



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Main Committee

APPROPRIATION BILL (NO. 1) 2010-2011

APPROPRIATION BILL (NO. 2) 2010-2011

**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENTARY
DEPARTMENTS) BILL (NO. 1) 2010-2011**

Second Reading

SPEECH

Thursday, 27 May 2010

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Questioner
Speaker Broadbent, Russell, MP

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Mr BROADBENT (McMillan) (10.00 am)—There are two issues that go to the credibility of the Treasurer: what is said by the Treasurer on the day and what he does after that. The Treasurer said in 2008:

We will invest \$2.2 billion over five years for the Caring for our Country program ...

That was in his speech of 13 May. But what has the government done to uphold this commitment in 2010-11? This budget cut funding for Caring for our Country by \$81.3 million and ripped the heart out of Landcare, cutting it by \$10.9 million. In my seat of McMillan, Landcare is an iconic organisation conducting serious work in revegetation, restoration, erosion and pest control and in improving our environment. The government has turned its back on regional communities in this regard.

I assert that the credibility of the government is in tatters. Again, the Treasurer, focusing on the future and not the present, said:

Tonight I am announcing a further \$2.2 billion investment in the health system.

... ..

over five years ... and over the rest of the decade.

... ..

That is why I am announcing \$523 million to train and support our nurses, including in aged care and in our rural and regional communities.

You would think that was absolutely marvellous, and I did. GP nurses were a great idea. But what is the reality? A GP clinic has informed me in regard to the GP nurse grant that, given the number of GPs, the clinic would be granted \$125,000 for the employment of nurses. As part of the grant process, the practice incentives payments under PIP plus seven other procedures which could be performed by nurses have been removed. This amounts to a total loss of \$159,000 to the GP clinic. The net loss of employing the nurses then amounts to approximately \$34,600. This is a major disincentive to employing the nurses. There is no logic in this program and it will do great damage rather than provide the benefits that we thought would accrue. The broader question is: is this happening in all accredited general practices and in the much touted superclinics?

I come back to Australians out there working and trying to make a go of it for their children and their loved ones. There was very little mention of them in the budget speech and no mention of rural, regional and remote Australians. But there was plenty of rhetoric about the future and the long run. When the Treasurer did mention families, he said:

But the families I speak to—

not ‘with’—

also want more time with each other.

So the government has decided to provide taxpayers the choice of a standard deduction instead of the hassle of shoeboxes full of receipts and the costs of professional assistance.

Let me say this: what does this achieve?

This means less time with the Tax Pack, more time with the loved ones—

said the Treasurer. Does a once-a-year activity translate to massively more time with loved ones? I think not. By the way, professional assistance is tax deductible.

I now turn to the issues facing young people and I will quote from an ACCESS ministries document rather than use my own words:

The issues facing young people today are unique, as is the case for every generation. But today more than ever young people are susceptible to new forms of peer pressure that invades even the privacy of their own homes. The advent of the internet brings with it some amazing prospects, however it also has introduced a new way of interaction among young people. To some it is simply a fun way of keeping in touch. For others it is the ultimate device for inflicting misery on peers and even teachers in a very public arena. Welcome to the world of cyber-bullying.

Here is an illustration for most of us, including me, of a case of bullying:

For most of us, bullying was played out between 9 and 3 and the retreat of home was usually rapid, and we were safe, there was time out.

Imagine what it would be like, to come home from a demoralising day at school, victim of the same group of kids yet again. You come home, throw your bag in the door, you're tired and stressed out, you've got heaps of homework to do. You're so behind because you can't concentrate in class, everything is late and the teachers are getting cross.

You turn on your computer and open up your English assignment, a little icon starts flashing on your screen, it's impossible to ignore it, like an itch that has to be scratched. You try to concentrate on your assignment but the flashing icon requires attention, someone wants to tell you something ...

You click, and to your horror you see your own name, plastered on the screen with a photo of you that is enough to make you want to die. It's private and personal and everyone can see you, and everyone is laughing at you. They are calling you names and you bury your head in your hands, hot tears streaming down your face, humiliation, embarrassment, anger blended together. How can I face another day at school, how can I face another day of my life ...

You are too embarrassed to tell your parents, there is no-one to turn to. Welcome to the world of cyber-bullying.

After a sleepless night while you checked your account every few minutes to torture yourself further with what people are saying about you, you decide there is only one thing to do.

You sneak into the school yard early, avoiding everyone, yet you feel their eyes are boring into you sniggering, you walk up the hall and find a door with one word written on it, chaplain ... You walk inside, your eyes meet Sarah's the chaplain and you shake uncontrollably and the tears are unstoppable.

'There is nothing I can do,' she—

who is speaking—the chaplain or the student?

says with a sad smile, 'first things first,' she says, 'let me get the hot chocolate on and the comfiest chair in the house.' It feels like a hug and you know from her smile that she's in it with you, and you begin to feel safer, and slowly but surely the world begins to shift back into focus, perspective slowly dawns and you begin to realise the humiliation of the night is over and soon it'll be yesterday's news.

This is not a one in a million story. This is happening all the time in many schools across Australia. It could be the young man who delivers your paper, the girl next door—worse, it could be your daughter, your nephew or your grandchild. That is why the chaplaincy program is so important in this day and age. It is different. The coalition have committed to the program in upcoming years. I am just worried the government might not have committed to this program in upcoming years. It is crucially important; in fact, I think the program should be extended so that more schools can take the opportunity to provide chaplaincy in their schools so that that young girl and many others can go to that door and find the word 'chaplain'.

In conclusion, as to the coalition's announcement of refugee policy today, my views and standing on these issues are well known and documented. I take not one step back from, nor do I resile from, that I have said and that I have done. I live in hope for all people who have made this great south land their home. I stand in the absolute assurance that hope will always triumph over fear.