



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Prime Minister

SPEECH

Thursday, 4 December 2014

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Questioner
Speaker Plibersek, Tanya, MP

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Ms PLIBERSEK (Sydney—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (15:38): Thank you, Deputy Speaker. I want to take the opportunity on this last day of sittings to wish you and your family a happy Christmas and New Year.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I think you were in the chair the other day when I told the story of my little Louis, who helps himself to the mini Magnums. I do not normally share stories of my family, but today's topic brought to mind another one, and it is about my middle child, Joe. I was going into his room and I was finding that it was getting stinkier and stinkier. I thought, 'Here comes adolescence; his body is changing.' No, it was not that. It was in fact a sandwich—I think it was a sandwich. It was something in his schoolbag that had been there for so many weeks that it was actually unidentifiable. It was mush wrapped in gladwrap, which was leaking liquid—and it was hot to the touch.

The only thing that stays in the schoolbag longer than an uneaten sandwich is a school report—that is, a bad school report. At this time of year you know that, the longer it takes for the school report to get from the schoolbag to the kitchen table, the worse it is going to be. And, really, that did make me think that this week we are doing all of this analysis of what has been happening this year and how we have been doing. I think it is fair to say that, if we did an analysis—a report card—of how this government has done in the last year, it would not be a very good report card.

The Prime Minister promised before the election—he made a number of promises, but let us just take one, for example—that 'Kevin Rudd and I are on an absolute unity ticket when it comes to school funding.' He said that on 4 August. Christopher Pyne, the Manager of Government Business, said, 'You can vote Liberal or Labor and you'll get exactly the same amount of funding for your school.' How did they live up to that one? Well, Labor committed \$14.65 billion to Gonski school education funding. The Prime Minister has guaranteed—guess what—\$2.8 billion. The difference between almost \$15 billion and less than \$3 billion—not a very good grasp of mathematical concepts there.

What is the consequence of the Prime Minister's poor grasp of maths? Let us hear from David Gonski:

There needs to be a commitment to a properly funded, needs-based funding system and a failure to do so will be to our detriment.

Yes, it will be. It will be not just to the detriment of the individual children who will miss out—and there will be individual children who miss out—but to the detriment of this nation if we do not invest in early education, primary school, infant school and indeed high school.

Let us turn to science. How is the Prime Minister doing when it comes to science? What is the biggest scientific debate in Australia, and indeed globally, today? A colourless, weightless gas—it is this little thing called climate change! Here is something from Lord Deben, the former environment minister in the government of Thatcher, the hero of the Prime Minister:

"I haven't met an Australian who is not deeply ashamed of this government, most of whom voted for Abbott," he said. "How can you say 'we don't mind what 97% of scientists tell us, we are going to stick two fingers up and do it anyway'?"

That is really what we saw at the G20. We saw a government determined not to discuss climate science. And you add to that cuts to the CSIRO: \$115 million from CSIRO funding; losing 400 researchers, including some of the best known internationally; and 300 positions cut as part of an internal restructure. Nobel laureate Professor Peter Doherty said:

Cutting resources for science, technology, innovation and education is a sure way of accelerating our transition to a Third-World economy.

So he has not been rated very well on maths, our Prime Minister. He has not been rated very well on science. Economics—that is a whole other area. He said he would 'end the debt and deficit'. He has doubled the deficit. He has given debt unlimited, in a dirty deal with the Greens. He has \$20 billion for a Paid Parental Leave scheme that no-one wants. He gave \$9 billion to the Reserve Bank—unasked for and unneeded. A billion dollars foregone in profit-shifting tax evasion from multinational companies. He has given up the revenue from carbon pricing, but he has kept the compensation. What a disaster it has been.