

VERIFIED TRANSCRIPT

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS AND ESTIMATES COMMITTEE

Inquiry into budget estimates 2010–11

Melbourne — 18 May 2010

Members

Mr R. Dalla-Riva

Ms J. Graley

Ms J. Huppert

Mr W. Noonan

Ms S. Pennicuik

Mr G. Rich-Phillips

Mr R. Scott

Mr B. Stensholt

Dr W. Sykes

Mr K. Wells

Chair: Mr B. Stensholt

Deputy Chair: Mr K. Wells

Staff

Executive Officer: Ms V. Cheong

Witnesses

Mr J. Madden, Minister for the Respect Agenda,

Dr P. Hertan, Deputy Secretary, the Respect Agenda,

Mr Y. Blacher, Secretary,

Mr S. Gregory, Chief Financial Officer, and

Mr N. Oats, Senior Policy Officer, Policy and Strategy, Department of Planning and Community Development.

The CHAIR — I now welcome Mr Justin Madden, MLC, Minister for the Respect Agenda; Mr Peter Hertan, deputy secretary, the Respect Agenda, the Department of Planning and Community Development; and Mr Nicholas Oats, senior policy officer, policy and strategy, Department of Planning and Community Development. I call on the minister to give a brief presentation of no more than 5 minutes on the more complex financial and performance information relating to the budget estimates and the respect agenda portfolio.

Overheads shown.

Mr MADDEN — This is the first time I have had the opportunity to present as the Minister for the Respect Agenda — it is a new portfolio. I have quite a number of slides here, but I do not intend to speak for very long, because the slides are relatively self-evident. One of the reasons I have quite a number of slides is because it is a new portfolio.

It is a new portfolio, and it is an opportunity to share with you what the government is doing in this space. The point is that we have built a reputation as a great livable city and a great livable state, and we want to maintain that. We often think about the changes we need to make to improve what we have got, but sometimes we have to make changes to keep what we have got. In many ways, the respect agenda is about that. As highlighted there, it is about ourselves, it is about others. It is also about our community.

We all have a responsibility. It is about growing that sense of obligation to one another at all sorts of levels. It is about personal responsibility — it is about how we make decisions about our own behaviour. It is about fairness, the way in which we treat each other and in a sense the boundaries we have. As well as that, it is about the smaller things in life and in many ways a lot of common sense.

We are aiming to bring about a cultural change. On cultural change, those things do not happen overnight, but the intention is to make those happen, and I have often referred to them. We promote a recognition of respect that is everybody's responsibility. It is not necessarily one particular age group's responsibility or one particular cohort's; it is something we all need to work on together. We all have a role in creating a society where people respect themselves and others in the community. The government cannot tell people how to live. We cannot drive the change alone, but we are looking to work in partnership with other community groups to build an even better and stronger culture of respect and understanding.

We are focusing on six issues as priority areas of action. You can see there, we are supporting respectful behaviour, but we are also addressing antisocial behaviours. That is a reasonable balance in terms of where we think we need to direct our attention. You can see the six themes there.

In some ways, what a number of people have pointed out to me is that helping parents to build self-respect in children could almost be at the top of the list, because a lot of these things relate to the way individuals see themselves and how others see them. Whilst we do not want to tell people how they should parent, if we can encourage people and assist people — anybody who is a parent knows how challenging it is and if we can do that at a very complex point in time in the way we live today, that can be of great assistance.

In terms of each one of those, I want to quickly relate to those. There are a couple of graphs on each one of these. There are six slides here and there is a graph and I think it is worth all members of the committee having a look at the graphs, because they do tell us something about why we have focused on these six areas. It is not that they have come out of the blue; they are because we have seen an increase in relation to these.

You can see there that alcohol-related violence in public places is an issue. Whilst it has declined in certain locations, and you can see that there, or remained relatively constant, what we can see is in public places there has been a significant increase. So we want to ensure that people in public places feel safe and whilst if they break the law, the law will deal with them, we do not want to be at that point. We want to be well in advance of that, more proactive, and try to get people to appreciate how they should behave in public places before they get to the point of the sort of antisocial activity that might take place.

The other area of interest of course is bullying, including cyber safety, sometimes referred to as cyber bullying. You can see there in that graph at certain year levels in schools there is an increase and that is a very important and relevant component in how we need to educate one another and also, in relation to new technologies, be conscious as parents or people who associate with young people — teachers and the like — that the new

technology gives people different forms in which they can, in a sense, be involved in antisocial behaviour which might include cyber bullying and the like.

