



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES**



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**Federation Chamber**

**BILLS**

**Appropriation Bill (No. 1) 2015-2016,  
Appropriation Bill (No. 2) 2015-2016,  
Appropriation (Parliamentary Departments)  
Bill (No. 1) 2015-2016, Appropriation Bill (No. 5)  
2014-2015, Appropriation Bill (No. 6) 2014-2015**

**Second Reading**

**SPEECH**

**Tuesday, 26 May 2015**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

---

## SPEECH

**Date** Tuesday, 26 May 2015  
**Page** 4684  
**Questioner**  
**Speaker** Hayes, Chris, MP

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

**Mr HAYES** (Fowler—Chief Opposition Whip) (19:47): I think this is the first opportunity I have had to appear before you, Deputy Speaker Conroy. I trust that you will do a fine job in this new role. I rise to speak on the Appropriation Bill (No. 1) 2015-2016 and cognate bills. This year's budget is clearly an attempt at a very short-term political fix, with no positive plan for innovation, growth or jobs. For those of us who remember the austere atmospherics around the budget of last year, think about what this budget does: it fails to address the very thing that they spoke about then which was a deficit. In fact, this year's budget seeks to double the deficit over the next four years. Compare that to last year's predictions.

This government has certainly thrown a few sweeteners in to distract from some of the harsh and unfair measures that were in last year's budget, and I will come to that. But for members here, just pause and think that this budget still has the \$80 billion cuts to our health and education. It still has the changes to family payments that will see the average single-income family nearly \$6,000 worse off. It still has university deregulation, which makes it a very real prospect of seeing \$100,000 degrees. These things very much impact on my community and, I suspect, many of the communities that members here represent. On the other hand, compare that to what Labor has put forward in terms of writing off the HECS debt for science, technology and engineering students, trying to encourage more students to train for the jobs of the future. That is something that is embracing innovation. That is something that is looking to the future.

We are planning to invest in training thousands of new science and technology teachers, in bringing more digital technology to our schools and in our most important capital—that is, our people. I would suggest that that is looking to the future—investing in our people so that they can be trained and available for the jobs of the future. Those opposite are, quite frankly, all about cuts. There is certainly no vision and no plan. Very clearly, they have one eye firmly fixed on the next election.

The Abbott government's second budget announced an \$11.3 billion cut to Australian foreign aid. This is the lowest recorded level as a proportion of our national income. These cuts will certainly hit some of the world's poorest countries pretty hard and put regional security at risk. Some of our closest neighbours, including the Philippines, Indonesia, Laos, Myanmar, are seeing their aid cut by 40 per cent.

The most astonishing thing about this government's budget is its relentless attack on families, particularly young families. Just look at the derogatory terms that were used for mothers who want to spend precious time with their newborn babies. This is a new low for this government. Referring to mothers as 'rorters' and 'fraudsters' and accusing them of double dipping for simply accessing what was legitimately provided for in their industrial agreements and specifically singling out public servants was a new low for this government.

There were cuts to family payments, including family tax benefit B stopping once the child turns six years of age, which will leave some families thousands of dollars worse off every year. As you would no doubt appreciate, Mr Deputy Speaker, as a new father, raising a child in today's world is increasingly expensive and many parents in this place will very much understand that. It is even more acute for single-income families, particularly families coming from low socioeconomic backgrounds. This budget does not discriminate; it is those people who are very much impacted by the harsh measures that were in last year's budget that flow through to this one. One thing that has also largely escaped the attention of many of the commentators is the abolition of the after hours GP hotline service. Again, that is fairly important for families. The triage services that offers were used by over 200,000 people last year—and that has just been cut.

This budget is also very worrying for our young people, particularly vulnerable young job seekers. They will be forced off Centrelink support for a month before being eligible for any form of assistance at all. No matter how hard people try, sometimes it takes a little bit more than a month to secure a job. It is pretty scary to think that vulnerable people might be forced into various situations—some of them probably dangerous situations—trying

to get by while receiving no support at all. Whether it is one month or six months, as was originally proposed, Labor is not prepared to stand by and watch young people being forced into poverty and hardship.

