



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Main Committee

CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS

Schools: Computers

SPEECH

Wednesday, 10 February 2010

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SPEECH

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Speaker	Broadbent, Russell, MP	Question No.	

Mr BROADBENT (McMillan) (9.53 am)—I would like to identify with the words just spoken by the previous speaker and congratulate him on that address and the story. Gough Whitlam's 'It's time' speech on 13 November 1972 in part said this:

We will make pre-school education available to every Australian child. We do this not just because we believe that all Australian children should have the opportunities now available only to children in Canberra, but because pre-school education is the most important single weapon in promoting equality and in overcoming social, economic and language inequalities.

Although I may not agree with a lot of what the Whitlam government said and did, I certainly agree with that statement. Thirty-eight years after Gough Whitlam said that, it is unfulfilled. There are still today Indigenous communities right across Australia and other communities in country areas where such education is not available to our youngest.

In 1989, Bob Hawke promised that one billion trees would be planted. Do we know—has there been a check—whether those one billion trees were planted? I would put to you that the Howard government's program of funding Landcare planted far more trees than we could ever imagine and that was people power in action. Once again, this was a promise which has not been fulfilled that we know of—unless there has been an audit.

Before the 2007 election Prime Minister Rudd promised new leadership and a new future. He held up a computer and said, 'There'll be one of these in every child's hands by 2011'—next year. When questioned by young people, the Prime Minister said:

We've said a computer for every young person at secondary from Year 9 or above by 2013 or thereabouts ...

The fact is that the original 2007 election commitment was for laptops to be rolled out in four years, by 2011. He was incorrect. He said:

We're on track to doing that. We have about 260,000 computers out there at schools now. That is a fact.

According to Senate estimates, 154,000 of the one million promised laptops are in operation. So what he said was factually incorrect.

When we as politicians make commitments before an election about what we are going to do, there should be an integrity check on the promises that we make to the Australian people; otherwise, we let them down badly. When a Prime Minister or any of us are checked like that, we have a responsibility. If we make a promise to the Australian people in an election campaign just for their green vote, like Bob Hawke in 1989, and then do not fulfil that promises, we should be called to account. And the only way we can be called to account is by the people on election day.