Janes and babies like her in Melbourne.

It defies logic to suggest that it is not happening here.

Just because it is Melbourne, it could not happen here? Let me tell the house, if it is happening in Darwin and it is happening in Sydney, there is a fair chance it is happening here, because we have the greater numbers, and proportionality would make it almost certain that it would be happening here. That is why we need to have this matter referred to the Family and Community Development Committee. That is why we need to examine this matter a little bit further. That is why we need to find out the truth. That is certainly why I will be supporting Mr Kavanagh's motion today.

I was staggered when I found out the government is opposing this motion. I thought, given that this is just a referral motion to the Family and Community Development Committee, the government would go along with and support this motion. I thought the government would say, 'Yes, that is a reasonable suggestion. We will find out a bit more about that.' You have to ask the question: why is the government opposing this? Why is the government turning its back on these tiny babies? Why is the government discarding the law as ruthlessly as these little babies are also being discarded?

With apologies to those few people in the ALP who care about these sorts of issues, the once great Australian Labor Party has been captured by an extremist element, an extremist left-wing feminist group called Emily's List.

That group is prepared to pay any price to secure and retain its sacred right to abortion. That is the simple fact of the matter. That is why the government is opposed to this motion today. The fact is that former Premier Joan Kirner, Prime Minister Julia Gillard and Emily's List have all joined together to make the ALP, the once great Australian Labor Party, the party of death, and that should distress us all. It certainly distresses me.

This motion and this whole situation saddens me very deeply. It is a very sad day when this Parliament hears of tiny, innocent babies being literally

## Reference ...

thrown to one side and allowed to die — but not all of them. There are many babies that doctors and nurses do a marvellous job saving, and I know there are many babies, and I have seen it happen, who come into this world and do not stay with us for very long. But there are also babies who are aborted very deliberately but who are born alive and are then discarded, and they die from neglect. They are the ones this motion refers to today.

It is not a motion which condemns the practice. It is a motion which purely asks for more information.

It is very sad when this Parliament sees that happening and will not only do nothing to protect these babies but does not even want to know. This Parliament says, 'Don't want to know. Leave it alone.' I now know how the Holocaust happened, because the Germans in the 1930s and the 1940s did exactly what we are doing now: they turned away and pretended that it was not happening. I am very sad indeed. If this motion is defeated, and it looks as if it will be, if this Parliament turns away and pretends that nothing is happening, today will be Victoria's saddest day.

**COUNCIL**  
28 July 2010

## Office Of Police Integrity: Production Of Documents

**Mr FINN** (Western Metropolitan) — I rise to support the motion so ably put by my friend and colleague Mr Dalla-Riva. In doing so I move an amendment, which I now ask to be circulated:

That the words '13 April 2010' be omitted with the view of inserting in their place '10 August 2010.'

It should be obvious to most members of the house that 13 April has passed. We need to make this amendment, as it will be clear and obvious to all.

I will say a few words on the motion before us today. I believe we have a law and order crisis in this state, but I do not believe the crisis is among the rank and file of policemen and policewomen on the front line. I do not believe they are responsible for the concerns that people have about their safety. I do not believe those men and women who go out every day and every night and put their lives on the line to protect us are responsible for

the law and order crisis that we suffer from in this state.

I do not think there is any doubt that for some years the Victoria Police hierarchy has been in disarray. We have not recovered since the appointment of Christine Nixon as Chief Commissioner of Police, when this government brought her down from New South Wales in a way that created pandemonium within the force.

Over Ms Nixon's time as chief commissioner we saw that she had no great enthusiasm for the task of protecting the community and putting the law into place but an enormous capacity for social engineering within the police force. She pushed her own agenda the whole time she was chief commissioner, and as a result the fibre of the Victorian police force was destroyed. She set out to destroy the fibre and the culture of the Victorian police force, and I have to say she was singularly and extraordinarily successful in doing that. It will take us years to recover from Christine Nixon's time as Chief Commissioner of Police.

Those of us who have been touched by cancer would know this metaphor very well. If Christine Nixon were the original cancer in the Victorian police force, she has produced a number of secondary cancers. Now that she has gone she has left behind her a number of cancers in the force that the government has no intention of trying to remove. Until they are removed we will continue to have a law and order crisis in this state. We will continue to have a situation where people will be playing games and putting social engineering and political policy ahead of the enforcement of law and order in Victoria. That is a tragedy for average Victorians and for those of us who are genuinely concerned for our safety.

I live in and represent an area where far too many situations get out of hand — where people's personal safety is at risk, people are seriously injured and people find themselves being bashed, robbed or are under some sort of threat.

I am just hoping that at some stage in the not-too-distant future we might be able to recover from the years of the Nixon menace at the Victoria Police and VicPol might be able to get back to what it is really good at — that is, fighting crime and protecting Victorians.

One of those cancers I referred to is the Office of Police Integrity. The OPI is a circus. It was set up almost as a personal police force of the then chief commissioner to get her enemies, real or perceived, within the police force. Now that she has gone it is time

for the OPI to go as well. As soon as she walked out the door it outlived its usefulness. I am hoping the OPI and others around the leadership hierarchy — and I use that term loosely — of Victoria Police today will be removed and we will again, in the not-too-distant future, have a police force which is led by people who have the best interests of Victorians at heart and genuinely want to see policing in this state as it is supposed to be — and that is all about protecting Victorians.

As I say, that is not happening at the moment and it is long overdue.

I hope Mr Dalla-Riva's motion will go some way towards establishing the facts of this matter and that it might make some contribution to giving us back the police force that we once had and were once so very proud of.

**COUNCIL | Members Statements**  
28 July 2010

## Attorney-General: conduct

**Mr FINN** (Western Metropolitan) — Brendan Donohue told us last night on Channel 7 that the Deputy Premier and Attorney-General, Rob Hulls, sees cheese as the panacea to all the government's electoral problems. I suppose that should not be surprising coming from a man who often presents himself as a rat with a gold tooth. His response to this chamber's request — —

Mr D. Davis — On a point of order, Acting President, the member over there, Mr Murphy, just took a photograph in the chamber. There was a flash across. I understand that members of the public are not entitled to take photographs in the chamber. You may find it interesting to see groups of MPs discussing — —

Hon. M. P. Pakula — He said it was an accident.

Mr D. Davis — No, he took it. There was a flash.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Leane) — Order! I ask the member whether it was an accident.

Mr Murphy — Yes, it was an accident.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Leane) — Order! It will not happen again. I ask the member to delete whatever it was.

Mr FINN — People have been known to queue up to take photos of me.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Leane) — Order! I ask Mr Finn to clarify whether he referred to the Deputy Premier as 'a rat with a gold tooth.'

Mr FINN — No, what I said was he presents himself quite often as a rat

## Attorney-General: conduct ...

with a gold tooth.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Leane) — Order! I ask the member to withdraw that.

Mr FINN — I do not know what is going on with this place sometimes. It is covering up all sorts of things, but I am happy to withdraw it if that is the desire of the Chair.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Leane) — Order! I ask the member not to reflect on the Chair and to withdraw the comment.

Mr FINN — I would never dream of reflecting on the Chair. In response to this chamber's request for information and cooperation the response from the Attorney-General is invariably, 'Stiff cheddar'. Let me give Rob Hulls some advice: if he seeks electoral Nirvana, he should forget the lactose-laden dairy products. He should seek guidance from the good people of Niddrie, who find his social engineering program quite appalling. They are sickened by his experimentation with children that sees them as nothing but guinea pigs who grow up with two mums or two dads. The people of Niddrie have not forgotten it was Rob Hulls's initiative that gave Victoria abortion on demand up until the moment of birth — and in some cases beyond.

It is just not good enough.

I can assure you that nobody in Victoria will easily forgive Rob Hulls for taking justice out of our justice system as he continues to stack every level of the judiciary with his civil libertarian mates. When Victorians are finished with Rob Hulls in November of this year — I can assure you and I can assure Victoria — he will have plenty of time for cheese tasting.

**COUNCIL | Adjournment**  
29 July 2010

## St Albans: Anglican church emergency relief centre

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Community Services. The matter concerns the emergency relief centre which I visited at the St Albans Anglican church in the last couple of weeks. The minister there is Reverend Faith Johnson, and I think a more appropriately named member of the clergy would be hard to find anywhere. This particular emergency relief centre is run purely by volunteers. It has on a regular basis

helped up to 90 people in a single morning. That group of volunteers is a very committed, hardworking and dedicated group, some of advancing years it has to be said — one volunteer I am told is in her nineties. They do a magnificent and sterling job, and I was impressed when I was told of the level of commitment they show to their clients, many of whom are suffering significant hardship.

