



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

SPEECH

Date Tuesday, 26 August 2014
Page 8575
Questioner
Speaker Snowdon, Warren, MP

Source House
Proof No
Responder
Question No.

Mr SNOWDON (Lingiari) (15:42): Good golly! That is all I can say. The member for Moncrieff was supposed to be defending the budget, defending the Prime Minister and defending the Treasurer. But all we got was a filibuster about God knows what—because it made no sense to anyone on this side of the chamber. Let us be very clear. The Leader of the Opposition described this budget as 'dishonest', 'unfair', 'rotten' and 'based upon lies'. Was it based on lies? Of course it was based on lies. Yet those opposite will not defend, or own up to, the lies. All they do is hide behind the stupidity of their budget proposals which impact upon the poorest Australians.

It is okay for the Treasurer, who sits smoking cigars with the Minister for Finance, to look down at poor people and say, 'Poor people do not drive cars.' Well, they do in my electorate. The poor people in my electorate are those who are most impacted by this budget because they drive cars and pay fuel prices 22c to 25c in excess of what the Treasurer pays in North Sydney. It is okay for the Treasurer, sitting in the sublime suburb of North Sydney, to talk about the poor people of Australia. He does not know a poor person. He has never met a poor person. If he had met a poor person, he would acknowledge how difficult it is for people who live in rural and remote Australia to meet the requirements of this budget.

Let's talk about GP co-payments. The people who are most likely to die early in this country are those who live in regional, rural and remote Australia. They have shorter life spans, a higher level of chronic disease and higher levels of smoking. What does this budget do for them? It says to them: 'By the way, if you've got a chronic disease, if you smoke, if you need to address it, go to the doctor. But it's going to cost you more.' And if you are an Aboriginal person and you go to an Aboriginal community controlled health organisation, they will have to pick up the tab. Frankly, they will not be able to. As a direct result, the health of many Australians will suffer. That does not seem to matter to the government, because the Treasurer says, 'Look, it's all about this.' Try the paid parental leave scheme. Get rid of it and you could pay for most of what we are debating here today. Let us be very clear about that.

Let's talk about universities and let's talk about regional universities like Charles Darwin University. Seventy-five per cent of students at Charles Darwin University are aged 25 or older. Think about it. These are people who may well be married, have a mortgage, have kids going to school and be raising their families—and now they are going to be expected to take out a second mortgage for their education. This budget will directly cost Charles Darwin University \$50 million and the potential for student numbers to fall, because students will not be able to afford or will choose not to pay these excessive fees. Somehow or another this is a joke. People in the government who represent regional Australia think that they can parade around their communities saying, 'This is a bloody good idea.' Well, it ain't a bloody good idea. It's a dreadful idea, and it is impacting upon those people who most need assistance in this community.

Let's talk about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs, where half a billion dollars has been cut out of programs, with \$160 million cut out of health. The government says that they are all for supporting closing the gap, but they cut \$160 million out of health programs designed to improve health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. Let us be very clear: the truth is being told, it is in the budget papers. Have a look at the budget papers. You on that side deny the budget papers; you deny their existence. Alice Springs is one of the communities impacted by the attack on veterans in remote Australia, the RSL and these travelling projects. The RSL in Alice Springs is miserably affected by the stupidity of this government, the Treasurer and the Prime Minister.