



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**  
**MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE**

**Budget**

**SPEECH**

**Tuesday, 26 August 2014**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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## SPEECH

**Date** Tuesday, 26 August 2014  
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**Questioner**  
**Speaker** Bowen, Chris, MP

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

**Mr BOWEN** (McMahon) (15:32): The cabinet met for six hours yesterday in an emergency session for budget reboot No. 17. They got a briefing. Did they get a briefing from the pensioners of Australia? Did they invite pensioners in to talk about their budget changes? Did they talk to university students about the changes and the cuts to university funding and the changes to HECS? Did they talk to people about their \$7 GP tax—by any other name—and its impact on families? No, they got a briefing from the spin doctor, from the faceless man of the Liberal Party, the federal director of the Liberal Party, Brian Loughnane. And what did he say? He said, do not say budget emergency. There is no budget emergency. People do not believe it. People do not believe our rhetoric anymore. People do not believe our lies. That is what Brian Loughnane told the cabinet yesterday.

The coalition had a tactic session about how they could sell the budget. I have got a tip for the government: do not have a tactic session about how to sell the budget; have a substance session about starting again because that is what the Australian people demand. Did we have a little photo opportunity at the cabinet meeting yesterday like we used to, like in the good old days of Tony Abbott talking to a united team, with Joe on one side and the deputy leader on the other, about how wonderful everything was going to be if the Liberal and National parties were elected? No, there was no photo opportunity yesterday; the Prime Minister did not want to be seen with the Treasurer yesterday at the cabinet. But there is a key problem here and the government just does not get it. The Australian people get it. In fairness to the Treasurer, it is not about the sales job; it is about the substance because this budget fails every test.

We know that Brian Loughnane said do not talk about a budget emergency because nobody believes it. But not even Brian Loughnane would have suggested that they say that the budget is fair. He would not have recommended that because I give Mr Loughnane credit. He is a smart man who knows that is not credible. He knows that that is not an argument that the Australian people would accept—and deep down the Treasurer knows it too because the Treasurer was told before the budget was brought down that his budget would be unfair. The Treasurer was told it by the Treasury of Australia. Do you know what his great plan to deal with this was? He had a very cunning plan to deal with the advice from the Treasury.

The Treasurer had tables in front of him showing that his budget would have an unfair impact on lower middle-income earners in Australia and the Treasurer came up with a great idea to fix this. He said whatever you do, do not put those tables in the budget. That was his plan for the first time. It was good enough for Treasurer Costello, it was good enough for Treasurer Swan to put those tables in the budget but the Treasurer had a cunning plan not to tell anybody about it. 'Nothing to see here' he said. But there was a problem for the Treasurer because there is a thing called freedom of information. Every so often, even under this government, things get out to a newspaper, *The Sydney Morning Herald*. But of course the Treasurer had the direct and right answer. He said you cannot believe everything you read in *The Sydney Morning Herald*. He said that it is somebody else's fault again; it is those pesky newspapers. Well it was not *The Sydney Morning Herald's* analysis; it was the Treasury's analysis. The Treasurer distanced himself from the Treasury's analysis, which spoke for itself.

But, in fairness to the Treasurer, the people of Australia do not need those tables to tell them the budget is unfair because they had worked that out themselves. They had worked out that this is a government not only hopelessly incompetent but completely out of touch with reality. You have got a Treasurer who says that poor people do not drive and if they do, by some happenstance, they do not drive very far. He then defended himself for 48 hours and selectively released figures from the Australian Bureau of Statistics. I had a look at those figures and I had to release the rest of them that night to show that what he said was absolutely wrong. He selectively released figures which showed that he was deadset wrong. For 48 hours he defended himself and then he finally issued an apology. The next week he was in Geelong and he said he was misunderstood; his words were twisted. It is terrible when everybody is against you. I say this, Treasurer: your words were not twisted; your policies are. Your budget shows wrong priorities. It is unfair to the Australian people and everybody gets it except for him.  
(Time expired)