Violence against women: you can see in that chart, and it is worth looking at those graphs there, intimate partner violence is a significant contributor to the burden of disease in Victorian women. There are a whole lot of other factors that might undermine women's health, but if you look there you can see that partner violence is a very significant component of women's health in Victoria, and there is a whole lot of government actions already in these areas. But in many ways my role is to make sure that I am coordinating that approach across government portfolios, because some of them are located in various portfolios under the responsibilities of various ministers as well.

Understanding difference and diversity: one of the great things about Victoria is we are generally a very inclusive society. It is one of the things that makes us a great international city, whether it be events, whether it be lifestyle, whether it be livability. But discrimination, whilst it has declined in a number of areas there, as you can see in that graph, it has increased in the area of race relations, in a sense. We need to try to work to respond to that accordingly. There are a number of existing government initiatives already highlighted there.

In terms of helping parents and carers build self-respect in children, as I said, parenting is very challenging. It is even more challenging, and it has come to light in some of the discussions with various groups I have met. The technological difference or literacy between different generations has just an added layer of complexity in terms of what might be a pre-existing generational divide that has always existed. So in order to assist families in getting parenting right and taking off some of that pressure, there is a range of initiatives that we need to work on to assist people to feel more confident about what they are doing in terms of parenting and the interaction with their children.

Then one of the other areas that we are also very conscious of is getting people more involved in the community. There seems to be a change in the way people participate in terms of volunteering. We know how important volunteering is. I do not need to tell members of the committee how important it is, but what we are seeing is that people volunteer differently, maybe because they are time poor or time challenged, or whatever the term might be. Fewer people are spending more time volunteering and more people are spending less time volunteering. Even though they are still volunteering, they are not giving the same number of hours.

I am sure, Dr Sykes, you would see some of that in regional Victoria, where you see the old-timers at the football clubs and the cricket clubs, who have been doing it for years and years and they are the character of the clubs, still doing it and you do not necessarily see the next generation of young people doing it. Although they might help out, they do not help out for the same length of time that some of the old characters of those clubs are involved, or those community groups or those charitable groups. We need to make sure that we complement that in a way as government and there is a number of program areas mentioned there.

We are getting to the last few slides. In terms of the role of the minister, initially let us not underestimate just by having the portfolio as an agenda item, it provokes discussion and that discussion cannot be a bad thing. I am sure the opposition will have a view or an opinion on it, as has been expressed in the chamber. That might create discussion or provoke response about what we all want, but just the discussion is a good thing and promoting that discussion with partner groups, businesses, community groups and all of us promoting the concepts that I have talked about is a very important issue.

The other issue is in terms of the way in which it is coordinated across government. A lot of these things are located in various streams of government. It is about making sure that, in a sense, there are not overlaps, there are not gaps and that the messages we are sending to the community are consistent. We have seen that already with the recent example of the Victorian Code of Conduct for Community Sport. That was led by the Minister for Sport, Recreation and Youth Affairs but that fits into the respect agenda on a number of fronts.

In terms of investment, in this year's state budget we see \$1.7 million dedicated to, in a sense, myself or the respect agenda portfolio to see that spent predominately with community groups in partnership to convey that message of respect and to provide forums and opportunities to examine these issues and promote discussion more broadly in the community. As the portfolio minister, I provide a whole-of-government focus on the respect agenda. It is important to acknowledge that it is a substantial investment. We commit to a range of those, not only in the portfolio but in a range of other areas, and it is not to take away from what other ministers do,

particularly around law and order and particularly around antisocial behaviour. The law will deal with people accordingly if they break the law, but it is about being more proactive.

As I have mentioned on a number of occasions, it is a bit like seatbelts — and the Premier has used this as an example. You can have rules, regulations and legislation, but at the end of the day you have to get a step change or a quantum leap in people's cultural attitude towards these things, and this portfolio allows us to do that and to be proactive rather than reactive. It will take time — it will not happen overnight — but I am very confident that with the emphasis of this government and other governments moving in this direction we will see a greater recognition of the small things in our lives that are important to community resilience, community cohesion and enhancing Victoria as a great place to live, and particularly to celebrate what is a state of great livability.

Ms GRALEY — Minister, I am really interested in the respect agenda because I have a large number of young people in my electorate. Page 28 of budget paper 3 refers to the establishment of the new portfolio and your appointment as Minister for the Respect Agenda. Page 329 of budget paper 3 refers to the investment of \$1.7 million in the respect agenda over the next three years. I would like you to advise the committee what you will be focusing on as the minister in this new portfolio area and how you will use the budget allocation to progress the respect agenda. Also, I noticed in your presentation the complementary investment from other portfolio areas; you might like to comment on that too.

