



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

BILLS

Australian Education Bill 2012

Consideration in Detail

SPEECH

Wednesday, 5 June 2013

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Date Wednesday, 5 June 2013
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Questioner
Speaker Pyne, Christopher, MP

Source House
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Responder
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Mr PYNE (Sturt—Manager of Opposition Business) (10:56): Just to continue the theme of the government trying to swindle the Australian public on this so-called national agreement, we are debating 71 pages of amendments in the House today on the basis that two jurisdictions out of eight—New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory—have apparently agreed to this national agreement. Before the parliament rises, we will be passing these bills because the government, I assume, has the numbers. We rise on 27 June and, by 30 June, other states and territories may sign up. But there is no national agreement. We are being asked to pass bills on the basis that the minister is claiming that there is a national agreement to introduce a new school funding model. There is not. The non-government schools have not come out and said that they want this new school funding model. The Catholic schools in Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland and elsewhere have all raised specific concerns. The Independent Schools Council, the AISs in Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland and other states have all come out and raised concerns. Western Australia has indicated that they will not sign. Queensland, Victoria and the Northern Territory have all indicated that they will not sign. The South Australian budget is being handed down today. It will be very interesting to see whether there is any money in the South Australian budget to meet the expectations of the federal government of signing this national agreement. My hunch is that there will not be. So there will not be a national agreement. The non-government schools are not on board; the states and territories are not on board. Yet the government intends to ram these bills through the House and gag the debate today, when we have only had since yesterday to consider 71 pages of amendments.

It is no surprise that the government would want to do that, because what is hidden in this new school funding model? It is referred to in part 7 of the amendments that we received yesterday, under the heading 'Implementation plans,' and it is also explained more clearly in the explanatory memorandum:

The amendments also provide the Minister with a residual power to give approved authorities directions in relation to their implementation plans, for example, where an approved authority is not undertaking the activities it has committed to. In deciding whether to give such a direction the Minister must have regard to any relevant education agreement that the approved authority is a party to such as the National Education Reform Agreement or the National Education Agreement.

What does that mean in layman's language? It means that any state or territory or non-government school sector that signs up to this national agreement, and which is implemented, will be handing over the most unprecedented powers to the federal minister for education in Australia's education history.

No wonder the Labor government wants this bill to go through, because then the federal minister for education would love to be able to tell the states and territories how to run their schools. He would love to be able to say to the Catholic systems, which Labor has always hated and opposed violently since 1963. They did not introduce the funding of non-government schools, the Menzies government did. And ever since then, ever since 1963, every bit of Labor government policy when it has been in power has been to try to undermine the funding of non-government schools, particularly Catholic schools.

This legislation, these amendments, will allow the minister for education to say to the Catholic systems: 'If you intend to vary the national model we have established, you need to get agreement from the federal minister for education.' So if the Catholic systems want to say that St Ignatius' Riverview will cross-subsidise St Monica's down the road in their system, they will have to get agreement from the federal minister for education. And every time they vary their system, they will have to go to the federal government to get agreement to do that. If I was a Catholic principal, if I was a Catholic educator in one of the Catholic education commissions, I would not be handing over my power to the federal minister to distribute amongst the Catholic schools in the way they have done for decades so that local parish schools can be cross-subsidised by wealthier, high-end Catholic schools.

It is not just for the Catholic schools though, of course. Every independent school is handing over this power to the federal minister for education, and every state and territory. And that is one of the reasons they will not sign up. *(Time expired)*