



Guy Barnett MP

LIBERAL MEMBER FOR LYONS

THE PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA - HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

ADJOURNMENT SPEECH – SAFE SCHOOLS PROGRAM

TUESDAY, 31 May 2016 [6.16pm]

Mr BARNETT (Lyons) - Madam Speaker, I am pleased tonight to speak on the Federal election. We have a clear choice between the Federal Coalition and Federal Labor when it comes to protecting our children, specifically with protecting our children at school. What has happened in recent days regarding Roz Ward gives me concerns about her role in the Safe Schools Program.

I want to talk about protecting our children, a theme that has been important to all of us in this place and it is something that I strongly support. Protecting our children means, among other things, that each child regardless of their personal characteristics should be safe and secure at home, school or wherever they are. Children deserve a living and learning environment in which love, support and kindness provide the structure in which their physical, mental, emotional, spiritual and social growth can occur.

Bullying or malicious unkindness deserves no place in our schools, homes and other places where children are nurtured. Thus, it is a particular concern when activities and practices that few parents would wish their children to be exposed to are pushed under the guise of anti-bullying. I am referring to the Safe Schools Program that has caused controversy in the media and broader community over the past year and more recently in recent months and days, particularly at a national level.

The program was rolled out initially under the previous Labor government of some \$8 million and purports to be an anti-bullying program supporting LGBTI students. Concerns have been raised by many that the program had a radical political agenda and was unnecessarily sexualising our children. The Minister for Education, Senator Simon Birmingham, commissioned a review into the program in February this year, and I spoke on it a couple of months ago. The review found a number of shortfalls within the program and that reform was needed.

In a statement on 18 March, responding to the findings of the review, Senator Birmingham addressed a number of these concerns calling for immediate action to fix the content of the program. These changes involved removal of the program from primary schools, removal of third party branding and links to external sites such as Minus 18, removal of age-appropriate activities and material, including role

playing exercises which forced girls to act as boys and boys to act as girls, cessation of any political advocacy through the program, and giving of parental consent for student involvement. I, along with many others, welcome these changes. They were accepted by the State Government, for which I am very grateful and thankful. This particular reform initiative was welcomed and commended by a range of organisations, including the Australian Christian Lobby and FamilyVoice Australia, and I commend them for their efforts.

As it turns out, things have continued more rapidly on this front. The architect of this controversial and radical program has first been appointed to a high-powered advisory role with the Victorian State Government and then shortly afterwards forced to stand down over inflammatory and outrageous comments. I read the Facebook post of Roz Ward of Latrobe University:

Now we just need to get rid of the racist Australian flag on top of state parliament and get a red one up there and my work is done.

That is what she said on her Facebook page - an own-goal I suspect. It is a disgraceful and outrageous comment. Roz Ward was reported as being a long-time member of Victoria's Socialist Alliance and a committed Marxist who believes capitalism must be overthrown to make way for a brave new world.

I draw and commend an article by Kevin Donnelly in the Herald Sun today where he said that Ward, when defending the controversial gender sexuality program, argues:

LGBTI oppression and hetero-normality are woven into the fabric of capitalism and it will only be through a revitalised class struggle and revolutionary change that we can hope for the liberation of LGBTI people.

In the same speech entitled *The Role of the Left to the LGBTI Rights*, given at the 2016 Marxism conference, Ward argues:

Marxism offers both the hope and the strategy needed to create a world where human sexuality, gender and how we relate to our bodies can blossom in extraordinary new and amazing ways that we can only try to imagine today.

You can see this is part of her DNA, but certainly her ideology and her theology is for radical change. She was the founder of the Safe Schools Coalition.

There have been references to the book *The Gender Fairy*, a children's book. It says that only you know whether you are a boy or a girl and no-one can tell you. This is the concern I have together with many others. I see that Jeff Kennett, from BeyondBlue, has threatened to remove his funding support of \$600 000 over the last couple of years for the program if she does not resign. There are calls around the country, including Senator Birmingham, for her to resign from a range of organisations, and for her to resign from her advisory role on the Safe Schools Coalition Australia, which is a national steering committee. I support those calls.

Those remarks about the Australian flag being racist are outrageous. The fact that she has not resigned already is a great shame. I note the Australian Christian Lobby said they welcome calls for the founder of the so-called Safe Schools program to resign, but has warned that Roz Ward's ideology must also go. The Coalition has pledged not to renew the Safe Schools funding but the Labor Leader, Bill Shorten, has pledged to fund it. There is a clear choice at the Federal election between the Federal Coalition and those on the other side who wish to promote this ideology and the political games being played in our schools with our kids. Our kids need to be safe.