



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS

SPEECH

Wednesday, 7 February 2001

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Speaker Billson, Bruce, MP	Question No.

Mr BILLSON (Dunkley) (4.30 pm)—Mr Speaker, I wish to make a personal explanation.

Mr SPEAKER—Does the honourable member claim to have been misrepresented?

Mr BILLSON—Yes, repeatedly.

Mr SPEAKER—Please proceed.

Mr BILLSON—It saddens me greatly that, after making a personal explanation last night highlighting the reckless indifference to the truth that the Labor Party have about my position on fuel taxes—

Mr SPEAKER—The member for Dunkley will come to the point about which he has been misrepresented.

Mr BILLSON—that untruth has been perpetuated by the members for Hotham and Batman by way of a press release and also, regrettably, in the respected journal the *Herald Sun* in Melbourne. The *Herald Sun* seems to make the point that I have been duplicitous in my view in suggesting that a February CPI indexed tax freeze was sensible policy.

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr SPEAKER—The member for Dunkley is entitled to be heard in silence.

Mr BILLSON—I have never advocated that view. That was conveyed to the journalist at the *Herald Sun*, who quite accurately recorded my comments as—

Mr SPEAKER—The Deputy Leader of the Opposition is defying the chair.

Mr BILLSON—and I quote:

Mr Billson said freezing the February excise indexation would have been a knee-jerk short-term political stunt that would have delivered barely distinguishable results. He said he supported a more meaningful reduction in fuel taxes once the impact —

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr SPEAKER—The member for Dunkley will resume his seat. I warn the Deputy Leader of the Opposition! This is not an action I take lightly but, by any standard, the chair is being defied and provoked by the actions currently being taken by members on my left. I call on all members to exercise greater restraint. The member for Dunkley will come to where he has been misrepresented.

Mr BILLSON—I continued to say:

... once the impact of a full year of the new tax system had been assessed.

That very measured, sensible policy position was actually contained in the article prepared by the journalist from the *Herald Sun*, but the sub-editors whipped it out, giving the story quite a different meaning in what was published that entirely misrepresented my position. I am happy to refer my proposal to the Treasurer or shadow Treasurer—it is a good plan.

Mr SPEAKER—The member for Dunkley has indicated where he has been misrepresented.