



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 11922	Proof No
Questioner	Responder
Speaker Cox, David, MP	Question No.

Mr COX (Kingston) (9.56 am)—This amendment to the Appropriation (Supplementary Measures) Bill (No. 1) 1999 are particularly important. The Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit is presently having an inquiry into the new Financial Management and Accountability Act. One of the issues that has been raised by one of the very expert witnesses to that committee, Maurice Kennedy, who in fact wrote most of the act when he was an officer of the Department of Finance and Administration, is the way in which the government is appropriating moneys under very broad categories and, with accrual accounting, appropriating moneys which will be expended over a number of years, and the risks that are entailed there by the government down the track possibly not expending those moneys actually in accordance with those appropriations.

The amendment that we are debating today is somewhat related to that. One of our chief concerns is that moneys can be expended according to either agreements with conditions or agreements with the states that do not attach to them any conditions. We are getting to a situation where there is less and less accountability by the executive for the expenditure of public moneys. As I was saying earlier, this executive has shown itself prone to making promises about how it will expend public moneys which are simply not kept. In the case that I was referring to earlier, money that was put aside for respite care for people with dementia is now being disbursed over a much greater range of people with other client needs—in particular, those with challenging behaviours and children and young people with disabilities ranging from autism to mental illness. This change in policy reduces markedly the amount of respite available for carers.

Mr Slipper—Mr Deputy Speaker, I raise a further point of order. You have made rulings to earlier points of order very clear: this is a very specific debate, and members must remain relevant to the matters under consideration. I must say the honourable member for Kingston, regrettably, appears to be ignoring the very specific rulings you previously made. I ask you to bring him back to the question before the chamber.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Jenkins)—On the point of order, the honourable member for Kingston must use his comments only to draw a comparison between what he believes to be the case about, in this case, a Commonwealth-state agreement and how the Senate amendment which relates to Commonwealth-state agreements would relate to assistance to the book industry.

Mr Slipper—Is this about books now?

Mr COX—It is about books; the principle of the—

Mr Slipper interjecting—

Mr Ronaldson—It would be the first time if it was.

Mr COX—I think it is a perfectly relevant consideration, that the government have chosen—

Mr Ronaldson—You have absolutely no idea what this amendment is about.

Mr COX—This amendment is about you being able to make arrangements with the states that do not have any conditions attached to them. In this case it is about books. But it is a very general principle of accountability that this parliament does not allow you the kind of latitude that you seek for the finances of the Commonwealth.

Mr Slipper interjecting—

Mr COX—I take the parliamentary secretary's interjection. I am making a very valid comparison between the way that this government acts in relation to the promises that it makes and the way that it provides money to the states. *(Time expired)*