My main concern is that the centre of this effort is a tin shed in the car park of the church. The tin shed holds tinned food, clothing and a variety of things that might help people who find themselves in strife. The trouble is the tin shed. It has holes in the roof. It is not connected to electricity, so it is prone to be extremely hot during summer and very cold in these winter months. The volunteers give freely of their time to work in this shed to help fellow human beings who might be going through some hardship at a given time.

They have many plans for what they would like to do to help more people and to set up a more permanent fixture to help the people of St Albans who are going through difficult times, but the problem is that they have little money with which to implement these plans.

They are helping people in the true Christian spirit, and I suggest that by doing so they are also saving the state a good deal of money. If these people were not volunteering their time in the way they are doing, either the state or federal government would have to come to the aid of the people the volunteers are assisting, and that would obviously cost taxpayers a good deal of money.

I ask the minister to accompany me to meet Reverend Faith Johnson and the volunteers and see for herself what is being done at St Albans Anglican church. Hopefully she can then get an idea of what she can do to provide more help for both the volunteers and the people of St Albans.

**COUNCIL | Adjournment**  
10 August 2010

## Police: Craigieburn

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. The house would be aware, and perhaps even the minister might be aware, that I have raised a number of warnings over the last few years about gang warfare in the Western Metropolitan Region.

Mrs COOTE — Trained in South Yarra.

Mr FINN — They may be trained in South Yarra; they may well be. I have referred specifically to my concerns about the gangs in St Albans and Sunshine, but I think the riot that exploded in Craigieburn last week is an example of some of the worst we can expect if the government continues to bury its head in the sand on this particular issue.

I am sure those who saw the Craigieburn riot on television would have been as horrified as I was. That riot involved not just those who gathered to enter the fray; this riot was at a shopping centre. Being a very public place, the riot terrified many members of the community who were going about their daily business. Husbands were afraid for their wives, mothers were afraid for their children, and panic, I think it is safe to say, was very much the order of the day in a lot of people's minds.

Given that I have previously raised the issue of the lack of police in Craigieburn, it is of great concern to me and to many people in Craigieburn that the lack of police resources will be a major issue if these sorts of riots continue or indeed if nothing is done to prevent them.

The Craigieburn community must be protected, and I do not believe that at this time we can be sure that that will occur.

There is a sense of fear at this very moment in Craigieburn, and that must be addressed as a matter of urgency.

I ask the Minister for Police and Emergency Services to ensure that the police presence to properly protect the people of Craigieburn is upheld and delivered, and to ensure that the sort of outrageous civil disorder we saw last week in and around Craigieburn is never repeated. We are aware that the member for Yuroke in the other place is not interested in these sorts of issues, so I am very hopeful that the minister will take his lead from me and those who have approached me about this issue and that he will take the appropriate action to ensure that the people of Craigieburn — the people the Minister for Planning allegedly represents as well — get the proper protection they need as innocent people going about their daily lives.

## 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission: Final Report

**Mr FINN** (Western Metropolitan) — I was going to say it gives me a great deal of pleasure to speak on this report, but far from it — I wish in fact that I did not have to speak on this 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission report. I wish this report was not necessary, I wish this royal commission was not necessary and of course I desperately wish the bushfires of February 2009 had never occurred.

Some would say that those of us who live in the western suburbs were not affected by the bushfires of last year, and physically that may be so, but the reality, the truth, is that many, many people of the western suburbs were deeply emotionally distressed by what happened on Black Saturday. Many people in the western suburbs of Melbourne were psychologically pained and continue to be psychologically pained by what they saw on Black Saturday and the days after Black Saturday. The people of the western suburbs have a great empathy for people who are suffering. I think it is a very important point to make that the hearts of everybody in the western suburbs go out to those who have suffered, and continue to suffer, as a result of those dreadful fires.

Unfortunately bushfires are a matter of fact in Victoria. History has told us that there is no getting away from the fact that we will have bushfires. Going back through generations, through decades, over the last century we have seen that bushfire is something that we just have to deal with.

Our job, I believe, as members of this Parliament, as community leaders, is to minimise the damage that these bushfires cause.

I strongly believe that some significant blame for the ferocity of these fires must be carried by those councils who refuse to carry out their responsibility to clean up the fuel which provides such bushfires with the food they need to go on their destructive way. Inevitably these councils have a strong green component. I am a great supporter of trees. I love to go out in the bush, and I was born and raised in the country. I love being in that sort of environment. The Minister for Environment and Climate Change, Minister Jennings, is a

little bit surprised to hear me say that, but I assure the minister — —

Mrs Peulich — Without your crystals. Mr FINN — He has got his own crystals, Mrs Peulich.

But seriously let me assure you that the bush is one of my very favourite places. At the same time we must, and councils must, allow back-burning access via fire mitigation and so forth. The councils have a responsibility to protect the community — their own communities — with regard to these matters. It is not good enough for any council just to say, 'That is all locked up; we will just let it grow', because when that happens that is a disaster waiting to happen.

On a day that was staggering in many ways, one thing that was truly staggering was that there was no leadership shown by anybody in the fight against this fire. We had a situation where there were thousands of volunteer and professional firefighters, police and emergency services personnel risking their lives, but there was nobody at the top showing them leadership.

There was nobody at the top who was taking responsibility for directing traffic — not the chief fire officer, not the Chief Commissioner of Police, not the emergency services commissioner and certainly not the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. In fact many people have asked — and I think this is probably the most significant question of this whole sad and tragic event: where was the minister when all of this was happening? Why was the minister not taking up his responsibility to ensure that leadership was provided to those men and women who were risking their lives on Black Saturday? Where was the minister? It is just not good enough to pop up a few days later and say, 'I spent the day at home.' He should not have spent the day at home. He had a job to do. He did not do it, and that is a sad fact of life.

I have to say to this house that I am very pleased that former Chief Commissioner of Police Christine Nixon is gone from the bushfire reconstruction authority, but I have to point out the obvious: she should never have been appointed in the first place. Ms Nixon should never have got the job. I cannot understand how she got the job. I cannot believe that either the Minister for Police and Emergency Services or the Premier, or both of them for that matter, did not know she had deserted her post when Victorians needed her the most. I cannot believe that either the minister or the Premier were not aware of what she had done.

Again I ask the question: why over the past 10 years has Christine

Nixon been such a protected species, irrespective of what she has done either as the Chief Commissioner of Police, including her total dereliction of duty on Black Saturday, or since as the head of the Victorian Bushfire Reconstruction and Recovery Authority? It has been pointed out time and again that Christine Nixon was not up to the job, and yet this government — and this Premier in particular — has protected her. Why? Will the government and the Premier explain to this Parliament and to the people of Victoria why he has protected her in the way that he has for such a long time? Even her resignation was protected; it was announced under the cover of the announcement of the federal election. It shows a certain degree of cowardice on the part of Christine Nixon that she was not prepared to face the music. She was not prepared to stand up in the full view of the public and tell us where she had gone wrong, admit her mistakes and perhaps even say that she was sorry. Maybe she could have said she was sorry for what she had done or perhaps what she had not done.

The total inadequacy of Christine Nixon as Chief Commissioner of Police was never more apparent than on Black Saturday 2009. However, the inadequacy goes far beyond Christine Nixon; it goes to those who put politics and social engineering ahead of proper policing and proper protection for our community — those who gave her the job when she was never up to the task. That is something we must never allow to happen again.

As I said, on Black Saturday thousands of Victorians risked their lives in a war of monumental proportions, the likes of which we had never seen before in this state, but the generals were asleep at the wheel. Some went to the hairdresser and to dinner; some stayed at home in Bendigo; and others, unbelievably, did not have a clue what they should do. That is just not good enough for Victoria and not good enough for Victorians.

Russell Rees and Christine Nixon have gone, but still today nobody wants to take responsibility for the total dereliction of duty by those who should have been leading the way on Black Saturday, those who should have been in charge and shown leadership. Nobody is prepared to get up and say, 'Yes, it was my responsibility and I failed.' Why is the government not able to accept responsibility for the job its members should be doing? It is just not good enough.