This is clearly a budget, as I said, about the next election. It is certainly not one for the nation's future. Labor is happy to work with the government to ensure positive steps are taken, as was indicated with respect to small business. We take the view that we do not stop at a 1.5 per cent cut in tax or the reestablishment of the instant asset write-off. Whilst they are good things, they should not be the be-all and end-all, and it should not be on the basis that this only exists for the next prospective two years. Nevertheless, it is welcomed that these measures have found their way back in—but bear in mind that it was this government that abolished the instant asset write-off.

Labor introduced the small business instant asset write-off. I recall the threshold of \$6,500, as well as an accelerated depreciation mechanism. It also applied an initial deduction for motor vehicles. It is good that the Abbott government has decided to reintroduce that, and I think it is good that it is up to \$20,000. It is a measure that we support and I think that many businesses will benefit from it. But for two years—this is not what is required to stimulate growth in that sector and the provision of jobs. I am prepared to concede that this is probably the only positive sign from this year's budget. There are no encouraging steps other than that in looking at job creation.

Many of the leading minds and organisations have had the opportunity now to review this budget and make comment on it. With respect to many of those that I have seen, their view is that this budget fails to plan for the future adequately. They say it is unfair. It certainly forces the most vulnerable in our community to bear the brunt of the cuts.

For instance, the Australian Council of Social Service CEO, Cassandra Goldie, expressed that many of last year's harsh cuts are retained, that the budget attacks those on low incomes disproportionately and that it also fails to stimulate investment in jobs growth. The Australian Federation of Disability Organisations comments expressed great concern that 12 specialist organisations representing over 200,000 Australians with disability have not been funded under this budget. The Refugee Council of Australia commented that the budget was mean-spirited and short-sighted for its failure to respond to the world's growing humanitarian crises due to the unprecedented cuts to aid. They went on to say:

Australia, one of the most affluent nations on earth, and one of the few very wealthy countries surrounded by developing countries, has a responsibility to its own people, to the region and to the international community to be a better global citizen. If Australia continues down this current path, the negative outfall of such arrogant policies will affect Australia's security, trade and long term prosperity.

World Vision CEO, Tim Costello, said these cuts put lives and the stability of Australia's immediate region at risk:

It seems incredible that we should be willing to undermine the stability and security of our own region, hitting the area of closest and most immediate need and undermining our chances for future prosperity.

A further comment comes from the chief executive officer of CPA Australia, who said that the small business package was one of the only high points in the budget and that it was evident the government had been spooked by the negative reception it got in 2014:

... tonight's budget lacks a real vision and commitment to the serious and overdue structural reforms that are desperately needed to secure Australia's future.

Clearly, greater investment in infrastructure is vital to improving productivity, which also provides a direct boost for economic growth and jobs. These are the very things that this government has simply not done and simply avoided in this budget.

In the time I have left, I would also indicate my personal disappointment that this budget fails to reverse the \$270 million in cuts to various community organisations and continues to plan on cutting the funding for legal and community services assisting victims of domestic violence. I was hoping that we had a bipartisan position in tackling this very serious issue. Instead, what we see is ever increasing short-term funding for family violence support services, the government should work on a long-term strategic approach in tackling this community pandemic.

Earlier this year Labor proposed a bipartisan national crisis summit on family violence to work together to develop the best strategies, safety and support for the victims of this terrible scourge on our society. Recently I had the opportunity of meeting with Rosie Batty, the 2015 Australian of the Year, and one of our most passionate advocates concerning violence against women and children, to discuss the issue of family violence generally. Rosie spoke of the prevailing attitudes in our community that allow violence to continue. When you reflect upon the fact that one in three women will be a victim of violence in their lifetime and one in five will experience violence of a sexual nature, what is even more chilling is that every week two women are killed in Australia by a current or former partner. This is one of the most significant issues facing our community, and I will continue to encourage all men to make the commitment never to commit, to excuse or to remain silent on violence against women and children.

In closing, I would like to briefly speak about something very close to home in my electorate: the government's commitment to proceed with the Badgerys Creek airport. Regrettably, during the planning stages the concerns of local residents have largely been ignored. The government has failed to ensure the same curfew that applies in Sydney Airport would be applied to Badgerys Creek. It has failed to outline clearly the infrastructure development plans, road and rail links to support increased traffic through our communities. It has failed to develop a plan for increased investment to attract new business opportunities into our area. Above all, it has failed to undertake an updated environmental impact statement and to engage in proper consultation with our community. This is a very significant aspect of development in Western Sydney and one for which the people of Western Sydney deserve to be treated with dignity and respect and be fully consulted by this government.