




Speech By
Hon. Mark Furner

MEMBER FOR FERNY GROVE

Record of Proceedings, 18 August 2022

LEGAL AFFAIRS AND SAFETY COMMITTEE

Report, Motion to Take Note

 **Hon. ML FURNER** (Ferny Grove—ALP) (Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries and Minister for Rural Communities) (3.41 pm): I would like to start by acknowledging the committee members who brought this report to this chamber. It demonstrates the good work that committees do in this House. I particularly acknowledge the chair, Peter Russo, alongside all the members on that committee who brought forward the inquiry into serious vilification and hate crimes.

Following the member for Capalaba's comments just now, I pay my respects and also reflect on the good work that the previous member for Stretton delivered. It is fitting that this report is dedicated to him because he did so much in the area of Stretton and had a solid heart and commitment in terms of representing the multicultural society and community of Stretton. When Duncan passed away, we lost a champion in this place. We lost someone who was dedicated to multiculturalism. However, there are other champions coming up through the ranks now whom I see in this chamber and through their contributions I have heard today whom I respect, and we will see people flowing on from that.

I reflect on a couple of examples that I have experienced in my term in public office in both the Senate and this House. I reflect back to a time in 2014 where I was in the chamber of the Australian Senate sitting next to Senator Nova Peris, an Indigenous senator from the Northern Territory. To our disbelief, the then attorney-general for Australia stood up and claimed that people have a right to be bigots. In attempts to amend the Racial Discrimination Act, he was suggesting that there should be sections provided in that act to allow people to have a say—to be bigots. Both Nova and I were gobsmacked when we heard that.

Another reflection I have is from 2016. Prior to entering the ministry, I was up in Cairns seeing my family there. For some time I had always wanted to go to Cooktown. We drove up to Cooktown for a visit and drove through Wujal Wujal. We saw amazing communities up there. We met the then mayor, a beautiful person. We got to experience very briefly a bit of the community and understood the beauty of a remote Indigenous community. My departure involved me flying back to Cairns, then flying home to Brisbane. At the Cooktown airport—it is a very small airport—you talk to people, as you do, and the chap who was conversing with me there said, 'Where have you been? What are you up here for?' I said, 'I have just come up here to see family and we thought we would pay a visit to Cooktown and pass through Wujal Wujal.' He said, 'Oh.' I said, 'Why do you say that?' He said, 'Well, I don't like the colour scheme down there.' I was so angry. I had to restrain myself from doing something probably unlawful to that particular person for his comments. This is the type of racial vilification that needs to be ruled out in our society—right across this state—and right across this nation. That is why we need leaders and champions to stand up and speak out against it.

Over the period of the last election in 2020, once again I met a One Nation candidate who in fact ran against me in the electorate of Ferny Grove. I saw his Facebook posts and I screenshot many of those before he identified himself as a One Nation candidate. His posts were consistent with the

procedures and examples that Pauline Hanson uses and has been using since she was first elected to the Australian parliament as a member of the House of Representatives. He was claiming, 'It's right to be white'; 'It's great to see Tony Mundine on the canvas. That's white victory'; and those sorts of comments. These are the types of matters—online vilification—that are addressed by recommendation 1 in the report. We should do as much as possible to identify and rule this out, because we do not need any more Pauline Hansons in our society and we do not need any more George Brandises who believe that people have a right to be bigots. We need to stand up and talk about vilification and the wrongs of racism. Only then will our society be better. Only then will we be positioned to call out the harm and the hurt it does to people, whether they be from multicultural backgrounds or Indigenous backgrounds, to make sure we live in a harmonious, proper and prosperous society for the future.