



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
APPROPRIATION (SUPPLEMENTARY
MEASURES) BILL (No. 1) 1999

Consideration of Senate Message

SPEECH

Wednesday, 20 October 1999

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SPEECH

Date Wednesday, 20 October 1999	Source House
Page 11919	Proof No
Questioner	Responder
Speaker Cox, David, MP	Question No.

Mr COX (Kingston) (9.45 am)—I rise on another issue: a program which is administered by the states but funded by the Commonwealth, the National Respite for Carers Program. Under this program, \$80 million will be allocated for dementia respite over the next four years as part of the coalition election 1998 platform—or at least that is what it said. This was a very clear and specific promise: 'The coalition will allocate \$80 million over four years to expand community based respite care options for carers of people with dementia.' I am informed that this initiative was announced on World Alzheimer's Day in September 1998 with this statement:

A re-elected coalition government would boost support by \$80 million over four years, which will provide more than 130,000 days of additional in-home respite care every year for carers of people with dementia.

That statement was put out by the Hon. Warwick Smith, the then Minister for Family Services on 20 September 1998. Unfortunately, that commitment seems to have expired with him. The initiative was also included in the coalition's policy paper called *Older Australians: a secure and stable future*. The coalition clearly says—

Mr Truss—I must raise again a point of order on relevance. Whilst I appreciate that in appropriation debates there is normally a right to have a general debate, this is an amendment coming back from the Senate. It deals with things like the book bounty; it does not deal with the broad question of Commonwealth-state relations or any program that the Commonwealth might happen to fund through the states. This amendment deals with the way in which the Commonwealth pays the book bounty through the states. I submit that the speeches being made are simply out of order and not relevant to the subject matter before the House.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Jenkins)—On the point of order, standing order 81 says that no member may digress from the subject matter provided that:

(b) on the motion for the second reading of an Appropriation or Supply Bill, except an Appropriation or Supply Bill for expenditure that is not expenditure for the ordinary annual services of the Government, matters relating to public affairs may be debated.

So there are actually two matters. This appropriation bill is for expenditure for certain purposes, and this is not a second reading debate but a debate about an amendment that has been returned from the Senate. I hope that the honourable member for Kingston might have those thoughts in mind when he continues his remarks to the question that the amendment be agreed to.

Mr COX—The issue at hand with this amendment is the relatively unrestricted way in which the Commonwealth can provide many of these grants to the states. I am demonstrating by means of the amendment being dealt with here that there is some dissatisfaction with the lack of accountability of the government as a result of the way the bills have been framed. The matters I am going to are a further demonstration of why the government's cavalier attitude to the way it uses appropriations needs to be examined and why there needs to be more clarity in the legislation. That is why this amendment is important. The issue I am going to is the way the government says it is going to do one thing with a program and then swiftly changes it to do another. The guidelines for submissions for these moneys have become available—and those guidelines now demonstrate a notable alteration to the original statement. In the way that the government is relatively unfettered at the moment in how it changes arrangements for the provision of funding for books, the provision of funding for dementia care has been changed unilaterally by the government according to its own wishes. These funds can now be used for respite for carers of any person with a challenging behaviour resulting from any disability. While there is no doubt that there is a large unmet demand for respite for carers of people with challenging behaviours—(*Time expired*)