Mr MADDEN — As I said before, as a government we have a strong history of investing in initiatives that address issues reflecting a lack of respect as well as those that promote respectful behaviour. You mentioned young people, and I am very conscious that a lot of this portfolio might relate to young people, but importantly it is not about telling young people how to live. At some of the round tables I have been involved with, rather than young people being sceptical about it, they have been relatively enthusiastic about it, because what we know about young people is that they are often at risk of being victims or being involved in many of these issues through engaging in some of these antisocial behaviours. On those three issues highlighted as antisocial behaviours, they can be the victims of them or they can be the perpetrators of them. Many young people are very conscious that it relates directly to them. It is not necessarily about how they should live, but they are conscious about their own issues, particularly in public places on some of those issues I mentioned before.

I mentioned we have a \$1.7 million investment in the respect agenda over the next three years. That includes \$200 000 this financial year and \$700 000 and \$800 000 in 2010–11 and 2011–12 respectively. It will help to facilitate my work to coordinate the government's approach to those existing initiatives and help develop new initiatives, particularly partnered initiatives, to promote respect.

The important focus is on working with the community sector, business, sporting groups and other organisations that build on initiatives already under way in many parts of the community. The funding will be provided for a number of partnerships that will build individual resilience and promote respectful behaviours and relationships. We need to communicate to the public, and the budget will allow for investment, particularly in a communications kit, establishing a dedicated website and giving people an opportunity to, in a sense, talk about their experiences.

What some of the young people have said — and I have met quite a number of them — is they are very conscious of these issues and they are also consistently, in a sense, almost annoyed at the way the media portray young people in a light that young people are involved in all of this when is not necessarily young people involved. It does have an effect on young people, and many young people at those round tables feel like they have been stereotyped on the basis of some of the media portrayals of these issues. They feel — resentment is probably too strong a term but maybe significant scepticism at the portrayal of young people, but they are conscious that these things have an impact on them. So we need to work on that.

As well as that, it is also to complement the funding in a number of government areas. There is \$673.6 million dedicated to more police; \$14.1 million to prevent violence against women; \$22 million over four years for 55 additional youth workers to support vulnerable people in risky behaviour, particularly knife culture on the streets; \$2.6 million for increased staffing across social services; \$4.4 million for the Respect on the Streets campaign to promote positive behaviour as change, and raise awareness about new enforcement measures in relation to violent and antisocial street activity; \$3.7 million to enable six community-based organisations to extend their cyber safety programs; \$2 million over four years to expand Parentline and Maternal and Child Health Line; \$1 million to the Victorian Multicultural Commission for grants for projects that promote cohesion

and community harmony; \$500 000 for Victorian Promoting Harmony initiatives such as Diversity Week, Viva Victoria and the Premier's Multifaith Leaders Forum; \$800 000 over two years to support International Student Care Services; \$800 000 over two years for FReeZA; and \$600 000 over two years to conduct the promotion of the Victorian Code of Conduct for Community Sport.

There are a number of investments. They do not specifically rest in the portfolio, but they complement what is taking place in the portfolio and are important in terms of the broader respect agenda.

Mr DALLA-RIVA — Minister, this respect agenda portfolio is surely all spin, just smoke and mirrors, and there are no tangible KPIs or benchmarks. The Labor members can moan, but you gave them the Rachel Hunter advertisement before — 'it won't happen overnight, but it will happen'. So if it will happen, what are the specifics you can give to the people of Victoria on the expected measures, specific tangible outcomes and targets, or is this just a portfolio that is rubbish?

Mr WELLS — In the run-up to the state election.

Mr NOONAN — A typically disrespectful question.

Mr WELLS — A number of programs were mentioned — —

The CHAIR — Without assistance, Mr Wells, thank you very much. We have the question. The minister, to answer, please.

Mr MADDEN — I note a hint of scepticism from Mr Dalla-Riva in relation to these matters. Each one of those individual measures in relation to the areas that I have described, particularly around antisocial behaviour, sits within individual ministers' portfolios. On knife violence and many of those sorts of issues — the antisocial behaviour — there will be specific measures in their portfolios. I would expect a decline in those, and I would expect an improvement, in a sense, in those performance measures over time by the proactive investment we are making up-front with the respect agenda. Again, I take you back to seatbelt legislation and regulation. Over time the number of deaths and injuries on the road has come down. They did not come down immediately. From time to time they shift and move.

Mr DALLA-RIVA — And we had a presentation by the roads minister.