I conclude by offering my sympathy and the sympathy of those in the west

## 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission: Final Report ...

of Melbourne to those families and friends of the victims. Black Saturday was for them a day of great personal tragedy. It was a day that has changed their lives forever and which they will never forget. Our thoughts and our prayers must continue, and we must support them in any way possible. We must do more to help those who lost property and who are spending another winter in caravans, warming themselves around camp fires in various parts of Victoria.

Here we are, more than 18 months after the fires of Black Saturday, and so much needs to be done but is not being done. So much must be done and has to be done, so let us get on with it. We owe those people. Above all we must commit ourselves to do whatever is humanly possible to ensure that we never again see the tragedy that we saw on 7 February 2009.

### COUNCIL | Members Statements 11 August 2010

## Australian Labor Party: federal leadership

**Mr FINN** (Western Metropolitan) — This morning whilst preparing for another day in the adventure that is life in the Legislative Council I received a text message from an old mate of mine. Bobby is a former Cairo taxidriver and still drives like one, but we share a deep mutual love of the Richmond Football Club. He is a good bloke and has been a mate of mine for over 25 years. The trouble is that Bobby has one major flaw — he is a Labor man. I mention that because the text he sent to me this morning reads, 'Good morning, mate. It scares me to think Mark Latham could have been PM.' I shot Bob back a text reminding him that he had voted for Mark Latham to become Prime Minister.

It got me thinking about all those Labor types currently bagging Mad Mark who were just a few short years ago his greatest supporters.

The current Prime Minister helped put Mark Latham in the Labor leadership; she was going to be his health minister. He had the full backing of the current Deputy Prime Minister, and even Kevin Rudd backed him in those days. The highest position of political leadership in this nation was going to go to Mad Mark Latham with the support of the ALP. How can we hand the future of Australia over to

people who were just a few years ago at one with Mark Latham? How could we trust these people with the keys to government when each and every one of them wanted to put Mark Latham in the Lodge? The nation and its people are too important to let this mob of whackers run the show any longer.

### COUNCIL | Adjournment 12 August 2010

## Autism: western suburbs schools

**Mr FINN** (Western Metropolitan) — I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Education and it concerns the ongoing battle for justice for children with autism in the western suburbs and their parents and in particular the battle for a P-12 autism-specific school in the western suburbs.

Recently there was a meeting between a group of parents and the western metropolitan region of DEECD (Department of Education and Early Childhood Development). This meeting was, to say the least, less than successful. I have received from one parent who was at that meeting some points detailing some of the matters that were raised. She tells me, with some distress, I have to say:

We were told there was no committee for the western region autism plan, rather just a group of public servants from the DEECD ...

they consulted with principals from mainstream schools. When we asked, it was admitted there had been no consultation with special school principals despite them having large numbers of autistic students at their schools. Parents were to have no input and were not to be informed of what is on the regional autism state plan.

There were plans for autism inclusion units at mainstream schools. They didn't know which schools, they didn't know how many units ... and they didn't know ... how many students it would cater for. These would be pilot programs. They didn't know how long before any more units would be created. They didn't even seem very sure what the units would be like.

Basically it was implied that we had a choice whether to put our children in special schools or mainstream schools. This is very cruel and insensitive.

My daughter would be considered 'classic autistic' and runs away, self-harms when distressed, struggles to communicate, at nearly 9 appears not to read, can't cope with being around very many people. We have

no choice ... as do many other parents of children like ours.

It is outrageous that children with autism and their families are being put through this agony when we consider there are autism-specific P-12 schools in the northern suburbs, certainly in the eastern suburbs and the southern suburbs, with a new one announced in the recent state budget. However, the western suburbs have been told, 'It's just not planned. It's not going to happen and we don't even really want to talk to you about it.'

It is not good enough. It is insulting; it is insensitive. It is an outrage that in the western suburbs children with autism and their parents are being treated in this way.

I ask the minister, as soon as is humanly possible, to set up a time to make herself available for a meeting with me and with parents of children with autism living in the west. We need to get this matter up and running and to get it resolved so that there is justice for these children.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT — Order! Mr Finn mentioned that he had raised this matter about an autism school previously, and that was also my recollection. As I understand it, it would have been within the past six months; is that correct?

Mr FINN — Yes.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT — Order! Can he advise me what was the action he sought on the previous occasion?

Mr FINN — I thought that you, or whoever was in the chair, would ask that very question, so I checked before I came in. What I asked the minister for was that a school be built immediately. What I am asking for tonight is a meeting between the parents, the minister and me.

### COUNCIL | Adjournment 31 August 2010

## Rail: Laverton station

**Mr FINN** (Western Metropolitan) — I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Public Transport. The matter involves further problems at the Laverton railway station. The house will recall that in March I raised a number of problems with the new Laverton railway station, particularly in relation to the lifts breaking down, forcing people — particularly the elderly and the infirm, such as those in wheelchairs — to find other ways to get out of the station. Given that the ramps are no longer there, the lifts do not work and they cannot get up the

## Rail: Laverton station ...

stairs, we have a real problem on our hands. That is not the problem I wish to raise this evening, even though that problem, from what I am told, still very much exists at Laverton and nobody has done a thing to change that. I think that is very sad indeed.

There is a problem that I have personally witnessed on a number of occasions in recent times when I have been at the Laverton station in the very early hours of the morning, greeting commuters and receiving their warm wishes as they have headed off on the trains on their way to work. This brand-new station has an overpass with a covered-in walkway. It is very impressive-looking indeed. When the lifts are working it is even better. But there is one major flaw: the steps between the overpass and the platforms have no roof. So while people can access the overpass and gather in large numbers under the roof on the overpass, they have to make a mad dash down the stairs to get to the platform. What I have witnessed is a number of the good people of the western suburbs almost coming to grief as they have attempted to run through the rain down the steps to get to their train.

I would have thought that if you were going to spend a couple of million dollars on a railway station, even for a by-election, you would at least put a roof over the stairs. Many of these people in Laverton and the people of Sanctuary Lakes and surrounds are almost coming a cropper. It is just not good enough at all.

I will not ask the minister to explain how this station was built without a roof over the stairs, but I will ask him to ensure that a roof is built over these stairs.

It will provide a safer and dryer environment for the good people of that part of the western suburbs.

**COUNCIL**  
1 September 2010

## Government: Production Of Documents

**Mr FINN** (Western Metropolitan) — On a radio station that I listen to every morning there is a Friday morning segment entitled 'Bullish artist of the week' where prizes are given for people who ring in and nominate people who have carried on in a way which might not necessarily be consistent with the truth or indeed which might provide some assistance to the perversion of

the truth.

I think this week I might be walking away with the bottles of De Bortoli: I am going to ring in on Friday morning and nominate Mr Murphy, because what we heard in his contribution before was one of the most extraordinary performances I have ever heard in my life. I was absolutely staggered. I can only say to members opposite: if Mr Murphy is a beacon of what the ALP has to offer in future, they are in more strife than they can possibly imagine. They are in deep and diabolical trouble.

I had no intention of speaking in this debate. I thought it had been handled quite well by a good number of members on this side of the house and I had no intention of making a contribution. Even when Mr Leane was speaking I was not tempted to come down and set the record straight. But when Mr Murphy got up I just could not help myself, because his contribution tonight is something that I might actually keep a copy of and show my children and their children and perhaps even their children — if I am still around at that point — as an example of what not to do if they are ever in a position of speaking in a public arena. It was absolutely extraordinary.

The most amazing claim from Mr Murphy was that we on this side of the house are in some sort of conservative coalition with the Greens. This was coming from a member of a party who preferred the Greens in every electorate in the state.

Mr Lenders would have us believe that he does not want that situation to continue, but he does. It is not going to change and we all know it is not going to change, because what we have seen today in Canberra is replicated here in Victoria.

The Labor Party is in bed with the Greens, and it does not matter what it says, what it does or how many times it jumps up and down and objects — that is the fact of the matter. The Labor Party and the Greens are as one. In fact the Greens are the new extreme socialist left of the ALP. I know the Minister for Environment and Climate Change, Mr Jennings, is appalled at that — he thought he was about as extreme left as you could get — but then along came the Greens, and by comparison Mr Jennings is almost a right-winger. President, you are over here with me!

Let us not be silly about this.

Let us consider the truth of the matter: we are here in opposition because of Greens preferences. The truth is that Mark Rose would be the member for Altona right now if

it were not for Greens preferences. Tonight on the news we saw photos of the outgoing Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, with the federal leader of the Greens, Bob Brown, and his cohorts all slapping each other on the back furiously, and what a marvellous heart-warming sight that was — not!

