



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Education and Skills

SPEECH

Tuesday, 13 February 2007

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Questioner
Speaker Ciobo, Steven, MP

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Mr CIOBO (Moncrieff) (5.19 pm)—I am certainly pleased to rise in rebuttal to the very weak attempt that Labor made in this afternoon's matter of public importance. The central assertion made by the Labor Party this afternoon was that in some way this government has failed the people of Australia in recognising, apparently, according to the Australian Labor Party, the declining productivity growth in the economy and that education and skills training play a key role in reinvigorating productivity growth and securing future prosperity. Of all the political parties to lecture this chamber about the importance of investing in education and of securing future prosperity, you would have to say that the Labor Party would take the cake in terms of being the very last people who should come in and speak to this issue.

Let us look at the future prosperity that 13 years of Labor delivered to the Australian people. The central element of its argument is that we need to secure future prosperity. If the Labor Party is so good at it, let us look at what it left. We know that the Australian Labor Party secured Australia's future prosperity between 1983 and 1996 by leaving a \$95 billion black hole in the Australian budget. That was the debt that was left by the Australian Labor Party. We know that the Australian Labor Party believed so much in skilling and training young Australians that it consigned about 25 per cent of those under the age of 25 to the unemployment scrap heap. That is the legacy of the Australian Labor Party. That is the way it secured future prosperity. Do you know what, Mr Deputy Speaker? Obviously, the Labor Party believes so much in training that it prefers you to be in training than in a job. The sad reality is that that is the legacy that the Australian Labor Party left to the people of Australia.

Under this government we saw just a couple of days ago the unemployment rate in this country reach the lowest level for 32 years. If we want to talk in a very serious sense about securing Australia's future prosperity, we know there is no better anchor for someone's future prosperity than knowing they will have a job or the opportunity to secure a job when they finish their training course, school education, TAFE course or university education. That is the kind of anchor that young Australians want to have going into the future. That is the kind of anchor that they want a government at a Commonwealth level to deliver for them, not the kinds of words and empty rhetoric that we heard spewing forth from opposition members this afternoon. That is not future prosperity; that is empty rhetoric. We hear it time and time again from the Australian Labor Party.

When you look at actually delivering, when you are talking about investment in skills education and when you talk about investment in schools, what is the track record of this government? Again, the contrast could not be more clear. What we know is that, in 1996, after this government was elected and the Labor Party left their 13-year legacy, we saw interest on government debt reach \$8.4 billion. Investment in hospitals and schools was at \$9.1 billion and assistance to families with children was at \$14.4 billion.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Jenkins)—Order! The time allotted for the debate on the matter of public importance has expired. The debate is concluded.