

SENATOR PAULINE HANSON'S COMMENTS — CHILDREN WITH DISABILITY

Statement

HON JACQUI BOYDELL (Mining and Pastoral — Deputy Leader of the National Party) [5.33 pm]: I feel compelled to rise tonight because of my complete outrage at the comments made by Senator Pauline Hanson about removing children with disabilities from mainstream classrooms. All members would be aware that this story has been running in the media all day today. I will not repeat any of the things that Senator Hanson unfortunately said. I questioned whether I would make comment on this, but what determined that I would make comment is the other comments that Senator Hanson has unfortunately made about issues such as vaccination and no jab, no pay; about Muslim people and immigration; and about anything else that she may choose to call a populist issue. I felt compelled to say that enough is enough. The senator has a responsibility to utilise her position in the federal Parliament, and the platform that she has, to speak for our nation as a senator who presents a responsible, reliable and well-informed opinion. It is extremely unfortunate that this is not the first incident in which Senator Hanson has made ill-informed comments and has then tried to fob them off as having been misinterpreted or not what she said. I am sorry, Senator Hanson, but it is what you said. It is in the *Hansard* of the federal Parliament. Hon Donna Faragher made reference to this earlier today. As a parent, I do not seek to raise my children as people who are divisive, hurtful, unkind and self-centred, as the senator's comments were about children with disabilities, and autism in particular. I call on the senator, although I am sure she will not listen to any of our comments, to withdraw those comments. She should stop hiding behind the fact that she thinks she has been misquoted. She has not. The *Hansard* is well and truly clear. I would ask the senator to please be informed on issues in the future.

We live and abide in an Australian society that we are very proud of. We are a tolerant society, we are understanding, we are a kind society and we are encouraging of people. That is our role; it is not to divide. I completely reject the comments that she made. They are out of touch and very abhorrent to my family, me, many of my friends and many people who have taken to social media today to express their outrage. I know that many members of this house have agreed with those comments today and I thank them for that. We have to highlight this issue and use the platform that we have to do so, because it is not acceptable to be a member of Parliament and to come to the house and speak when one is ill-informed, out of touch and knows nothing about which they are speaking.

HON MATTHEW SWINBOURN (East Metropolitan) [5.37 pm]: It is with reluctance that I also stand on the issue raised by Hon Jacqui Boyde and Hon Donna Faragher. Perhaps I can enlighten people about the personal cost of making statements of that kind. My son has autism and he has been in a mainstream school all his life. He does not deserve to be singled out in the way that he has been. He has done very well in a mainstream school. I find it particularly galling that somebody who at best is ignorant and at worst is being deliberately damaging would speak in a manner like that in our federal Parliament without any regard for the people she is affecting. I believe that her words were that "they interfere with our kids' learning". My child is one of our kids. He is not apart from this community; he is part of it. For the senator to speak in that manner as though they belong somewhere else is harking back to a time that I hope all of us in this chamber would hope that this state would never go back to. I hope that our honourable friends from One Nation will stand up and condemn their leader because of the comments she made, because I hope that they do not hold those repugnant views as well. Having met all three of them, it would disappoint me greatly if they did. My son also has a disability and participates with that. It is unfortunate that I have to speak about my own personal circumstances in this manner. I should not have to bring to attention my son's circumstances, but I think it is necessary to do so. I thank the two honourable members on the other side for speaking up for people like Mitchell, who cannot speak for themselves. I thank the house for listening to me.

Members: Hear, hear!