The fact of the matter is that the Greens and the Labor Party are as one, and there is no getting away from that fact. They can get up here and posture and make all sorts of — —

Mr Kavanagh interjected.

Mr FINN — I apologise to Mr Kavanagh. He has just reminded me that there is only one Labor member of this house, and he is it — and that is very true.

Historically and legally that is very true. Of course I was referring to the ALP and the Greens.

If you want to talk about Labor preferences, I stated my position that both sides should put the Greens last. I said that, and I challenge Mr Viney, Mr Jennings, Mr Lenders and anyone else who wants to stick their head up on the other side of the house to say likewise. If they want to match my push to put the Greens last, I would be delighted. I would be the first to congratulate them, but I certainly will not be holding my breath. I do not think it will happen.

This motion is about who runs this state. Is it the executive or is it the Parliament? This motion is about the sovereignty of the Parliament of Victoria. That is what this is about.

We have heard some members tonight get up and claim that they are elected as members of Parliament and that Mr Lenders is elected as a member of Parliament and we have to respect that, but they themselves do not respect the authority or the sovereignty of the Parliament itself. That is what this motion is about. It is asking: where does the buck stop? And the answer I give to that is that it stops here, in this Parliament. That is where the buck stops, that is where the authority is, and that is why we must support this motion tonight.

**COUNCIL**  
1 September 2010

## Reference

On the motion of Ms HARTLAND (Western Metropolitan) — I move:

That this house requires the Family and Community Development Committee to inquire into, consider and report on the provisions of the Medical Treatment Act 1988 relating to end-of-life medical treatment and palliative care options, with particular

## Reference ...

regard to —

(a) whether those provisions are sufficient to meet contemporary community expectations;

(b) whether those provisions are sufficient to prevent end-of-life suffering;

(c) whether those provisions continue to facilitate and support best practice;

(d) input from a variety of stakeholders and the community; and

(e) whether to make recommendations to the Attorney-General to refer any matter to the Victorian Law Reform Commission.

**Mr FINN** (Western Metropolitan) — The opposition has adopted a view of giving its members a conscience vote on this particular matter, so obviously I will not be speaking on behalf of every member of the opposition because there are different views on this issue. I can assure the house that I will not be visiting upon Ms Hartland the sort of abuse and vitriol that she directed at Mr Kavanagh when he recently moved a motion on a life and death issue just a few weeks ago. In fact if anything, I would say to Ms Hartland that she is consistent — she supports death at both ends. That is something on which she has been consistent from day one.

I want to make two quick points on this motion. Firstly, as a member of the Family and Community Development Committee I can advise the house that we do not have time to discuss this reference. We already have a brief. For many months we have been examining public housing, and we are rapidly coming to the point where we will have a final report, which we are preparing at the moment. We must also keep in mind that the Parliament will be dissolved at the end of next month. We will have just enough time to finish our current study before the Parliament is dissolved in time for the election; I am sure Mr Scheffer will back me up on that one. In pure, practical terms there is no way that we can take on any other issue, particularly a conflicted and burdensome issue such as this one.

Having read the motion and listened to Ms Hartland, I am struggling to see how this is related to the Medical Treatment Act 1988. This motion is not about revisiting or debating the ramifications of that particular bill. I remember only too well when that bill was passed, because on that evening I was sitting not far from where I am standing at this very moment. This motion is not about revisiting the Medical Treatment Act 1988 or finding out what impact that has had. This motion is about revisiting the issue of euthanasia.

I say to the house that we have

already done that. As Ms Hartland pointed out, we did that when we debated her bill about two years ago. During her address on this particular motion she gave a very thorough run-down of a good many of the contributions to the debate on that bill. Why we are retracing the steps of the debate that we had some two years ago — which had a very clear result in the end, when it was defeated — I do not know.

My views on this matter have not changed.

I am very sympathetic to those who wish to have a painless and swift, I suppose in some ways, end to their physical life here on earth, but there is no way that at this point we can be assured that any law will guarantee that we do not step over the mark and find ourselves in a situation — as people in other countries have — where lives have been taken without the consent of those who are being killed. If we could get a guarantee, then I certainly would reconsider my position, but we cannot do that.

I know that many in the euthanasia lobby say, 'Look at Oregon and some of the other places that have tried this.' I would say that they should look at Holland and some of the other places where a good number of people have been killed without their consent. That is something that we in this country should not be encouraging and tolerating.

I express the hope that we as a Parliament, as representatives of society in Victoria in 2010, embrace life and the culture of life and that we turn away from death as it is presented as some macabre panacea for a good many human problems. Those who almost accept that as a way of life — if that is not a contradiction — are probably very sad people, and I would like to assist them to enjoy life a little bit more.

I will be voting against this motion. I suppose that will not come as any great shock to anybody. I believe we have been there before; there is no need to go back. I urge members to vote against this motion.

## COUNCIL | Members Statements 1 September 2010

### Greens: support

**Mr FINN** (Western Metropolitan) — I am sure the cockles of our collective hearts were warmed on election night this year when we heard the newly elected member for Melbourne, Adam Bandt, tell us that the world needs more love, not less. I thought that may be a turning point in the history of the world!

Hon. M. P. Pakula — No fear!

**Mr FINN** — But, as the minister points out, it is sadly not the case. It was fascinating that the first ones to ignore this new decree from on high were none other than supporters of — you guessed it! — the Australian Greens. When I suggested last week that the Greens were to the Left what One Nation was to the Right, it seems all that love went out the window. My office was deluged with abusive phone calls, with some callers using extreme and obscene language. The vitriol and venom directed at me over the last few days by supporters of this extreme left political party is far from anything Mr Bandt or perhaps the Australian Greens might like to purport to be supporting. After what they have been talking about, the lack of tolerance and lack of love from the extreme left in this country is quite extraordinary. It is pure unadulterated hypocrisy, and sadly there is more to come if we see a repeat come November.

## COUNCIL | Adjournment 2 September 2010

### Ambulance services: Craigieburn

**Mr FINN** (Western Metropolitan) — I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Health. It concerns the ongoing saga of ambulance services in Craigieburn and surrounding suburbs.

I have received a letter from Mr Keith Herring, the secretary of the Craigieburn and District Ambulance Committee. The letter begins:

The Craigieburn and District Ambulance Committee Inc. (CADAC) would like to bring to your attention that the Craigieburn ambulance branch should be upgraded to a 24-hour service so that it meets the needs of our growing community.

A major part of our local population assumes that there is a 24-hour ambulance service in

Craigieburn. In fact, the Craigieburn ambulance vehicle operates from 9.00 a.m. to 9.00 p.m. From 7.30 p.m. to 9.00 a.m., a volunteer ambulance first responder team attends to 'Code 1' medical emergencies and provides advanced first aid, but they do not transport patients to hospital. This means that if a person needs to be transported to hospital after 9.00 p.m., ambulance vehicles have to come from other areas and it is possible that patients may have to wait up to 30 minutes or more before being transported to hospital.

It is not only residents of the area but visitors, people taking part in sporting activities, and as the development continues especially with the opening of the new town centre, there will be people coming into the area to work who will need to feel secure in the knowledge that no matter what time of day or night there is an ambulance vehicle based in Craigieburn.

We also have to take into account the amount of traffic using the Hume Freeway and the possibility of serious motor vehicle accidents occurring and that Craigieburn is a gateway to the areas north of us.

I have also received from CADAC a number of reports of ambulance response times over recent weeks. I am informed that an 80-year-old lady neighbour of Mr Herring had a fall and seriously injured her head. A call was made to 000 at 7.30 p.m. The ambulance arrived half an hour later. That ambulance came from Thomastown.

Last Thursday morning another chap up the street from Mr Herring called an ambulance for his wife at 3.20 a.m. A private ambulance arrived at 5.00 a.m. to transport her to hospital. We can see those sorts of ambulance times are just not good enough.

Representations have been made to the member for Yuroke in the Assembly. She has rejected those community concerns. There is barely any support from her for the local community, and I believe that is a disgrace in itself.

I ask the minister to take these concerns into consideration, to review the needs of the Craigieburn community and the suburbs surrounding Craigieburn and ensure that Craigieburn is given a 24-hour ambulance service based in Craigieburn that will meet the needs of the growing Craigieburn community.

## **Rail: public safety**

**Mr FINN** (Western Metropolitan) — My question is directed to the Minister for Public Transport.

Ms Lovell — He is not here.

