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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**

**Higher Education**

**SPEECH**

**Monday, 27 February 2017**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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## SPEECH

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**Speaker** Ryan, Joanne, MP

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**Ms RYAN** (Lalor—Opposition Whip) (11:04): I am thrilled to rise today to support the member for Sydney's motion—an incredibly important motion, I might say. During O-week around the country, our university students headed off for their academic year—a year of uncertainty not just for those students but for the institutions, the universities themselves. We can place responsibility for that right at the feet of those sitting opposite in this House today.

I am pleased to join the member for Sydney, the member for Griffith, the member for Richmond and the member for Moreton on this side, who stand with me today to put a spike in the ground that says: 'We will back students in this country. We will back young people from our electorates accessing university and being successful at university.' Those opposite use coded words like 'sustainable and affordable'. Since the election of the government, which used to be the Abbott government but now is the Turnbull government and tomorrow could be anybody's government, we know that, when they use words like 'sustainable and affordable', that is code for cuts and for narrowing who can potentially attend university. Make no mistake.

Today we have heard from the other side lots of rhetoric about graduates going to university and then not being able to get a job. They are bleeding hearts over there about these young people who go to university, get a certification and then cannot get a job. They like competition everywhere else, but they do not like competition when a kid from Lalor is knocking a kid from one of their electorates out of a job because they got into university.

It is Labor's legacy and Labor's history that means that children in my electorate are focused and keen to get a university education. I stand here as somebody who spent years of their professional life teaching year 12 students, supporting year 12 students, being a coordinator for year 12 students and sitting with them to talk about university and what it would mean for them. I was not in classrooms when \$100,000 degrees and deregulation were mooted by the government, those opposite. But I can tell you I know the ramifications of the increase in the debt to students in homes around Australia. It means that working-class kids, kids whose parents did not go to university, will face an extra hurdle. That hurdle is actually convincing their parents that this is a good idea, that debt is a good idea, that there is a brighter future where they can get an education and get one of those good jobs that the Prime Minister and the member for Deakin like to talk about so they can buy a house.

There is absolutely no doubt that the uncertainty in this sector is being driven by this do-nothing government that just continue their out-of-touch ways to breed uncertainty not just in the university sector but in the school sector and the early childhood education sector. When it comes to education, they are casting about for ideas and delivering nothing for Australian children.

Let's go to the things that the government are doing on the ground that, layer upon layer, are undermining our young people from getting ahead in life. I have spent time looking at this across the last 12 months. In fact, this time last year the office phone started to ring with calls from students in my electorate who were going to university, who had been to O Week and who were off and running—except there were delays at Centrelink for up to five months for those students to get their youth allowance. Then we saw headlines about student dropout rates. It is no surprise students are dropping out if they have not got money to put food on their own table, to put petrol in their car or, in Victoria, to top up their Myki ticket to get to university.

On top of that, there was the decision this week of this government to not put in a submission on behalf of those young people around this country to the Fair Work Commission around penalty rates. They should be held accountable. All of these students this year will wait probably another five months, given the delays at Centrelink that are occurring, for their youth allowance. In the meantime, they are going to take a hit to their penalty rates on Sundays. This government are doing nothing to support the education of students from my electorate. They are doing a lot to lock out kids from electorates like mine around this country from opportunities, from being aspirational and from a good future. We should not be surprised. We have a Prime Minister who suggests parents

should shell out for everything. So the message from this government to kids in my electorate is: get yourself some rich parents. This is not enough. The member for Sydney has it right.