



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

---

## SPEECH

**Date** Wednesday, 5 June 2013  
**Page** 5320  
**Questioner**  
**Speaker** Pyne, Christopher, MP

**Source** House  
**Proof** No  
**Responder**  
**Question No.**

**Mr PYNE** (Sturt—Manager of Opposition Business) (11:30): There are a few more issues that need to be ventilated before the government attempts to gag this debate. I have heard that they intend to gag it in about four or five minutes from now. It would be an absolutely extraordinary act to gag a debate on 71 pages of amendments that the opposition and the Independents received yesterday after less than an hour and a half's debate. I hope that rumour is not true.

In the agreement that the government has signed and has proposed that other states sign, the National Education Reform Agreement—in schedule H—there is a very interesting measure that is called the capacity to contribute. It says:

The anticipated level of private contribution will be based on a school's SES score until a new, individual measure of parental capacity to contribute is developed.

We know that this is to be developed by 2017 for implementation in 2017, so an individual measure of parental capacity to contribute will replace the SES score in 2017. And individual parental capacity to contribute can only mean one thing—that is, that parents of children in non-government schools will be means-tested to see what their capacity to contribute is to their local school.

When I raised this issue, the minister said that what that meant is an aggregate of parents' capacity to contribute. But if it is an aggregate of parents' capacity to contribute, why doesn't it say an aggregate of parents' capacity to contribute? It does not say aggregate, because it is not aggregate; it is individual, and individual parental capacity to contribute can only be a means test on parents of non-government schools.

The minister can duck and weave and spin his wheels as much as he likes. Parents, when they hear 'individual parental capacity to contribute', hear means test. So I say to the Independents and the Labor members who intend to support this new school funding model and I say to the states and territories who have signed up to it or are thinking of signing up to it: understand you are signing up to a national reform agreement on schools that requires you to be a party to means-testing parents in non-government schools. No amount of spin and obfuscation from the minister can deny the fact that, if this was meant to be an aggregate of parents' capacity to contribute to the schooling of their children, then it would say aggregate. It says individual because that is what the government means to implement—a means test from 2017.

I know there are members of the Labor caucus who support Catholic schooling, in spite of their party's longstanding opposition to non-government schooling, because they believe in choice for parents. They are signing up—John Murphy in Reid would be one of them; he is being asked to sign up to a new reform agreement that will introduce means tests on his parents in non-government schools.

The sector is so concerned about what the government is proposing that in an article in *The Sydney Morning Herald* on 5 June, Geoff Newcombe, the executive director of the Association of Independent Schools of New South Wales said:

The data is so rubbery. We're going to do a quality assurance on the data with the government to try and fix where it's obviously incorrect

This is six months from when the new system is designed to be implemented.

I have already talked about the National Catholic Education Commission and Mary McKillop College in my own electorate, and most members would have letters from Catholic schools. The Australian Parents Council have expressed their concern. The Independent Education Union have expressed their concern, and we have the Catholics, independents, the Independent Education Union, the Australian Parents Council and individual principals all asking for more information, all asking to delay the process so they can get it right. But the

government is deaf to them, and the minister has said in his rebuttal to my points that the argument that they are cutting is not true.

I asked a question three weeks ago about this particular chart. It shows that the cuts to education—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER ( Ms O'Neill ): The Manager of Opposition Business will put the props away, thank you.

**Mr PYNE:** I would like to table this graph. I would like to table NewsExtra from the IEU.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Is the Manager of Opposition Business seeking—

**Mr PYNE:** Can I just finish going through my list, please?

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: No, you cannot. Is the Manager of Opposition Business seeking leave to table documents?

**Mr PYNE:** That is exactly what I am doing but I have got to name the documents first.

Leave is not granted.

**Mr PYNE:** I have not named the documents, Madam Acting Deputy Speaker. How could you know what the documents are unless you allow me to finish my statement?

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Please take your seat.

**Mr Garrett:** Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, on a point of order: the shadow minister is working himself into a state of high anxiety here but he has to observe the appropriate protocols of this parliament. You identified those matters. You read them into the record, and we said no.

**Mr PYNE:** Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, it is not possible for you to ask whether leave is granted until the documents that I am asking to have tabled are heard by the minister. I could be asking to table one of his own speeches for which he might be prepared to give leave. Until I have finished going through this list, which is short, it is impossible to sit a member of the opposition down and put that question to the minister. I seek leave to table—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: If the Manager of Opposition Business would like to name the documents please go ahead.

**Mr PYNE:** Thank you, I would like to do that. That is the correct process: a letter from Mary McKillop College; the newsletter of the Australian Catholic Education Commission of New South Wales; schedule H of the National Education Reform Agreement; the Australian Parents Council letter; NewsExtra of the Independent Education Union; and the graph that I talked about before. They are the documents I seek leave to table.

Leave not granted.