Mr FINN — No, he is not, is he; Mr Barber is not here. In Mr Barber's absence I will direct my question to Mr Pakula, who, I am told, does act from time to time as the Minister for Public Transport. I refer the minister to the leaked letter from the Southern Cross station operator, AssetCo, detailing a litany of gaps in the security surveillance that is putting Victorian commuters at increased risk. The closed-circuit television (CCTV) system installed only two years ago is described as 'seriously inadequate', and parts of the station are not even covered by the CCTV cameras.

The footage is of such low quality that it is essentially useless. Given that, I ask the minister to give a guarantee that any abduction or assault at the station will be captured by the surveillance system and that the footage could be used for evidentiary or police investigation purposes.

Hon. M. P. PAKULA (Minister for Public Transport) — I am not sure whether Mr Finn was trying to take the micky out of Mr Barber or me, but I want to assume it was Mr Barber for the purposes of this question time. I have seen the breathless report today that refers to a leaked letter. The reality is that the letter from Mr Walker was a letter that was sent in normal business operations; it formalised matters raised at regular operation meetings. A number of the claims in the article were interesting, and not all of them were accurate.

In regard to the assertion that parts of Southern Cross railway station are not under adequate security surveillance, I point out that the fact is that black spots for CCTV are known. Additional cameras have been installed to cut

— —

Mr D. Davis — On a point of order, President, the minister is clearly reading a document, and I wonder if he might make the document available to the chamber.

The PRESIDENT — Order! Maybe it is not clearly understood in the chamber, but the fact is that the minister is free to answer the question in any way he sees fit. He is not required to make material available in terms of the questions asked or his answer.

Mr PAKULA — I have never read an answer in this chamber, unlike Mr Davis with his supplementary

questions. There are more than 200 security cameras present at the station. The station also has an enormous number of staff and personnel; and as I have indicated in this house previously, we have recently upgraded something like 3000 CCTV cameras to digital capacity to improve their resolution, and that improvement in resolution has already borne fruit on a number of occasions.

It is also not correct, as the article claims, that the operator has demanded upgrades to the system. The matters raised by the CEO of Civic Nexus have been raised in the normal course of business operations. Operational issues requiring improvement are raised from time to time and are documented formally in letters to the department from time to time, and all those matters remain matters for discussion between the representatives of Southern Cross station and the Department of Transport. As I have indicated to this chamber, we have taken enormous steps in terms of upgrading CCTV resolution.

Mr Finn — It is working really well there.

Hon. M. P. PAKULA — As I said yesterday, or it might have been Tuesday, Mr Finn, in fact — —

Mr Finn — 'Seriously inadequate.'

Hon. M. P. PAKULA — Mr Finn is quoting from the article; but the fact is, as I have indicated, that the upgrade to digital has already led to a number of individuals turning themselves in when images of them have been displayed over the internet and on television.

I also have to say in regard to that story that, as I indicated previously, there are an enormous number of staff present at Southern Cross station, and the dialogue that goes on between the Southern Cross authority and the department routinely leads to changes as technology improves and as other changes are required from time to time at that station.

The cameras that were initially installed were part of the scope when the Southern Cross station was constructed and were state of the art at the time. We recognise that technology moves on; we recognise that as technology moves on improvements need to be made, and they are improvements that we continue to demonstrate and build across the system.

### *Supplementary question*

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I commend the minister for a half-decent attempt to defend the indefensible, but given the lack of

## Rail: public safety ...

security surveillance available at a major public transport hub like Southern Cross railway station — —

Mr Viney — On a point of order, President, I note that Mr Finn is reading his supplementary question from a document, and I wonder whether he might like to make the document available to the house.

The PRESIDENT — Order! I remind Mr Viney that there is such a thing as a frivolous point of order. Any repeat from anyone today will result in an early lunch.

Mr FINN — I will ask the question again: given the lack of security surveillance available at a major public transport hub like Southern Cross station, is it not a fact that the need for protective service officers at train stations after 6.00 p.m. is now even more urgent?

Hon. M. P. PAKULA (Minister for Public Transport) — This is — —

Mr Finn — You obviously don't get the train after dark.

Hon. M. P. PAKULA — I do, Mr Finn. This is not the first time that members of the opposition have sought to have me endorse their policy. As I have said — —

Mr D. Davis — You copied half of it.

Hon. M. P. PAKULA — In regard to the opposition's policy, let me say it is increasingly becoming an orphan policy. We saw comments by Mr Bowen from the Public Transport Users Association — and I am sure the opposition will not mind me quoting on this occasion — where he said:

While we are pleased the opposition is being proactive on railway security, stations are not war zones ...

Armed guards on every platform

Honourable members interjecting.

Hon. M. P. PAKULA — Let me say it is — —

Mr Finn interjected.

Hon. M. P. PAKULA — I understand why as part of the Liberal Party's ongoing campaign of fear — fear about social housing, fear about law and order, fear about safety on public transport — it is in Mr Finn's interest to portray public transport as a war zone, but Mr Bowen, as an advocate for public transport users, has made the point that:

Armed guards on every platform is a disproportionate response to the problem.

They are his words, not mine. It is also the case that the Rail, Tram and Bus Union does not support this and the government does not support it. When he was asked, the CEO of Metro Trains Melbourne dared to express

an opinion and was threatened with the sack by Mr Mulder, the shadow Minister for Public Transport and member for Polwarth in the Assembly.

Mr O'Donohue interjected.

Hon. M. P. PAKULA — Let me take up Mr O'Donohue's point. He claims that the CEO of Metro endorsed it to start with. What the CEO of Metro was asked at the committee to which Mr O'Donohue referred was whether having protective services officers on platforms might lead to increased patronage. He might have answered that in the affirmative; it is not the same as endorsing it as a good idea.

Mr Finn interjected.

Hon. M. P. PAKULA — I inform Mr Finn that there are many ways you can have a staff presence and a security presence at stations, all of which might increase patronage and many of which might have a more beneficial effect for the network overall than simply having armed guards on stations. As I have indicated, we believe that can be done by increasing the number of transit police, by increasing the number of staffed stations, by having more staff to provide assistance to customers and by having an intelligence-based deployment method.

In closing, if the import of Mr Finn's question is to ask whether I endorse the Liberal Party's policy, the answer is no.

**COUNCIL | Second Reading  
3 September 2010**

## Climate Change Bill

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I come to this debate rather late with just a few thoughts on the hysteria surrounding this entire climate change matter. I use the word 'hysteria' advisedly because the hysteria surrounding this whole climate change debate reflects the need for the international left to have something with which to scare people and to hang its hat on.

We have to come to a conclusion that climate change is not so much a scientific thing as it is a political thing. We have seen left-wingers the world over using this as a means to promote themselves.

At the 2007 election former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd — 'Kevin07' as he then was — said climate change was the great moral challenge of our time. Then he proceeded to sit on his hands for the next three years. He was intending to do the same for the next three years but the now outgoing

Prime Minister got in first.

After the downfall of communism and the arms race, the left needed something else to hang its hat on — to scare people with. It raised a few dollars and promoted its own political interests. It came up with a thing called global warming. This was going along very nicely for a while; quite a number of people were terrified they were going to be fried in their beds and that one morning they would wake up sizzling like so many eggs and sausages on the breakfast table. This opened the purse strings of the gullible — those who are easily fooled. They gave money to environmentalists, greenies and those who promoted this nonsense until it was pointed out to them, predominantly in Australia by Andrew Bolt, that in fact — —

Mrs Coote — A good man.

Mr FINN — A very good man, Mrs Coote. It was pointed out to them that global warming did not actually exist and had not existed for quite some time.

Even when it did exist, it was nowhere near as bad as these people had been saying. What did they do? They changed the name. All of a sudden global warming became climate change. What does climate change mean? Climate change can mean anything you like — if it is too hot, it is climate change; if it is too cold, it is climate change; if it is just right, it is climate change.

This is a con; the whole thing is a con. Today we are in the Parliament of Victoria wasting our time on something that is largely an invention of the left. I am not suggesting for a moment that the climate does not change. I think that is a natural phenomenon; it has been happening for thousands of years, otherwise we would get our skates on and skate down Bourke Street. We would still be in the ice age. Obviously the climate changes. It gets warmer, it gets cooler, and that is the way nature works. But the nonsense so many go on about — that is, the fear peddled by the left in this country and around the world — has to be stomped on.

