



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**MOTIONS**

**Turnbull Government**

**SPEECH**

**Wednesday, 16 March 2016**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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## SPEECH

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**Questioner**  
**Speaker** Burke, Tony, MP

**Source** House  
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**Responder**  
**Question No.**

**Mr BURKE** (Watson—Manager of Opposition Business) (15:11): That was some of the longest 10 minutes the parliament has ever been through.

Government members interjecting—

**Mr BURKE:** Oh, the backbench is still there! I have not heard them for so long! That speech cleared the public gallery and tranquillised the backbench. Who would have thought we would get to the point in question time when the toughest question you could ask a Prime Minister is: 'What is your government's tax policy?' Who would have thought that was the tough one? He would say, 'Why didn't they think of that in PMO? Why didn't they come up with an answer?' What is the government's tax policy? We get to a situation where we have a resolution dealing with it, and what does he talk about? How you change the voting rules for the Senate.

We have a government that have failed every test they set for themselves. They said they would deal with the excesses of negative gearing. That is dead. They said they would never increase super tax. That is dead. They said they would never increase tobacco excise. That is now dead. They said they would increase the GST. That has been shelved for now. They said that they would cut personal income taxes. That is now dead. We now have a situation where every day they get closer and closer to the 2014 budget, brought down by the people they claim to be an alternative to.

Be warned: any time you hear someone from over that side say they are passionate about an issue, the issue is doomed. The Prime Minister was passionate about the republic—doomed. He was passionate about marriage equality—doomed. This guy over here was passionate about dealing with bracket creep—doomed; gone. The Prime Minister was passionate about climate change—doomed. As long as they say they believe in something, be guaranteed they will fly the kite and then they will cut the little cord that the kite is flying on and watch it blow away. Every chance they get, where people think, 'Maybe they're going to stand for something,' this Prime Minister comes in and shows the only leadership he is capable of: to stand for nothing.

Even on the most simple issues—in the Senate, during this same question time, the finance minister was asked: 'When the budget will be?' He stood up and agreed that it would on 10 May. This Prime Minister, in answer to the first question when asked what the date for the budget will be, said, '16 March.' That is today! Yesterday, the Leader of the House was off briefing the crossbench, saying it was going to be on 3 May. So we have three dates for the nation's budget. I have to say, the concept of it being today is just as plausible as anything else the Prime Minister has been offering in this parliament.

We have somebody who created so much hope among a lot of people that the nation's debate, at least, whether you agreed with him or disagreed with him, would improve when he became Prime Minister. Since then, you can find debate, but it is him disagreeing with himself on a daily basis. He gets up in question time and he asks himself questions. He does an interview and he argues with what he said the day before. I have to say, he is doing really well in the debate! It is riveting television! The problem is that it is not taking the nation anywhere.

Tax policy matters. But all the tax policy in all the tax debates is being led by this side of the House, as is the entire policy agenda for the nation. Where the agenda is being led from is shown by the simple fact that if you ask a question about tax policy the only policies those opposite have to talk about are Labor's policies. They are the only ones they have to talk about.

Then the government tried to have their big attack on negative gearing that they had in the drawer. Every time the Prime Minister says, 'Housing prices will go down,' we have the voice of the Assistant Treasurer piping up in the background, telling us that housing prices will go up. Will they go up or go down? The only constant theme is that we are meant to be terribly afraid of both. If fear is all the government have going for them, why did they bother replacing Mr Abbott? He was much better at it.

You would think at some point they would want to stand for something in politics. You would think they would have a reason for being. You would think that there would be a principle. Today at least from the Prime Minister we had the concept of there being a human right—he referred to a fundamental right—when he said that Labor's policy will restrict the freedom of Australians to invest and to negative gear. That is the first time I have ever heard a declaration of the freedom to negatively gear! But that is the principle they have. They have a fundamental principle that the government will give more help to the person buying their second, third or 10th home—(*Time expired*)

The SPEAKER: The time allotted for this debate has expired. The question is that the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition be agreed to.

**Mr Turnbull:** I ask that further questions be placed on the *Notice Paper*.