



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Main Committee

ADJOURNMENT

Indigenous Welfare

SPEECH

Thursday, 11 February 2010

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Speaker Broadbent, Russell, MP	Question No.

Mr BROADBENT (McMillan) (12.41 pm)—I have just come from the House of Representatives, where the Prime Minister has made an announcement on Indigenous welfare across Australia. If he can deliver what he has outlined, he will have my 100 per cent support and the support of my party. He outlined some good ideas that were well received by the parliament. We often get asked by the broader community, ‘Why don’t you people get up there and sit down together and nut something out and try to make it work together on behalf of this nation?’ I think that the Prime Minister’s statement today with regard to Indigenous communities will be fully supported by members of this House.

I was driving to Warragul to my office the other day and on the side of the road there was a car and trailer—a pretty rough car and a pretty rough old trailer—and three young fellas, a heap of insulation and a ladder. I think that the program that the government set out to achieve with regard to insulation was important. But, in the last couple of months, my office has been inundated with complaints, especially from older residents, about the aggressive nature of people trying to sell them insulation—for example, telling them it is for free; telling them that the insulation they have is carcinogenic but not even going into the roof and checking what they have; and trying to back up onto their lawns and throw insulation in the place. These three people I saw on the side of the road trying to tie their insulation back onto the trailer did not have any sort of work uniform on or an indication of who they were. The government has to look at that program very carefully.

It is the same with the Green Loans Program. Those receiving the loans are complaining. Those who were trained to give the loans are complaining. We do not get those sorts of complaints to my office unless there is an issue. The government needs to address this—Minister Peter Garrett needs to address this straightaway.

It is similar to the changes that the government decided to make to Landcare. Landcare was such a fantastic program and it was working well and achieving all the goals. Bureaucrats get involved and say, ‘There’s a new government; we can do it a new and better way,’ but often the old way is the best way when we are delivering the planting of trees. Every member of this House has a Landcare group somewhere that they are very proud of. Those groups are proud of the work that they have done and they show you the years of work they have done—‘Look at what we’ve done. See how our area has changed. See how salinity has been dealt with.’ It is just amazing work, and I want to commend everybody who is involved with that.

I have just been to a minister’s office—I will not name the minister—and I got a great reception from a young lady there. I said, ‘Here’s the plight of a person with regard to the youth allowance and how it has affected him and his family.’ I think the government could intervene in this case to help this young person through to their goal. The young lady not only received my letter but said, ‘I think I can do something here.’ As members of parliament, what we often forget are the small things that we are able to do just through a reasonable approach to a minister or to a member of their staff. Often that minister will not even know what has gone on in the office and that one of his staff may have said, ‘Yes, I think I can help you.’ It was not about me; it was about this young person.

As members of parliament, we are not going to remember where we got to on the ladder or what we did throughout our parliamentary careers. We are going to remember those individuals whose lives we have been able to make a difference to. The important memories for members in this place in the future will be who we helped, what individuals’ lives we changed, not how we self aggrandised. With the Prime Minister’s statement today, I hope that this government, with our support, will be able to make a difference to many Indigenous lives.