



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

**SOCIAL SECURITY AND OTHER
LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (INCOME
SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS) BILL 2009**

Consideration of Senate Message

SPEECH

Wednesday, 18 November 2009

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SPEECH

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Speaker Gillard, Julia, MP	Question No.

Ms GILLARD (Lalor—Minister for Education, Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations and Minister for Social Inclusion) (12.48 pm)—Can I just introduce some notes of reality into this debate. I am glad that some members of the opposition have come into the House, because I actually believe—and I have had the opportunity to talk about Youth Allowance with some members of the opposition—that there are some members of the opposition who have sought to deal with this issue seriously and have really thought it through. I would really seriously say to those members of the opposition: get to grips with these amendments, because they are not as they have been represented to you.

What these amendments do is, No. 1, engage in a further transitional change. Members of the opposition would be aware that the government has already made a transitional change, having listened to the voices of students. I met directly with some members of the opposition to talk about the question. We have already made a transitional change for students who are in gap years now and who need to move away from home to study.

What members of the opposition are being asked to do, in the further transitional change that is within these amendments, is to make that transitional arrangement for students who will live at home to study. That is, they are being asked to make that transitional change for students who may live in households of \$200,000 or \$300,000 a year. When I look at the members opposite here, I can see members from rural Victoria, for example, in the House. I do not believe that their constituents are calling on them to make a transitional change to make sure that students living at home, in households of \$150,000, \$200,000 or \$300,000 a year, in cities—maybe in Carlton, 10 steps from the university, in a household with an income of \$300,000 a year—get full youth allowance. So seriously think about what you are being asked to vote for here. That is the additional transitional change that is being moved by the member for Sturt, or, effectively, supported by him now in these contributions. I know the member for Gilmore's constituents would not be asking her to get full youth allowance for people living at home in the city in households with \$300,000 a year incomes, and that is what is in these amendments.

What else is in these amendments is a continuation of the system that has failed country kids. The maths do not lie, and the maths tell us that, in the last five years of the current student financing arrangement, the participation of country kids in universities has gone down. It is a shame. It is a national disgrace. It is something that we should fix. You are being asked to continue the system that has failed country kids, day in, day out.

At whose cost are you being asked to do that? I think that is a very important question to ask. The cost is to the 150,000 students in your electorate that could have had student start-up scholarships. The cost is to the kids in your electorate who need a relocation scholarship to move next year but who will not get that \$4,000 if this bill does not pass. The cost is to the kids from households on modest incomes like \$40,000 a year, who will not get the full rate of youth allowance if this bill does not pass, when they could have. The cost is to those 78,000 who would get an increase in their part youth allowance or get youth allowance for the first time if this bill passed. The cost is: the independence age not coming down progressively from 25 to 22. And the cost of these amendments before the House now to the budget is around \$1 billion, with no matching savings. Those are the facts.

The matching savings put up by the opposition were nowhere near the order of \$1 billion and they were about ripping scholarships—including \$160 million in scholarships for country kids—out of the hands of students. This is the opposition in its worst possible mode. What I will do is appeal again to the senior leadership of the opposition to make sure that members of the opposition are not implicated in a \$1 billion black hole in the budget or in ripping money out of the hands of kids next year, including the ones in your electorates. (*Time expired*)