



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**Main Committee**

**CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS**

**Micah Challenge**

**SPEECH**

**Thursday, 17 September 2009**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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## SPEECH

**Date** Thursday, 17 September 2009  
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**Questioner**  
**Speaker** Keenan, Michael, MP

**Source** House  
**Proof** No  
**Responder**  
**Question No.**

**Mr KEENAN** (Stirling) (9.47 am)—This week, like lots of other members of the parliament, I suspect, I have been visited by representatives of the Micah Challenge, which is a coalition of Christian organisations. They came to this parliament to ask their representatives to commit to, amongst other things, adhering to the Millennium Development Goals. When they came in, they presented a very cogent argument as to why we should do that. It pricked my conscience that I had been visited in my electorate about this issue in the past by campaigners for the Make Poverty History campaign, a campaign that I suspect is well known to all members in this place. I recalled that I had agreed to say something about this in the House and I had not fulfilled the obligation that I had given. So I am very pleased to be able to fulfil that obligation today.

Both the Micah Challenge and the Make Poverty History campaign are doing very important work within our community to highlight the issues of poverty. We are incredibly lucky here in Australia in that we all enjoy a very, very good standard of living, when across the globe we still find many people, particularly in that blighted continent of Africa, who do not enjoy the standard of living that most of us take for granted.

The representatives from the Micah Challenge presented me with what they called the ‘bible’, a publication that they have prepared that explains to members of parliament, and others, some of the problems that people are facing, particularly in Africa. They also left me with a very telling reminder about how terrible the affliction of poverty is in some places. It was a little band that they use on children—not on infants—to see how much in danger of fatal malnourishment they are. It is like a little tape measure. You put it around the upper forearm. If it gets into the red section—and the red section is exceptionally small—that means that the child is in danger of dying from malnutrition. To me, that was a very sobering reminder about the importance of these challenges: the fact that we need to have people out in the field measuring the upper forearms of fellow human beings to see whether they are in danger of dying from malnourishment.

I congratulate those representatives of the Micah Challenge and those who are taking part in the Make Poverty History campaign. We had a discussion. Australia does some very good things in our own region, and I think that should be included in some of their deliberations, but I really do appreciate their sense of purpose in coming to this parliament to remind us all about these vitally important global challenges.