



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

BILLS

**Northern Australia
Infrastructure Facility Bill 2016**

Consideration of Senate Message

SPEECH

Tuesday, 3 May 2016

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SPEECH

Date Tuesday, 3 May 2016
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Questioner
Speaker Albanese, Anthony, MP

Source House
Proof No
Responder
Question No.

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler) (12:04): The opposition will be supporting this proposition moved by the minister, but we are somewhat bemused that this government that has just begun this term, because this is week 2, allegedly, of this current sitting of parliament, is frankly so incompetent that we have circumstances whereby we have this occurrence. It may well have occurred early on in my 20 years in this place, but certainly since I have held the position of Leader of the House or the Manager of Opposition Business it has not occurred. This is quite unusual. It has occurred because the government failed to understand what was appropriate when it put together the Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility Bill.

Due to the very strong advocacy from my colleague the member for Perth, the government has recognised that it made an error in its original drafting of the bill on the definition of 'Northern Australia'. The substantial amendments that the government has foreshadowed will have to be moved in this House first and then carried in the Senate second. That is what should occur. Mr Speaker, I know that you and I would agree on the primacy of the House of Representatives under the Constitution. It now needs to be done through this rather convoluted procedural action moved by the government.

We certainly endorse your statement, Mr Speaker, on the constitutional issues. You are quite right, of course. But we find it extraordinary that the government had to have the Australian Constitution drawn to its attention in what is week 2 of a parliament that was convened to consider two pieces of legislation, one of which it dropped. That says it all about why this government should be put out of its misery on 2 July. It simply has not been competent to act like a government. It continues to act like an opposition in exile on the government benches.

This extraordinary proposition that is before the parliament today, which as I said the Labor Party will facilitate, is a change to legislation which has been advocated primarily by the member for Perth but supported by the Australian Labor Party to try and get this right. Of course, we facilitated the passage of the northern Australia infrastructure legislation through the parliament after it was prorogued. We put it through very quickly to try and help this fledgling new cabinet minister over here, because it is in our nature to be constructive, which is why we will support this proposition. But we say that Australia does not have long to wait before it has a government that understands the way the parliament works and is actually able to govern competently. We will have that opportunity. This bill only provides for loans for northern Australia, but it is legislation which we support, but we support it being conducted in a way that is obviously consistent with the Australian Constitution. My colleague the member for Perth will speak about the substance of these changes when the minister moves his amendments subsequent to the procedural resolutions that are currently before the House.

Question agreed to.

Message from the Administrator recommending appropriation for requested amendments announced.