We see just how false all this nonsense is when we consider the scare about the rising sea levels. We were told that islands would disappear and that thousands of people would be drowned. This is just absolutely hysterical nonsense. It was put to bed recently by none other than Al Gore when he bought a mansion — paid for by the climate change scare, no doubt — on Miami Beach. That is how scared he is about rising sea levels.

I should add that Al Gore has doubled his personal fortune as a result of his

## Climate Change Bill ...

championing climate change. He can see a fast buck when there is one around, and he is very quick to grab it — and he was very quick to grab it. If the Labor-Greens coalition — —

The PRESIDENT — Order! Whilst I am sure a number of us are actually enjoying Mr Finn's contribution, putting aside the fact that he is scaring the children in the gallery, the matter before us is the bill.

I think he should concentrate on the bill, and I ask him to come back to it.

Mr FINN — I am very happy to do that, President; I was just moving into the areas to which you referred. I was just going to suggest to our Greens and Labor friends, who are cuddling up very nicely over there on the benches — and a heart-warming sight it is too as they follow in the steps of their federal counterparts! — that if they are looking for something to really scare — —

Mr Lenders — Who did you prefer in Melbourne?

Mr FINN — Don't get me started on that.

If they are looking for something with which to scare people, they should tell people about the emission trading scheme and what it is going to do to my electorate in the western suburbs, what it is going to do to industries, what it is going to do to business, what it is going to do to people who work out there, how many jobs will be lost, how many homes will be lost and how many people are going to be without work and without a future because of this nonsense we are debating here today. It would be nice — it would be wonderful — if logic and common sense were to prevail on this whole matter. I am not confident that it will, because there are far too many people with far too many dollars to be made out of this con.

However, we have to sit through this, and I have a feeling that unfortunately it is not the last we will hear of this sort of legislation. If the Labor-Greens coalition gets into government in Canberra, I fear for what is going to happen to this country as a result of the climate change scare.

I sincerely hope that members of this house will take seriously my words of warning — that there are matters that desperately need to be addressed but that this is not one of them.

## COUNCIL | Adjournment 14 September 2010

### Sport governance and inclusion project: member

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Sport, Recreation and Youth Affairs. In recent times I have been appalled by the ferocity of the attacks on Aussie swimming champion Stephanie Rice, as I am sure many members of this house have been. Stephanie Rice is a great Australian sports star who has brought great glory to this nation, and I am sure that she will continue to do so if she is given the opportunity.

Stephanie is a 22-year-old who has achieved more in her short life than I believe most would in a century. She recently used a word on Twitter that she probably should not have used — I think that is the best way to describe it. It should be pointed out that that word was not an attack on homosexuals, but she was having a whack at a South African sporting team.

I have to say I do not find anything particularly wrong with that — in fact it is probably highly desirable in many ways. Despite that, Stephanie Rice has tearfully apologised, but the campaign of hysteria has continued.

I have asked myself who is responsible for this campaign, and this question was answered with an email I received the other day. The email was addressed to 'Davenport Customer Service', with a courtesy copy sent to [ausqueer@yahoo.com](mailto:ausqueer@yahoo.com). The email is from an individual called Rob Mitchell. Having done a Google search on him, I understand he is some sort of self-styled homosexual activist. He starts his email by saying:

Hi,

Can I suggest you check out [www.davenportsocks.com](http://www.davenportsocks.com)

It is a website I have set up highlighting the link between the systemic vilification peddled by your 'star' and the inevitable result it has on the mental health of the 10 per cent of young people in this country who are not straight.

The email goes on for quite some time with language that I think is rather intimidating and threatening to the Davenport company as to what will happen to the company if it does not drop its sponsorship of Stephanie Rice, as indeed Jaguar has done, which I think is pretty appalling.

The thing that distresses me most is that Mr Rob Mitchell has signed this

email as a member of the governance and inclusion project of the Victorian department of sport.

He has used the department of sport and the Victorian government in his campaign to destroy the life of a great Australian sportsperson. I think that is despicable, and I ask the minister to take immediate action to make it clear to the Victorian community that the Victorian government does not condone this activity. I also ask that he sack Rob Mitchell from any position he holds within the Victorian government.

## COUNCIL | Adjournment 15 September 2010

### Sunbury Road: traffic management

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Roads and Ports, and it is a matter that I have raised before — in fact I think I raised it 17 or 18 years ago in another place.

Mrs Coote — That was a good era.

Mr FINN — My word, it was a very good era, and let us hope we return to a similar era very soon.

Mrs Peulich — On the way!

Mr FINN — It is on the way, Mrs Peulich.

I have to say, President, that between the time that I first raised this matter and now the situation has deteriorated enormously; I just cannot begin to tell you. I am speaking specifically about Sunbury Road. I do not wish to intrude upon Mrs Petrovich's territory, but I am particularly talking about the section of that road between Loemans Road in Bulla and the end of the Tullamarine Freeway.

As we know, and as indeed was predicted by a number of people when Melbourne Airport was privatised, the airport has grown into a significant employer. I think there are somewhere between 15 000 and 20 000 employees at the airport, and that has about doubled from where it was 15 or 20 years ago.

Because there is such appalling public transport to Melbourne Airport, all those people have to drive.

A majority of those people, I would hazard to suggest, live in the Macedon Ranges or in Sunbury and have to use the road to which I refer.

The road behind the airport is frequently gridlocked and is the cause of enormous frustration for people. I have seen incidents where people

## Sunbury Road: traffic management ...

have taken their own lives and the lives of others into their hands as they have tried to move along that part of the road. The bridge at Deep Creek is about as old as this building and almost as functional. It has to be said that it is way past its use-by date and something has to be done.

The township of Bulla, where I am very happily domiciled, is paralysed twice a day, cut in two by the traffic. I can only say to the house that we are in urgent need of the much-talked-about Bulla bypass not just for residents but also for the thousands of motorists who use that road every day.

I ask the minister to immediately begin a traffic management plan for Sunbury Road, particularly for that section of the road between Bulla and the end of the Tullamarine Freeway. It is an absolutely urgent matter for many thousands of people. It is something that is long overdue, it is something that is much needed and it is something that cannot be put off any longer.

## COUNCIL | Members Statements 16 September 2010

### Blue Ribbon Day

**Mr FINN** (Western Metropolitan) — On 29 September Blue Ribbon Day comes our way. On Blue Ribbon Day we remember 151 police officers who were killed on duty in this state. We remember Sergeant Kennedy and constables Scanlon and Lonigan who were murdered by Ned Kelly and his gang in the 1800s, and we are reminded that Ned Kelly was not a hero; he was a police killer.

Seared into our more recent memory is 21-year-old Constable Angela Taylor who was killed by a bomb outside the then Russell Street police headquarters in 1986. We remember constables Steven Tynan and Damian Eyre, two young men ambushed and brutally murdered in Walsh Street, South Yarra, in 1988. We remember Sergeant Gary Silk and Senior Constable Rodney Miller who were murdered in cold blood in Moorabbin in 1998.

I will never forget, as someone who was at Rodney Miller's funeral, the heartbreaking sight of his widow carrying their young child, walking behind the coffin as it left the chapel.

The men and women of Victoria Police have my profound respect and admiration. Blue Ribbon Day, on 29 September, allows Victorians the opportunity to remember those who gave their lives in the service of our community. It allows us to show our gratitude and support for our police.

What a dreadful mess we would all be in without them. I often wear my blue ribbon. On 29 September I will be wearing it again with special purpose.

## COUNCIL | Adjournment 5 October 2010

### Water: Werribee irrigation district

**Mr FINN** (Western Metropolitan) — I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Water. It may come as news to you, President, that the Committee for Wyndham is a strong and powerful voice for the people of that municipality in the western suburbs of Melbourne. The committee has come out very strongly in recent times saying that the state government has to do more to ensure the future viability of the Werribee irrigation district following the presentation of options to the growers from the long-awaited report on the Western Irrigation Futures project.

The chairman, Peter Hudson, whom I am sure Mr Koch knows well, recently stated in a media release that:

The Werribee irrigation district has been and still is a very significant supplier of fresh vegetables to Victoria and is recognised in 'Melbourne 2030 vision for green wedges' as an intensive agricultural area — at least until 2030 and needs more than what been offered in the 'options'.

The reality is that growers are being forced to use water that has salinity levels up to 2000 EC thus increasing the soil salinity and sodicity levels and costs through expensive soil management practices.

