



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



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

**Budget**

**SPEECH**

**Wednesday, 14 May 2014**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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## SPEECH

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**Questioner**  
**Speaker** Bowen, Chris, MP

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**Question No.**

**Mr BOWEN** (McMahon) (15:18): We have heard a lot of speculation in recent weeks about how the role model for this budget was the 1996 Peter Costello budget, about how Peter Costello was the intellectual godfather of this particular budget and about how the John Howard government was the role model for this government. I do not think that is quite right, with due respect. I think it goes back further. I think the role model was the 1979 minibudget, which inspired a famous headline that could equally apply to this budget delivered by the Treasurer last night.

That is because this budget shows more effectively than anything else that the last election campaign waged by the Prime Minister and Treasurer was one of systematic and wilful deceit of the Australian people. It was systematic and wilful deceit of the Australian people, because the Prime Minister and Treasurer knew that if they told the Australian people in September what they were planning in this budget, then the Australian people would have been a lot less likely to vote for them.

On that basis, they campaigned for office on a web of deceit. They promised the Australian people cost-of-living relief. That is not what they delivered last night. They promised the Australian people they could return the budget to surplus with no new taxes and no cuts to spending over and above what they had already announced. That was always voodoo economics and we now know that it was deceit as well. It was more than voodoo economics; it was wilful and systematic misleading of the Australian people.

They told the Australian people many things. At last September's election, never before has so much been promised to so many people by so few as was promised by the Prime Minister and Treasurer and never before has so much been reneged on as there was in last night's budget. This is a budget of broken regard for the Australian people and their right to insist on political accountability in this nation. This was a budget that was cynical when it came to dealing with election promises. This was a budget that introduced new taxes, which the Prime Minister of Australia solemnly swore he would never introduce. The Treasurer of Australia solemnly promised the Australian people they would never happen. There are cuts to families, family payments, hospital funding and schools that they both said would never happen on their watch.

This budget is so fundamentally misleading that I must confess it is difficult to choose where to start. It could be Medicare, it could be family payments or it could be the fuel tax, but I am going to start on the \$80 billion worth of cuts to schools and hospitals. There are \$80 billion worth of cuts to schools and hospitals. This will affect frontline services that are so important to the Australian people. Australia really needs cuts to schools and hospitals at the moment. We need to close more schools and we need fewer services in our hospitals, according to the government. The Treasurer had a shocker on 7.30 last night and, when he was asked about the impacts of the cuts on the service deliveries of the states, this is what he had to say—and it is very profound: that it was up to them. He said it was up to his state and territory colleagues. The premiers and treasurers of Australia have given him a free character assessment today. That well-known socialist Campbell Newman said:

I am afraid it is a non-transparent and up-front way with dealing with that and it is very disappointing. We are calling on an emergency COAG.

I have to say: when Campbell Newman says you have cut too much, you know you have a problem. There is only one budget emergency in this country, and it is the budget emergency the states and territories copped from the Treasurer last night.

He has caused the premiers of New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria to condemn his budget because they know the types of cuts it will lead to in schools and hospitals. Alternatively, they will need another source of revenue. They will need a different type of funding. I wonder what that type of funding might be—maybe a Commonwealth tax that gets distributed to the states, known as the goods and services tax. As sure as night follows day, we are going to see the premiers and state treasurers calling for an increase in the rate of the GST

or a broadening in its base. In the meantime, they will have to cut, and cut to the bone. We will see schools close, make no mistake. We will see hospital services reduced, make no mistake. There is no alternative. State treasurers—with all due respect to them, whether they are Labor or Liberal—could not find collectively \$80 billion over the next 10 years without massive cuts to services. This is a Prime Minister who said, 'No cuts to health and no cuts to education'—that is, 80 billion broken promises to the Australian people.

Then we move to Medicare. Medicare happens to be very dear to members on this side of the House because Labor created it and Labor will defend it. We will defend it in this House; we will defend it the other place; we will defend it in the community; and we will fight and fight for universal health care in this country. The Treasurer might not think that \$7 is much money—he might say it is a cup of coffee or a cigar perhaps, to pick commodities at random—for people to give up to go to the doctor, but there are a lot of families for whom \$7 to go to the doctor with a sick child or sick children is a lot of money. They have to pay for medicine, too. We are seeing the medical fraternity point out the impacts of these cuts on health services right across the country. There will be Australians who decide they simply cannot afford to go to the doctor. There are two central principles here: firstly, your wealth should not determine your health; and, secondly, the health of every single Australian should be the concern of every Australian. If this government gets its way, there will no longer be universal health care in Australia. Medicare will be trashed. But we will not let that happen. We will stand in defence of Medicare, we will fight for Medicare and we will fight for universal health care. The Prime Minister says he is the best friend Medicare ever had. Well, I would hate to see an enemy of Medicare because, if he gets his way on his watch, he will destroy Medicare. Make no mistake: he will remove universal health care from Australia—but we will not let them do that.

Then we have other examples like the new taxes. We saw the Treasurer dancing through the rain drops at question time, saying, 'Oh, I did not actually say that.' There are a few million viewers who might recall that he did. We have the fuel levy, the indexation of the fuel excise. The Prime Minister, you might recall, did a bit of travelling over the last three years. He went around the country talking about the impacts of the carbon price on the cost of living and he promised to restore support for the cost of living by dealing with the carbon price. He just forgot to mention that they were going to change fuel indexation at the same time. I can see people pulling into the service station—they might choose BP—and, as they are filling up, they will be saying, 'BP, broken promises, thank you very much, Prime Minister Abbott.' It is a broken promise to every Australian and every Australian driver. The Prime Minister says: 'It's terrible to tax polluters and you wouldn't want to tax mining companies, but, jeez, taxing families and drivers, there's a good idea. Why don't we do that?'

There is a fundamental principle in politics: you hold people to their own tests. You hold people to what they say. They set the bar and then you hold them to it. The Prime Minister promised something different. He promised that he would uphold every single promise that he made. Now we have the core and non-core dance of the seven veils. He has said: 'There is an overarching promise or there are fundamental promises.' We have heard it from the frontbench; we have heard it from the backbench; we have had the pathetic denial that there are any breaches of election promises in this budget. If the government breaks a promise, just fess up to the Australian people. Just be honest with the Australian people and say: 'It was too hard; we were not up to it; it is all harder than we thought; we got it wrong.' You might at least get a bit of respect for that, but this pathetic denial of reality we have seen from the Prime Minister and the Treasurer is going down very badly with the Australian people, who feel insulted at their antics. In question time today we saw them refusing to acknowledge that they have breached promises. They have breached promises and they have effectively attempted to attack the social fabric of this nation. They have attempted to dismantle Medicare. They have attempted, after all their rhetoric, to take \$3,000 from single-income families with a child of seven years. A child of seven is so much cheaper than one of six! It just shows how fundamentally out of touch this Prime Minister and Treasurer are. We will continue to hold them to account and we will continue to hold them to their promises. We will continue to point out the fundamental dishonesty—(*Time expired*)