



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**Federation Chamber**

**ADJOURNMENT**

**McPherson Electorate**

**SPEECH**

**Thursday, 23 October 2014**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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## SPEECH

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**Questioner**  
**Speaker** Andrews, Karen, MP

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**Mrs ANDREWS** (McPherson) (10:33): When we come to Canberra, every member of this place has a variety of tasks and demands, whether in our party rooms, on the various committees we serve, on the Speaker's panel or parliamentary duty roster, or through portfolio related responsibilities. But in today's debate I want to focus on the highest duty we each have, and that is being an effective local member for the people in our electorates. I want to reflect on some of the feedback I have received, particularly last week, when I hosted a series of listening posts throughout my electorate.

Most months, I conduct a monthly listening post at one of my local shopping centres, The Pines Shopping Centre at Elanora. They are extremely valuable to me and, I believe, to the community so that we can stay in touch and I can get reactions to the latest announcements. For this more extensive series of listening posts, I set aside two days and advertised where I would be in my electorate-wide newsletter. We started at the beautiful Burleigh Heads beach at 7 am on Wednesday and went through to Mudgeeraba, then Elanora, Coolangatta and Tugun and finished at 8 pm on the Thursday at Treetops shopping centre at Burleigh.

The reaction was tremendous and I thank the many people who specifically came out to discuss their concerns with me as well as the many others who stopped by for a quick chat while going about their daily business. As MPs, we are always talking to the community—at functions, at meetings, at special events, in appointments in our offices and at a variety of other opportunities—but there is nothing quite like listening to our communities.

And there is nothing that matches the interaction you have when you are on a street corner at a listening post. Where better can you gain a real understanding of the need to improve sightlines at the pedestrian crossing on the corner of Griffith Street and Dutton Street in Coolangatta than when you are standing 10 metres from it? Where better can you gain a real understanding of the need for more accessible public toilets or how helpful a jetty or pontoon would be at the park on the corner of Bayswater Avenue and Grenada Court at Varsity Lakes for those locals who like to go recreational kayaking on that stretch of water?

Whilst many of these are council issues that I will be raising with my local councillors, I also had the chance to discuss issues as diverse as the NBN rollout, digital radio, securing Australia's food bowl, the indexation of British service pensions, disability support pensions and the review of the national curriculum—just to name a few of the topics that were raised with me. I was also pleased to discuss how our new Stronger Regions Fund might benefit a local project that has been some time in the planning.

I met a gentleman who was busking with his violin out the front of the IGA in Tugun. He told me that for him and many of his friends times were tough. It was a very real reminder of the imperative to improve our nation's economy and restore growth and prosperity. Then there was the delightful gentleman who was out for an early morning walk at Burleigh. He did not want to interrupt when I was talking to someone else so told my staff to ask me to pass on the message to the Prime Minister—'Don't back down.' In all it was a very productive experience and a much-needed complement to the round of parliamentary sittings, committee hearings, round table consultations and meetings that seem to crowd our calendar. Every time I do a series of listening posts it provides me with a renewed sense of purpose and determination.

I also want to mention today what a privilege it was for me to address the Gold Coast Association of Independent Retirees earlier this month on a range of different issues. They were particularly concerned about the Senate being obstructionist and the challenges the government faced in trying to repair the budget in that climate. Not surprisingly, these retirees understand the importance of balancing the budget and planning for the future.

Next month I am hosting two special seniors morning teas that once again are aimed at providing a forum for discussion and listening to concerns. These morning teas will provide information on a range of services but, most importantly, they will give local residents a chance to raise their concerns and have their questions answered. As an alternative to the very large seniors forum that I had co-hosted with the member for Moncrieff in previous

years, the seniors morning teas are a more community-based and personal way of catering to the special needs of our seniors in a less formal, local setting. I am looking forward to meeting with and listening to our McPherson seniors at these morning teas. I anticipate that they will become a regular fixture on my calendar, just as the listening posts have become a vital part of the way I serve our community.