This is clearly something that is intolerable in an area which is so important to the food chain of Melbourne, particularly as the food bowl is so close to Melbourne itself. The media release further states:

Mr Hudson went on to say:

This is at a time when the growers were to get EC levels of 1000 or below. The salinity impact and costs associated with the present recycled water from the western treatment plant and proposed base EC level of 1500 is not sustainable for the future of vegetable growing.

That is clearly an attack on the livelihoods of a good many people in the Werribee South area, but it is also a major concern for those who are interested in placing fresh vegetables on the plates of Melburnians. It is something that affects all people, not just those in the Werribee South area.

The Committee for Wyndham has

questioned whether:

... the current water source from the western treatment plant will provide water of a quality and at an affordable cost consistent with the sustainability of the Werribee irrigation district for vegetable growing.

This is something the government has to address as a matter of urgency. This is an issue that has been going on for far too long.

Mr Koch — Years and years.

Mr FINN — Years and years, as Mr Koch says. It has been going on for far too long, certainly for the entire 11-year period of government. It is well and truly time for the government to come to the party on this issue, and I ask the minister to commit to a long-term supply of water fit for the purposes of Werribee South irrigators and to ensure that salinity levels are able to be retained at an EC (electrical conductivity) level of 1000 or less.

## COUNCIL 6 October 2010

### Schools: Funding

On the motion of Mr KAVANAGH (Western Victoria) — I move:

That this house acknowledges the responsibility of all Victorian governments to provide for and contribute towards the education of all school-age Victorians regardless of who owns the schools that they attend and that the level of government support for all Victorian school students should be reflective of student need and not the proprietorship of the educational institution.

**Mr FINN** (Western Metropolitan) — I rise to strongly support the motion moved by Mr Kavanagh. The motion is well expressed and is one that I believe has considerable merit. I congratulate Mr Kavanagh for having the foresight to move this motion before the house on this occasion.

I will not only support this motion but I will take it a little further. In politics these days we are used to hearing about new paradigms. I am about to put one of my own to the house.

It is important that the state government supports children, wherever they may be educated, and I believe it is the responsibility of the state government across the board to do so. I propose that the federal department of education be abolished and that the states have the entire responsibility for all schools, whether they be government or non-government.

Mrs Peulich — As well as the money.

## Schools: Funding ...

Mr FINN — Indeed, Mrs Peulich, the funding of non-government schools should be entirely the responsibility of the states. You never know, when we get rid of the 20 000 or 30 000 bureaucrats who are sitting around looking out their windows in the morning and then having nothing to do in the afternoon, when we get rid of those office buildings in Canberra and when we have those extra millions of dollars, we might be able to spend more money on education.

We might be able to put more money into schools and provide a better education for children, whether they attend government or non-government schools.

I commend Mr Kavanagh on his motion, but we need to take it further. We need to bring education back to the level of government that is closest to the people. I believe we would get a far greater result in education, and indeed in health, transport and a number of other areas, if we did away with the federal department and returned the powers to the states. The sooner we do that the better off we will be.

This motion is very much about justice, because parents of children in non-government schools pay tax too. Over the years we have heard from people like former Premier Joan Kirner, who would close all the non-government schools, particularly Catholic schools — she is not fond of Catholics — in the country. I see the Minister for Public Transport shaking his head.

He has obviously forgotten an organisation called DOGS — the Australian Council for the Defence of Government Schools — which Joan Kirner was involved in many years ago. It went to war against Catholic schools in particular but non-government schools generally.

The people in this organisation would take government funding from those schools and completely ignore the fact that the parents of the children attending those schools pay taxes too. Not only do they pay taxes; they actually subsidise the government system. If the Catholic school system, for example, were to close tomorrow, there is no way the government system could cope, because it would be swamped. The state government is subsidised by parents who send their children to non-government schools, and that is very important.

I go back to the days of the dim, distant past when non-government schools did not receive government funding. I well remember attending a little Catholic primary school in the country. We were very much regarded as second-class citizens. I recall the

then Governor, Sir Rohan Delacombe, visiting the local state school. He was visiting the area, and we students of the local Catholic school, St Brendan's School in Coragulac — I am sure Mr Koch knows the area well — lined the side of the road waving our hankies; we were not given flags, which were reserved for the state schools. The Governor was to fly past in his Bentley and wave to us as he went by. Fortunately he stopped, got out, shook our hands, said hello and made a big deal of it, probably throwing his schedule out considerably.

That was the way things were back then. It was a time when there was no government funding for non-government schools, which had class sizes of 60 or 70, and those who were left behind were well and truly left behind. It was not until I went to a government primary school a few years later that I caught up with the rest of the pack — —

Mrs Peulich — Not the same grade?

Mr FINN — I cannot remember, to tell you the truth. It was so long ago! That was the situation then. I would hate to see Victoria return to that situation. I do not believe that would be fair or reasonable. By supporting Mr Kavanagh's motion today we would go some way towards ensuring that the Parliament prevents that situation from occurring again.

**COUNCIL | Members Statements**  
6 October 2010

## Vietnamese community: rally

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — On grand final day — that is, the day of the draw, I addressed a rally in the Footscray Mall. The rally was organised by the Australian Vietnamese community and was attended by some 2000 people. It was a protest against the Vietnamese government establishing offices in Australia, in particular one in Footscray. The organisers of the rally are concerned about the influence of communist operatives within the local Vietnamese community. But it was a much broader protest against communism and support for freedom, which the Vietnamese community has enjoyed in Australia.

Members of the Vietnamese community know what they are talking about, because many of them risked their lives to flee the totalitarianism of the communist government in Vietnam. I took the opportunity that day, and I do so again today, to express

my strong support for the Australian Vietnamese community.

It has made, and continues to make, a major contribution to Australian society. I express my staunch opposition to communism generally and my devotion to the freedom and liberty provided by Australia.

Mr Murphy — How about China?

Mr FINN — Calm down, comrade, we will get to you in a minute. I entirely reject any attempt by the Hanoi government to interfere in local Australian Vietnamese affairs. As I said at the end of the rally — and I was cheered at the end of the rally — I want the communists out of Footscray, the communists out of Australia and the communists out of Vietnam.

**COUNCIL**  
6 October 2010

## Adequacy and future directions of public housing in Victoria

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — It gives me a great deal of pleasure in speaking to this report. It has to be said that this is a substantial report. A great deal of work has gone into it, including a good many hearings and a number of site visits, as has been mentioned by Mr Scheffer.

With an election merely weeks away I have to comment on the degree of cooperation between members of this committee who worked together to find answers to what is a deep problem in Victoria and one that I think each and every member agrees has to be addressed as a matter of priority.

It is not good enough in a civilised state like Victoria in 2010 to have people living on the streets. People are living on the streets because they are not able to access proper or affordable housing. That is something we as a Parliament should not tolerate. We should not be able to sleep at night with the knowledge that there are people who are living and sleeping on the streets, particularly women, children and families who are living in cars or tents or under bits of iron sheeting or something similar — —

Mrs Peulich — Under bridges.

Mr FINN — Under bridges. It is something that we as a Parliament have to take to heart. We have to take this very seriously. I know that we as a committee, during our consideration of this report, in hearing the many

## Adequacy and future directions of public housing in Victoria ...

witnesses who gave evidence, at the site visits we made and the discussions we had, took this issue very seriously.

As Mr Scheffer has pointed out, waiting lists have been a significant part of this inquiry. The committee has found that waiting lists have grown, particularly for people who were eligible for early or priority housing.

Mrs Peulich — Over the 11 years.

Mr FINN — Over the 11 years, yes, waiting times have also increased.

According to official projections for 2010-11, people experiencing or at risk of homelessness will wait an average of eight months to be allocated a public housing tenancy. That is an increase from three months in 1998-99. We have seen a blow-out of five months on waiting lists for those experiencing or at risk of homelessness. I find that quite appalling. Things are getting worse. That is something that this government and the Parliament have to target as a major issue and one to which we have to find a solution.

The committee has recommended that the Victorian government target support programs more effectively to people on the early housing waiting list. This is a group of people experiencing or at risk of homelessness that can be readily identified and targeted for support. Some are linked to homelessness support services already, but others are not.

It should be pointed out that there is currently no specific method for targeting people on the waiting list and ensuring individuals and families with identified housing needs have access to homelessness and relevant support.