The CHAIR — Without assistance.

Mr DALLA-RIVA — That was a specific piece of legislation.

The CHAIR — Let us have the minister finish his answer. If you wish to have clarification, you can do so later.

Mr DALLA-RIVA — We had the community development minister today who did nothing, and I just want to know.

Mr MADDEN — They will progressively come down over time, but more importantly — —

Mr WELLS — If you do not wear a seatbelt, you get fined. You are fined by the police if you do not wear a seatbelt, so your example is not a good example.

The CHAIR — Without assistance, Mr Wells.

Mr MADDEN — More importantly, and I am most happy to take up Mr Wells's interjection.

The CHAIR — No, do not.

Mr MADDEN — So I will not. Can I say that we will see an improvement in all these areas in a reduction in numbers of antisocial behaviour. We will see those over time. It might be slight initially in the first few years, but over time we will see a difference, as we have seen in other areas where you have a proactive approach rather than a reactive approach. We could maintain a reactive approach to everything, and we will still have that, but we also need to be proactive and take proactive measures and to promote a generational difference — a cultural generational difference — for young people as they get older.

Mr DALLA-RIVA — But how do you have that change without KPIs? The forward estimates is about having performance measures, outcomes, expectations that the community has. There is only one entry on the respect agenda, and that is on page 172 of budget paper 3 about ‘Respect partnership projects funded’. All the other issues you mentioned are not really, with due respect, within your portfolio.

Mr MADDEN — Thank you for that due respect, Mr Dalla-Riva. In relation to the \$1.7 million that sits within my portfolio, there are measures there. But in relation to the other initiatives and the impact, those initiatives will sit with other ministers’ portfolios, and those KPIs will no doubt report on those measures over time.

Mr WELLS — Can I just clarify a point, with respect? Would it not be more beneficial to the community if there were more police out on the street to reduce antisocial behaviour?

Ms HUPPERT — There are. There will be.

The CHAIR — I do not think that is — —

Mr WELLS — We are talking common sense here.

Mr MADDEN — With respect, Chair, I am not sure Mr Wells — —

Mr WELLS — You have the respect agenda. What are the outcomes?

Mr MADDEN — I am not sure if that was a question or an interjection.

The CHAIR — Minister, I think this is another portfolio, and it has been dealt with under another portfolio. If you wish to comment on this, you may.

Mr MADDEN — I am happy to respond to the interjection, Chair.

The CHAIR — It was actually a clarification.

Mr MADDEN — Page 323 of budget paper 3 shows a number of investments for the Department of Justice outputs that contribute to the recruitment and deployment of additional police. How will these new police contribute to government’s efforts to address alcohol-related violence? Tough action has been taken across government to address this issue. Increased number of police on the street, including an additional 1966 front-line police — —

Mr DALLA-RIVA — But you said it was not just about enforcement.

The CHAIR — Without assistance. Would you like to show some respect and listen to the minister?

Mr MADDEN — The deployment of additional police resources in entertainment precincts at key times; the introduction of new police powers and tougher penalties for carrying prohibited weapons and antisocial behaviour; a new risk-based fee structure for liquor licences; extension of the freeze on late-night liquor licences until the end of 2011 and new guidelines on responsible advertising and promotion; targeted community awareness campaigns, including a communications campaign to promote positive behavioural change and raise awareness of new enforcement measures in relation to violence and antisocial street activity; working with Aboriginal health and community organisations on specific strategies to address alcohol-related harm in Aboriginal communities; partnerships with community groups to encourage behavioural change and the Good Sports program supporting the responsible consumption of alcohol at sports events; and supporting FReeZA events for young people and Celebrate Safely education programs for school leavers week. These actions will complement the \$37 million Victorian Alcohol Action Plan 2008–13. The respect agenda is about preventing problems occurring in the first place by encouraging all of us to take responsibility.

Ms HUPPERT — Thank you, Minister, for showing that we do have to have comprehensive solutions to what are very complex problems.

The CHAIR — Without the statement.

Ms HUPPERT — Which brings me to another very complex problem, which is the problem of prevention of violence against women, which you referred to in your presentation. I note that one of the complementary investments is an investment of \$14.1 million in this respect, which is noted on page 329 of budget paper 3. How will this funding address disrespectful behaviour, and how will it contribute to the respect agenda more broadly?

