



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

BILLS

Australian Education Bill 2012

Consideration in Detail

SPEECH

Wednesday, 5 June 2013

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Questioner
Speaker Pyne, Christopher, MP

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Mr PYNE (Sturt—Manager of Opposition Business) (10:08): Now begins a long a process in the House of considering in detail the 71 pages of amendments the government dropped into the parliament yesterday. I say at the outset that the sheer incompetence of this government in trying to implement a new school funding model has been quite breathtaking. It has been like watching a passenger jet slamming into the deck of an aircraft carrier which has just hit an iceberg.

The Gonski report was handed to the government in late 2011. It was published in February 2012. We are now in parliament in June 2013 with the school funding model due to run out on 31 December this year, yet the government is still trying to get agreement to a new school funding model—six months before it is supposed to take effect.

It is quite impossible for this government to implement a new school-funding model competently in the time that it has given itself. If this government were competent, if it understood good public policy, if it were not obsessively inwardly focused, it would have been doing this last year. It would have been going through the process methodically and calmly like adults in the room, rather than threatening and shouting with megaphone diplomacy to the states and the non-government sector.

In this particular instance, late last year the government introduced a nine-page bill, a bill full of platitudes, called the Australian Education Bill—a nine-page bill with no detail—which they expected the parliament to debate and which we have been dutifully debating. Yesterday, without any notice to me as the shadow minister, without giving me the courtesy of delivering these amendments to my office, they dropped 71 pages of detailed amendments into the parliament which they expected to debate and pass at five o'clock last night. The minister insists that my office had these amendments delivered to it. It did not. There is no record in my office of these amendments appearing at any point yesterday. In fact, to get access to these amendments, my office had to download them from ParlInfo so that I had access to them. So, whatever the department or his office is telling the minister, I have no record of ever receiving these amendments.

There are 71 pages of detailed amendments introducing a complicated new funding model—much more complicated than the model we have had since the year 2000. There is so much detail in these amendments that it is utterly outrageous for the government to expect the parliament to consider them and pass them in a matter of hours. The normal process, if this government had not given up governing already, would have been to have introduced these amendments, to have consulted with the shadow minister and to have given at least a week or two for the Independents and the coalition to consider these amendments and come to a position. Instead, this government has given up governing. It is just trying to tick boxes and it thinks that an asinine debate about a new school-funding model rushed through this chamber will somehow repair its stocks with the public. What would repair its stocks with the public is a government of adults that actually governed for the good of the country rather than an inwardly obsessive government worried about its own political survival.

I will over the course of this debate go through in detail many of the concerns that the coalition has about this new school-funding model. But, before I get to the detail of the amendments, which I will go through, I will mention another part of the process, and that is that the sector itself has been shut down with confidentiality agreements that would make the Committee of Public Safety in revolutionary France blush with its heavy-handedness and its draconian measures. The non-government sector has not had the opportunity to speak to its sector, as any government would expect it to do, because of those confidentiality agreements.