I find it quite astonishing that we have people who are vulnerable, who are in imminent danger of becoming homeless or indeed who are already homeless and yet we do not know who they are and have no way of finding out. I well remember when I was a member of the other place, representing the area of Tullamarine between 1992 and 1999, that a lot of people who were in this situation came to me during those years, and we were able to help them. I helped a lot of people who found themselves in situations where they were either homeless or about to become homeless. I have to say, 11 years later, that when people come to me, it is not so easy to help them. This is something about which we not only have to express our concern and sorrow but we have to address it as a matter of priority. It is an urgent matter for many people who are faced with the prospect of homelessness.

It is very easy for those of us in this Parliament, because we will get into our cars tonight — or tomorrow

night at the end of the sitting week, hopefully — and go to our homes and sleep in our own beds, but there are far too many people in this state who do not have the right — and I believe it is a right — or the ability to do that, because they have no home and no bed of their own. That is deplorable in any civilised society. We as legislators in the Victorian Parliament — and, I believe, members of the government — have a real obligation to address this as a matter of urgency.

Another issue is the maintenance of public housing stock. We have all heard some of the horror stories — indeed the members of this committee heard some — about the appalling maintenance in some public housing in this state. I know there is an attitude of some who say, ‘The government is footing the bill, so beggars can’t be choosers’, as it were. I do not accept that. I do not believe that is a reasonable thing.

I think if we are going to provide public housing, and clearly we need to do that, we have to provide a decent standard of public housing, and maintenance issues are clearly a very important part of that.

The committee identified improved approaches and awareness of issues relating to maintenance and noted that the responsiveness of maintenance remains a concern for many participants in the inquiry. I think that is possibly somewhat of an understatement. Throughout the course of this inquiry we heard from a number of people who expressed very strong concerns about the level of maintenance — or perhaps I should say non-maintenance — with regard to public housing in this state. It is something that has to be taken on board by the Minister for Housing, Mr Wynne, and his department.

Mrs Peulich — No win.

Mr FINN — No win indeed, Mrs Peulich! It is a no-win situation for many of those who are living in public housing and are suffering those maintenance problems. It is something that has to be taken on board and addressed for the benefit of those people, particularly families living in substandard public housing accommodation.

I mentioned earlier that there was a great degree of cooperation and goodwill between members of the committee as we worked to find solutions, which it has to be said is not always the case on committees but certainly was on this occasion. However, it also has to be said that Mr Scheffer and I still have not come to a common view as to exactly what the role of the government should be

in public housing. I think it would be safe to say that Mr Scheffer is of the view, and I think he expressed this on the committee, that the government should be in open competition with the private sector in terms of providing public housing and cheaper forms of housing.

I certainly do not concur with that view. My view is that public housing should be provided for those who cannot find their own way in the private sector. Housing should be predominantly a role for the private sector, and I do not believe we should see one of these almost Cain-esque or Kirner-esque programs where governments compete with the private sector.

Mrs Peulich — Stalinist!

Mr FINN — Maybe, Mrs Peulich!

If we really wanted to alleviate many of the problems, if indeed not all of the problems, faced by people who are living in public housing or who need to live in public housing, we would encourage, support and help people to buy their own homes.

That is the most important thing any government can do to help people live at a standard of living and in a standard of accommodation to which we all aspire. As we know, those who buy or are buying their own homes take pride in that. Quite often they will have that home for as long as they live, and it will permanently solve the problems which this committee addressed.

I congratulate Dr Janine Bush and her team, and whilst I know members should not make reference to people in the gallery, I have a feeling David Critchley may not be far away, so I thank him for his efforts as well. I know the staff situation on the committee was a bit of a movable feast from time to time and was a little bit hard to follow, so I congratulate the full-time team on the committee for the job they have done in bringing this all together. The role they play is an extraordinarily important one from the viewpoint of the members of the committee.

I congratulate my fellow members of the committee for the work they have put in, and I hope this report is not something that in 10 or 15 years we find gathering dust in a storeroom somewhere in a government building down in Lonsdale Street. This is a report I believe we should take seriously. I urge the house and the government to do just that.

## Babes Project: funding

**Mr FINN** (Western Metropolitan) — I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Women's Affairs. It concerns a meeting I recently had with a couple of extremely impressive young ladies who have embarked on a project in the eastern suburbs, based in Ringwood. The project is called the Babes Project. Members may well ask what this about, as I did. I will quote from the flyer they gave me, because it explains what it is well. The flyer says:

The Babes Project is committed to providing positive options to women facing crisis pregnancy. Women need hope and help as they choose to either place their baby with an adoptive family or raise the child themselves. She will need much support, so we will build her a home.

The Babes Project home is a place where women will come as part of a wider program to provide support throughout their pregnancy and as they prepare for their future as parents or in going through the adoption process.

There will much room for women to take time to plan for childbirth and the next stage of life, with all the help necessary. She will be offered an educational program to assist her in providing for herself and her family long term.

We believe that adoption can be re-created in this nation to be a positive option for families. We also believe that some women just need support and practical tools to find the courage to move forward. This is why we believe the Babes Project home is a must in our community. It is time to stand alongside women and to journey the distance with them. It is time to show love.

I believe strongly in the words that are on this flyer and the motives behind the Babes Project. These two young women came to see me because they are based in the eastern suburbs at the moment and they wish to move some of their service to helping women in the western suburbs. That is something I strongly support and welcome.

I ask the Minister for Women's Affairs to provide some financial assistance for the Babes Project to set up in the western suburbs so that it can provide the sort of service that I do not think anybody else in the west does at the moment. It may well be something that you, President, might throw your support behind in the not-too-distant future. I ask the minister to provide that money. It seems appropriate as we

are just two days away from the annual March for the Babies, which is on the eve of the anniversary of the passing of the Abortion Law Reform Bill in this Parliament. It gives the minister a chance to show us that she is really pro-choice instead of just rabidly pro-abortion, as I strongly suspect.

President, I thank you for your indulgence on many occasions over the past four years and wish you well — but not too well.

## Autism: western suburbs schools

**Mr FINN** (Western Metropolitan) — Before I raise my matter tonight I congratulate you, President, on your election to the position of President. I have absolutely no doubt you will be a magnificent holder of that position for however long you may wish to hold it. I wish members a happy Christmas, all the best for the new year and a safe trip if any members are taking a trip over the Christmas period.

I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Education. I am delighted to see that Mr Hall is in the chamber and is the minister on duty, as he is obviously somebody who has a great deal of interest in the education portfolio.

As the house would probably be aware, I raised on a number of occasions throughout the course of this year the fact that a P-12 autism-specific school in the western suburbs was a particularly hot issue in the months leading up to the election. It came to symbolise the neglect of the west by the former Labor government. I have absolutely no doubt it played a significant role in the strong vote against Labor that we saw in many parts of the western suburbs on 27 November.

The coalition government has committed to the establishment of a P-12 school for children with autism in the western suburbs. That is something that has given a great deal of joy and, I have to say, a great deal of relief to a good many parents right throughout the western suburbs, because up until this point — and it is extraordinary — children with autism have been able to access secondary education in the eastern suburbs, the northern suburbs and the southern suburbs, but there has been nothing in the western suburbs. That is just appalling; it is intolerable. I am delighted to say it is

something that is about to come to an end, because having spoken to the Minister for Education, Martin Dixon, I know he has reaffirmed the coalition's commitment to education for all children with autism in the western suburbs.

I ask the minister to take into consideration what we need to get this thing up and running. I believe a consultation process with parents and the school community is necessary very early in the new year. This is something that cannot wait. I hope that throughout the course of next year we can get this school up and running, and those children will benefit.

### *Response*

Hon. P. R. HALL (Minister for Higher Education and Skills) — Mr Finn raised the matter of schools for the attention of the Minister for Education, and again it concerned an electoral commitment to establish a P-12 school for children with autism in the western suburbs. I think we all heard of that particular project during the course of the recent election campaign. It is a much-needed school for that area. The action sought by Mr Finn was for the establishment of a consulting process that would start early in 2011 — the first steps toward the establishment of that school. Again I say that the Minister for Education is very supportive of this project, and I will pass that request on. I am sure he will accede to that request by Mr Finn and his community.





# FINN IN THE HOUSE

Speeches July 2010 to December 2010



**Published by Bernie Finn MP**

Member for Western Metropolitan Region  
Acting President of the Legislative Council

277 Hampshire Road, Sunshine Victoria 3020  
Telephone (03) 9312 1212 • Fax (03) 9312 4598  
Email [bernie.finn@parliament.vic.gov.au](mailto:bernie.finn@parliament.vic.gov.au)  
Web [www.berniefinn.com](http://www.berniefinn.com)