



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**Main Committee**

**CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS**

**Farrer Electorate**

**SPEECH**

**Wednesday, 23 November 2011**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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## SPEECH

<b>Date</b>	Wednesday, 23 November 2011	<b>Source</b>	House
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<b>Questioner</b>		<b>Responder</b>	
<b>Speaker</b>	Ley, Sussan, MP	<b>Question No.</b>	

**Ms LEY** (Farrer) (09:39): As the parliamentary year comes to a close I wish to highlight the mood from my electorate of Farrer during this past 12 months. It was around this time a year ago that my region emerged from 10 long years of devastating drought. The rains came back, the soil renewed, abundant wildlife returned and hope was restored. So 2011 should have been a year of rejoicing, a year of renewal. How did this government respond? After a decade of struggle, farmers battered from the long dry were immediately cut off from the vital exceptional circumstances lifeline. Those who had made the decision that their time might have been up on the land were then left high and dry as the agriculture minister bungled the farm exit grant scheme. Those who stayed watched in horror his handling of the live exports fiasco. Others were told the Asian honeybee was not a threat—another 'oops' moment for this bungling agriculture minister. Those who received too much rain in the south were told by the federal Attorney-General that they were not quite flooded enough to receive direct emergency relief.

In my communities local clubs were told they will have to find hundreds of thousands of dollars to alter their poker machines so an estimated one per cent of the population can take their problem gambling somewhere else. In fact, we do not believe that changing poker machines and investing in new machines is actually going to address problem gamblers at all. Students, doctors and social services in Farrer were then stumped by this government's manipulative costcutting use of the inner and outer regional classification map.

We come to the Murray-Darling Basin Plan, a document drafted 12 months ago, which was purportedly constructed at arm's length from the water minister and the tentacles of this new green-eyed paradigm in which we are living. Instead, what we were served effectively took a sledgehammer to the nation's premier food bowl. When pushed on why the devastating flow-on effect on jobs in local communities up and down the basin had not been considered, the water minister then sacked and scapegoated the Murray-Darling Basin chair and put in a new one. He ordered a parliamentary inquiry and then ignored the findings. He promised a transparent process would follow but this actually meant having the revised plan leaked before it is even officially released. He promised real community consultation, yet as I stand here today there has been nothing organised and nothing announced. This is not good enough. So much so that in Deniliquin, one of the communities in my electorate heavily if not completely reliant on the outcome of this revised draft plan for its future, has offered to pay for the authority, the minister or indeed anyone they can get to come and tell them face-to-face what is going on.

The year 2011 should have been a year of hope, opportunity and reward. Instead it is clear evidence that we are all being forced to pay under Labor.