



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Abbott Government

SPEECH

Wednesday, 11 February 2015

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Speaker Plibersek, Tanya, MP	Question No.

Ms PLIBERSEK (Sydney—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (15:41): I think what you see in the previous speaker is the perfect illustration of the reason that we had to have this matter of public importance debate today, because what we have heard on the one hand from the Prime Minister is, 'I am humbled,' 'I have listened,' 'I have learned,' 'I will change my ways,' 'Please forgive me,' 'Give me another chance,' 'Another six months,' 'Hold Malcolm back for a little while yet' and 'Hold ScoMo and Julie Bishop off for a little while yet.' But what we see is that there is no—

Mr Turnbull: Mr Deputy Speaker, a point of order: would the member for Sydney refer to honourable members by their titles.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. BC Scott): I would remind the Deputy Leader of the Opposition to refer—

Ms PLIBERSEK: I thank the future Prime Minister, his majesty of Wentworth, for the intervention!

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: It is a fault on both sides of the House, I acknowledge, and it should be learned by both sides.

Ms PLIBERSEK: What you see is the reason for this matter of public importance. You have got a Prime Minister who is desperately trying to convince people that something has changed and that it is all going to be different from now on—since the 16 or 17 months we have had, where no Australian felt better off, where every Australian felt under attack by this government's policies—because today is the first day of good government.

We have the Prime Minister saying on 9 February, 'I have listened,' 'I have learned,' 'I have changed' and 'The government will change with me.' Then you have the previous member saying: 'Hang on a minute. We still are committed to all the cuts that people find so unpalatable.' You have got the member for Wentworth saying, 'Of course I support unreservedly and wholeheartedly every element of the budget.' You have got the Treasurer on 7.30 last night to Leigh Sales, when asked whether he will persist with policies like the GP tax, the \$100,000 university degrees and pension cuts, saying, 'We are because we have no choice.' You have got the Minister for Foreign Affairs saying yesterday that the whole cabinet has to take responsibility for the budget.

You have the whole of the leadership of the Liberal Party—as competitive as they are with one another, undermining as they are with one another—agree on this one fundamental fact: the cuts stay. The \$100,000 university degrees stay, the GP tax stays, the billion dollar cut to child care stays and the cuts to the age pension stay. Frankly, that does not sound like a government that has learnt its lesson. It does not sound like a Prime Minister who has learnt his lesson. It does not sound like any real change, sadly, for the Australian families that are suffering cuts of up to \$6,000 on an income of \$65,000. It does not sound like real change to me.

Perhaps the best illustration of this, other than backing in this toxic budget, is the shambles we have seen over the last few days in determining whether Australia's future submarines would be built in Adelaide, as the government clearly promised before the election, or whether they are going to be built somewhere else. We had a classic answer from the Prime Minister today in which he not only claimed that under Labor the submarines would be built in North Korea but also said they would be built by a dead man. I think Kim Jong-il has been gone for a while now, so he really jumped the shark on that one!

But here we have a submarine promise very clearly made before the last election to the people of South Australia: they will be built here, and the jobs that come with them will be South Australian jobs. Then there was some sort of arrangement—we are not clear what, because the Prime Minister clearly refused to answer the question today—made with Japan, an arrangement that the Australian people are not to be party to. Then we had, on Friday, some promise made to Senator Edwards. Again, it is not clear what the promise was, because we had two such clearly different accounts, one from Senator Edwards, saying, 'Absolutely I was told that there would be a tender process and that South Australian workers would potentially get work from this' and one from the Prime Minister,

saying, 'Oh, no; I never said anything like that.' This is a broken promise about a broken promise about a broken promise. We have had three completely different promises about where these submarines would be built, and it looks like all of them now will be broken. The tragic thing about all this, of course, is that the people who always suffer at the end of the day are ordinary working Australians. They have a government in chaos. They have frontbenchers undermining each other, all lobbying for the top job. And we see education expenses going up, health cuts, pension cuts—all of the things that this government promised they would not do.