



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Federation Chamber

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

School Education

SPEECH

Monday, 11 February 2013

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Page 794
Questioner
Speaker O'Dwyer, Kelly, MP

Source House
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Responder
Question No.

Ms O'DWYER (Higgins) (12:57): I am pleased to have an opportunity to speak on this motion about school funding. The Prime Minister, as we have heard so often, has made much of her personal commitment to education, citing it as a 'ruling passion' of her life and stating that the 'education revolution' would be a 'national crusade'. However, as Thomas A Edison so famously said, 'Vision without execution is hallucination.' Given that the Prime Minister is so fond of recounting the facts in question time, let me go through a couple of facts in the short time available.

Fact No. 1: in the 14 months since David Gonski delivered his final report to government on school funding, the government has been silent on each of the 41 recommendations. Typically, a report of this size and significance would receive a detailed response from the government. Typically, we would see modelling done of different funding options, and we would see that modelling released, discussed and debated, but so far we have seen nothing at all.

The key recommendation in the Gonski report is \$6.5 billion of additional funding. That is not over the next 10 years; that is each and every year—\$6.5 billion. And yet the government cannot answer very basic questions as to where this funding will come from. What is the split going to be? We heard of a 30-70 split in the Gonski review, yet the government has not said whether this 30-70 split with the states will be the funding model. Moreover, the government has not answered basic questions as to how it will fund the Commonwealth aspects of that funding split, no matter what that figure ends up being. We simply do not know.

The government provided around \$5 million in the budget towards another review. That \$5.8 million in the budget was for further research into school funding changes. So despite the fact that they say this was the most significant review and that it had all the answers, and saying, 'We need to deliver Gonski,' they needed to spend another \$5.8 million to conduct yet another review. Time is up—the government need to answer some questions.

Fact No. 2: the government has indeed spent quite a significant amount of money—they say—towards education. They have spent more than \$16 billion on school halls and yet according to the government's own review, the Orgill review, there has been significant waste and mismanagement of that money—that money has not gone to achieving better educational outcomes for future Australians. In fact, according to many media reports, that money has been wasted. We believe more than half of it has been wasted.

Fact No. 3: we know a little about what the government and the Prime Minister in particular think about education and the significance of it because she exposed that in her recent reshuffle. Why is it that the Prime Minister continues to insist on putting failed ministers into education? First we saw it with the member for Kingsford Smith, Peter Garrett, who was the minister responsible for pink batts. Now we have seen it with the member for McMahon, who has been responsible for our border protection failures. These two are now going to be leading lights in education, which the Prime Minister claims to be so critically important to her government.

Fact No. 4: this government governs with the support of the Greens. The Greens have a very clear policy when it comes to education funding. They do not want to see one dollar of funding go towards a student who is attending an independent school. They said this very recently in their manifesto, which appeared publicly on their website—although surprisingly in this election year that manifesto has now come down off the website.

We need to deliver funding security for students and teachers and our schools so that they can deliver the best educational opportunities for all young Australians. This is what we on this side of the chamber believe. This is certainly what I believe as the member for Higgins with more than 39 schools in my electorate. I know it is critically important that we do not rip away funding from some students in order to redistribute it according to the government's own designated formula of what is 'fair'. We know what this government thinks about 'fairness'. It is about taking money away from some students to waste it in other areas—and the government's record stands very clear on that.