



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Main Committee

APPROPRIATION BILL (NO. 1) 2010-2011

Consideration in Detail

SPEECH

Wednesday, 16 June 2010

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Date Wednesday, 16 June 2010
Page 5689
Questioner
Speaker Keenan, Michael, MP

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Question No.

Mr KEENAN (Stirling) (7.21 pm)—Earlier I had the chance to ask a series of questions which the government has refused to even acknowledge. The minister did respond to the first question that I asked, which was about the air marshals program. It seems remarkable to me that two ministers cannot walk into this place and just answer questions on their portfolio areas in the 35 minutes that have been allocated for scrutiny. Surely for ministers of the Crown it is not that difficult to come in here and answer questions for 35 minutes on areas within their portfolio without going through this ludicrous parody of government members getting up and asking dorothea questions and the minister then reading a prepared answer.

I know there is a great tradition in this place of subverting any measure of accountability, but quite frankly I think that this process today is a farce. I have seen ministers come in here and just answer questions, without having to get dorothea from their own side, because they feel confident addressing areas within their own portfolio.

Mr Brendan O'Connor—Do you want to ask a question? Which one do you want me to answer?

Mr KEENAN—I have actually asked a series of questions which I am happy to repeat for you now. You had the opportunity to answer some questions before but apparently you were not competent enough to be able to do that. So for the minister's benefit I will repeat those questions. Question 2: as part of the government's announcement to spend \$65 million over the next four years to introduce biometric data checks for Australian visa applications, does the government have any plans to initiate biometric data sharing arrangements with Sri Lanka, Malaysia and Indonesia?

Further, I ask: will the minister give a breakdown of the government's 2007 election promise for 500 extra sworn AFP officers? How many have actually been recruited and sworn in? Since December 2007 how many staff have been made redundant? I also ask the minister—and I will give him his full five minutes to respond to these issues, which I assume a competent minister would actually be able to do—about the budgetary allocation for the Bay class vessels within the budget. Given that the government has said that there are going to be notified expenditure announcements, that would of course change the calculations in relation to the surplus in 2014. Can he direct us to where in the budget the allocation for those vessels is?

Question 5, and I think this one is for the Attorney: referring to the public consultation on the R18+ classification for computer games, now that submissions have been closed and 60,000 submissions have been received, will the Attorney confirm whether the government will be supporting an R18+ classification for computer games?

Furthermore, I ask, referring to reports in the *Australian* on 15 June 2010: despite only one per cent of border detections occurring at our ports, yet resulting in 80 per cent of the drug importations coming into Australia, can the minister explain what has been done to combat the flood of illicit drugs coming through our ports?

Finally, I ask: given the Western Australian government's recent announcement that they were not going to house people smugglers in Western Australian prisons, will the minister confirm whether the government will stop using Western Australian prisons or whether they will evenly distribute the burden of detaining people smugglers across all states? He now has five minutes to answer those questions, and I am sure he should have all those facts to hand.