

## **MENTAL HEALTH — FLY IN, FLY OUT CODE**

### *Statement*

**HON TIM CLIFFORD (East Metropolitan)** [5.25 pm]: I would like to make a few remarks in light of the recent announcement about the fly in, fly out workers' code of practice. I will not go into the nuts and bolts of what has been proposed but I would like to say that it is well overdue.

I spent the better part of early 2006 to late 2010 as a FIFO worker. At a minimum, I spent the majority of that time working on a four-and-one roster—four weeks on and one week off. Sometimes it was six weeks on and one week off. Sometimes we rolled 13-day fortnights for months on end in the construction phase of a project before it went into the production phase. I am sad to say that it was a pretty crushing time in my life. I had a mortgage. I was away for a long period. I had to work away. My father worked away as well and when my dad worked away, it was to get ahead in life. When I worked away, it became the norm for a lot of people in this state, basically, in order to pay the mortgage. That was me for a long time. It was very tough. It was not only about me, but also the other 20 guys who worked under me; I had to worry about not only my mortgage. Even though people say FIFO workers are on huge incomes and they should be doing well for themselves, it was really hard because the housing boom meant incomes pretty much stayed the same but mortgages were at a peak. As well as dealing with the issues I had at home, a lot of my workmates had relationships that were falling apart. We did not have access to adequate communications. When I first started working away in 2006, I was working on the Ravensthorpe nickel project, and during that time we had only dial-up internet for months on end. Can members imagine trying to get on the internet when 150 to 200 guys were also trying to get online on a dial-up connection down in Ravensthorpe? It was pretty difficult. Communications were limited. There was no Skype. Under the employer I worked for, we had to work from 6.00 am to 6.00 pm every day with only half an hour dedicated to lunch. We had no smoko. Having time to get on the phone to loved ones at home was very difficult.

Sadly, it is still the same today. A lot of what we used to call tin-pot construction companies are operating in this state that do not necessarily respect any codes or any sort of guidelines that might encourage them to enforce better conditions for their workers. Sadly, that seems to be the norm. My respect goes out to all the people in families who continue to work away from home. I still have a lot of friends who do it. In fact, some people who do not know I am standing in this place now occasionally call me to ask whether I know where there is another job coming up. All my respect goes out to FIFO workers in this state and to all the people who have to leave their families in order to put bread on the table. I hope discussion keeps going regarding the code of practice and that we have enforceable guidelines and laws in this state to protect the people who dedicate so much of their lives to not only supporting their families, but also contributing to the wellbeing of the state's economy.

### *Statement*

**HON ROBIN SCOTT (Mining and Pastoral)** [5.29 pm]: I started in the fly in, fly out industry in the early 1980s. I did more than three decades in the industry and I enjoyed every single day of it. When I started, there were no mobile phones or internet connections. You had to queue up behind maybe 20 guys to use the dial-up telephone and you had to have a pocket full of \$1 coins and were allowed a maximum of 10 minutes. In those days it was very, very uncomfortable. If you were lucky, you got a chair in your donga so you could hang your clothes over it. There were no fridges, telephones or televisions. It was very, very basic. But it is a lifestyle that you choose.

Most of the guys I know who got divorced in the FIFO industry got divorced because they spent their two weeks on site every night drinking, living the life of luxury. When they went home, they just did the same thing. They went home and just drank. They did not pay too much attention to their families. That is why they got divorced, not because they were doing FIFO. Regarding this idea of FIFO destroying marriages, the guy would have got divorced if he was working at Woolies or Coles. It is an absolute disgrace that the FIFO industry is being blamed for suicides and break-ups of families and marriages.

Madam President, I can assure you that I enjoyed my time very much and I was well rewarded for it. I could have got out any time I wanted. I could have got out of it 15 years ago. I could have retired 15 years ago. That was my plan, but I enjoyed it, and that is why I will always back the FIFO industry. I would much rather that people were living in towns near mine sites, but there are mine sites in our state that are too far away from anywhere. They have to have FIFO and that is why they have FIFO. It would be much better if the government got rid of certain taxes to encourage companies near towns to set up their workers and their families so they can be home every night.

### *Statement*

**HON KYLE MCGINN (Mining and Pastoral)** [5.31 pm]: I just need to say that what I heard there was an absolute load of rubbish!

Several members interjected.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order!

**Hon KYLE MCGINN:** Fly in, fly out workers have mental health issues right up this coast. There have been 3 000 workers surveyed on this. Are you telling me that they are all liars? Are you saying that their marriages are falling apart because they are alcoholics? Let us have a look at the facts. They have four weeks on and one week off in some of these FIFO industries. It is an absolute disgrace.

**Hon Robin Scott:** Leave, leave!

**Hon KYLE MCGINN:** Leave, when they get financially up to the hilt? That is what they do. You might have been financially stable to take away from it, member. You might have had enough money in the bank, but a lot of people do not, because hardships at home and raising a family are harder than they used to be. I have to say, you make those type of comments, and you might know FIFO workers who are happy doing four and one, but I know plenty of workers —

**Hon Robin Scott:** I know more FIFO workers than you!

**Hon KYLE MCGINN:** Do you really? Is that right, member?

**Hon Robin Scott:** Yes!

**Hon KYLE MCGINN:** Okay, how many do you know? Do you want to start measuring dick size now?

**The PRESIDENT:** Order!

Several members interjected.

**Hon KYLE MCGINN:** Bullshit!

*Withdrawal of Remark*

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! Do not use that kind of language!

**Hon Kyle McGinn:** Sorry.

**The PRESIDENT:** You can retract that and you can apologise. It is unparliamentary.

**Hon KYLE MCGINN:** I retract it.

**Hon Robin Scott:** I apologise.

**The PRESIDENT:** And apologise.

**Hon KYLE MCGINN:** I apologise.

*Statement Resumed*

**The PRESIDENT:** Hon Robin Scott, you had your say. It is really, really hard for Hansard to hear the member on their feet if people are yelling at each other across the chamber.

**Hon KYLE MCGINN:** Thank you, Madam President.

It is not about who knows more FIFO workers. I have talked to FIFO workers who are struggling out there. It has been a well-known thing that has been highlighted in Western Australia. I believe that there are definitely issues. We know that from the two inquiries that have taken place. We know that there are issues and reasons for the suicides up there. I genuinely believe that if we had equal-time rosters and short-shift rosters, we would see a better state of mental health in the FIFO industry. I also believe that residential employment should come first. That is definitely what I stand for. I think all these towns should definitely have that. It is not that everyone should be FIFO, it is just the reality that FIFO is going to be there because of the massive influx that comes with construction work.