



# EXTRACT FROM PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



***HANSARD***

## LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

**23 JUNE 2021**

**Mr Melhem**

***Western Metropolitan***

**Speaking on a Motion**

**PLANNING SCHEME AMENDMENTS**

**Mr Melhem** (Western Metropolitan): That was quite entertaining from Mr Davis—very, very entertaining. The only thing is, I do not think he believes in anything he said. I mean, he is suddenly the champion of planning, community organisations' rights, councils' rights, development—you know, he has suddenly become the champion. But he made a few comments about, 'You can't do things too quickly; you can't do things'. I mean, we actually saw how quickly you got things done when you were in government between 2010 and 2014. We experienced that. You were very slow. You did nothing really. And you are talking about development. Do you want to talk about Docklands? Let us talk about that—but we will not.

The problem I think with Mr Davis's definition of 'consultation' is he thinks his own definition will apply to everyone. His definition is, 'I'll consult with myself in the morning, I'll look at myself in the mirror, I'll make my own decision about whatever I want to do and I'll just go and do it. I don't talk to anyone else, because I don't need to.' We can ask his own colleagues. I do not think he consults with them about what he does on a daily basis when the house is sitting.

So, Mr Davis, I am getting really amused. With revocation motion after revocation motion after revocation motion, you have become the champion of it, and there is only one thing driving you: you want the state to come to a standstill. You do not want us to deliver anything. You do not want us to deliver level crossings. You do not want us to basically get the state going again.

I do not know if you have noticed, but we do have a pandemic and we are trying to get the economy going, and we are actually not doing a bad job. We are not doing a bad job in getting things back on track after a horrible 12 or 15 months. The reason these provisions were put in place was, yes, to fast-track some projects, to make sure we can deliver these projects and we can create jobs. But it is not about taking away the rights of people and basically to not go and consult with councils or even communities.

I think let us call it what it is from your end: basically if you can get your way, we will not do anything. We will not be doing any project in Victoria, full stop, and basically it will be a complete standstill. That is what you want. You do not want any progress. You talked about how these provisions will take away rights. You are absolutely wrong. They do not. There is the same appeal process and consultation, and in fact these provisions are still subject to restrictions and to obligations on all these project delivery organisations to actually go and consult the community and local government. It does not take that right from them at all.

Let us talk about what these projects are about. We are talking about state projects and major roads, and some of these projects are supported by your counterpart in the federal government. But obviously on community consultation it is, as it says, expressly clear that these provisions require public consultation, including consultation with local council and public authorities, before a project starts. These requirements are drafted in the provisions. The project must also demonstrate how they can respond to matters raised by the community. But Mr Davis talked about how because he did not like a particular design himself that project should not go ahead. I mean, we have heard here about sky rail, how the sky was going to fall, for the last two, three or four years. Well, that issue now is not an issue. Everyone is happy with it.

Mr Davis, yes, basically having these provisions will fast-track some of these projects. Some of these projects might take six to 12 months to actually get off the ground. Under the new provision it might take a lesser period. We are not going to apologise for that, because we want to kickstart the economy. That is why we are spending a lot of money—billions of dollars, along with the commonwealth government—to make sure we restart the economy and we get projects going.

Now, I agree on one thing with Mr Davis. Yes, we should not do these things at the expense of safety or totally ignoring the community and council. We need to work within the current system. We need to make sure we do consult with people, we do work with local governments and we do make sure the amenity is not affected. We need to make sure these projects are delivered not at the expense of other people's rights. But if that means that we need to do it a bit faster, cut some red tape and fast-track these projects, it is a bit like with the level crossings. I mean, if you want to go and, for example, do a level crossing project one at a time on a particular line, and there are about half a dozen of them, it does not make sense. What makes sense is you do the whole line and the whole six, for example, in one hit as one application. That is sort of cutting red tape. It does not mean you cut corners.

None of these provisions are put in place to cut corners. I do not think Mr Davis has made the case for that apart from one single thing in his mind: 'If I can actually stop anything, if I can stop the West Gate project, if I can stop the north-east project, if I can stop the level crossing project, if I can stop all these projects, I will do that tomorrow'. That is why Mr Davis has been known as the 'revocation man'. Basically his biggest achievement in this house and the previous Parliament has been basically putting revocation motion after revocation motion. Let us talk about some of these, just a quick sample in the last 3 minutes I have. What are the projects likely to be affected should Mr Davis be successful in his motion?

In Werribee zoo, for example, we just invested \$84 million. That is in my electorate. That project, basically, would be delayed and delayed and delayed and delayed. I do not want it delayed. I wanted the \$84 million invested there yesterday. That project will provide a new way for visitors to access and experience the zoo, including uninterrupted 360-degree views of the zoo, and opportunities for visitors to interpret the wider Werribee Park heritage precinct and the Werribee River. This project is on the assessment pathway. So that is a particular project. I do not know what the argument is there. That project falls under that provision. But if Mr Davis gets his way, well, that is out—I mean, seriously. There is a long, long list of ambulance stations, and I will go through the list. There are about—

**Mr Davis interjected.**

**Mr Melhem:** They are everywhere, and I will not name them. I am sure other speakers will go through them. It is all about how we can fast-track these processes and applications, and what is wrong with that? But no, we do not care about that, because Mr Davis is not satisfied. Good luck satisfying Mr Davis about anything. Good luck convincing Mr Davis about any project—anything—because if it is not his idea, it is a bad idea. If it is not David Davis's idea, it is a bad idea and should not be considered or implemented. That is the whole problem.

**Mr Leane:** Has he ever had an idea?

**Mr Melhem:** That is the problem, Mr Leane; I do not think he has many bright ideas. That is the problem. Mate, just get on with the program. Just get on with it. Victorians are screaming. People want jobs. People want more ambulance stations. People want more investment in the state.

**Mr Finn interjected.**

**Mr Melhem:** Well, I will tell you, Mr Finn, my electorate—

**Mr Finn interjected.**

**Mr Melhem:** And that is exactly my point, Mr Finn; thanks for raising this. If Mr Davis was successful in his various attempts to revoke everything, not much would be happening in my electorate. Not a single investment would happen in my electorate. Let me tell you, it will not. Nothing will happen. Get that right. Let me tell you, I stand here in my last 30 seconds proud of what the Andrews Labor government—what Premier Daniel Andrews—has done. I am looking forward to him coming back to the job on Monday next week to continue to lead the state to make sure we continue to deliver decent jobs and decent projects for Victoria instead of the horrible alternative: the do-nothing Liberal Party.