Mr MADDEN — Again, reminding the committee that the respect agenda is a mixture of enforcement and positive campaigns, and it is important on a number of fronts. As a government we have a long-term plan to reduce violence against women so that women and children can live with confidence and without fear. In 2009 the government released a policy framework, *A Right to Respect — Victoria's Plan to Prevent Violence against Women 2010–2020*, a 10-year plan that aims to prevent violence before it occurs by challenging its underlying causes. The 2010–11 budget commits \$14.1 million over four years to the campaign, which will be delivered in partnership with community organisations.

This plan is complemented by a number of other initiatives, including Living Free From Violence — Upholding the Right Victoria Police Strategy to Reduce Violence Against Women and Children 2009–2014; a Right to Safety and Justice; Continuing Reform of the Integrated Family Violence System in Victoria, 2010 to 2020; extensive legislation and procedural forms, including the introduction of the Family Violence Protection Act 2008, which makes violent offenders more accountable for their victims and offers increased protection for women and children who are victims; the Victoria Police Code of Practice for Investigation of Family Violence to improve reporting and prosecution of family violence; and increasing staff training across social service sectors, such as mental health, alcohol and drugs and medical services to identify and respond to family violence, with funding of \$2.6 million throughout the 2010–11 budget. They are all important investments and measures to prevent violence against women.

Of course it is also about, as I said, having \$1.7 million to spread the understanding to those groups that might appear more prominent than others in some of those statistics or those cohorts where we see violence against women perpetrated and trying to be proactive in that space, particularly because the statistics reveal that in many instances it is men and younger men in relationships who need to understand that it is not acceptable in any sense.

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS — Minister, I would like to ask you about the 26 February media plan with respect to the Minister for the Respect Agenda because the media plan outlined a strategy for the minister to ‘go to an oldies home with a young person as part of the respect agenda, i.e., respecting and building relationships with communities’. I ask: did the minister go to an oldies home with a young person as part of the respect agenda and, in relation to the forward estimates, are you going to do it in the future?

The CHAIR — Insofar as it relates to the forward estimates and your portfolio, Minister.

Mr MADDEN — In relation to the matters that Mr Rich-Phillips raised, as I mentioned in relation specifically to that document, it was not my document, they were not my words and they were not my attitudes.

The CHAIR — I do not think it relates to this.

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS — You are not going to take some young people to see some ‘oldies’?

The CHAIR — Without assistance.

Mr MADDEN — In relation to my responsibilities but also my priorities in terms of the portfolio, I am particularly enthusiastic about relaying the message that this is not specifically about young people. Whilst many of those initiatives indicated relate to young people, or young people might relate to those initiatives, respect is in many ways a two-way street. It needs to be achieved together through community groups. I have had meetings with a number of organisations; the department and representatives from my department have had meetings with a number of organisations. I have raised the issue of respect generally in the community, and I want to continue to raise it generally. Secondly, I want to develop ideas about how we can support positive and innovative work around respect; and thirdly, build on the work of my colleagues, as I have mentioned.

My role is to coordinate that across government. It means I need to listen and coordinate their actions. In order to develop the respect agenda I have met with a wide range of groups that have contacted me, some very, very enthusiastic, to contribute their ideas. Examples of groups I have either met with or have been involved are the youth round tables in Footscray, Geelong and Yarra Glen, the likes of the Victorian Council of Social Service, the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission, the AFL Coaches Association, the Australian Football League, Mission Australia, the Eastern Community Legal Centre, Melbourne City Council and Scouts Australia. These are just a few of the organisations I have met with.

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS — What, no oldies homes?

The CHAIR — Without assistance.

Mr MADDEN — The department has also met with many groups. The department has met with the likes of the YMCA, the Anti Violence Project of Victoria, the Victorian Taxi Directorate, the Victorian Taxi Association, Regional Youth Affairs Networks, the Council to Homeless Persons, and these are all — —

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS — You have had lots of meetings. What have you actually achieved?

Mr MADDEN — They are not specifically meetings, Mr Rich-Phillips. These are a way of working out with these organisations how we can complement their work and how they can complement the theme around respect. Now that we have the funding issued through the budget I look forward to working with these groups on how we can proactively together promote a culture of greater respect throughout the broader community.

The CHAIR — That concludes the consideration of the budget estimates for the portfolios of planning and the respect agenda. I thank the minister and departmental officers for their attendance today. Where questions were taken on notice the committee will follow up with you in writing at a later date. The committee requests that written responses to those matters be provided within 30 days. Thank you, Minister, witnesses, Hansard and the committee.

Mr MADDEN — Thank you very much, Chair. As always, I am very grateful to have the opportunity to present before the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee, and I look forward to the potential opportunity of attending public accounts and estimates in future years.

The CHAIR — Thank you.

Committee adjourned.