



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Main Committee

APPROPRIATION BILL (NO. 1) 2007-2008

Consideration in Detail

SPEECH

Thursday, 14 June 2007

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SPEECH

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Questioner
Speaker Bowen, Chris, MP

Source House
Proof No
Responder
Question No.

Mr BOWEN (Prospect) (12.05 pm)—I am happy to speak for a couple of minutes so the parliamentary secretary can check whether he has the power. I am not sure that he knows. He might want to check whether he has the authority personally, as the Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer, to give the direction himself. I will speak for a couple of minutes and he may wish to take the opportunity to check. He may not choose to take that opportunity, but I ask him to confirm whether he, as Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer, has that capacity.

In 2005 the Chairman of the ACCC, the watchdog of motorists and consumers, said there was something funny going on with petrol prices. Two years later, in January this year, he was on the front page of the *Daily Telegraph* saying that oil companies were not passing on reductions in petrol prices from overseas and he was very concerned. He said the same thing last week. I have no quarrel with Mr Samuel—I think he does as good a job as he can with the authority that he has—but under this government's changes to the Trade Practices Act he cannot formally monitor petrol prices, which means getting behind petrol prices, seeking documents, talking to witnesses, ensuring that there is no price gouging and ensuring there is no collusion, unless he has a formal written directive from the government to do that. I am asking the parliamentary secretary to confirm to the House that he, as an individual, as Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer, has that personal authority.