



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



# **HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**Main Committee**

**BILLS**

**Appropriation Bill (No. 3) 2011-2012,  
Appropriation Bill (No. 4) 2011-2012**

**Second Reading**

**SPEECH**

**Wednesday, 15 February 2012**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

---

## SPEECH

**Date** Wednesday, 15 February 2012  
**Page** 1510  
**Questioner**  
**Speaker** Brodtmann, Gai, MP

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

**Ms BRODTMANN** (Canberra) (11:54): I rise today to speak about investment, something that the Gillard Labor government is not afraid to make—particularly when it comes to Canberra and the people here who strive to make this town the best capital city in the world. The government is committed to delivering a strong clean energy future for Australia, improving our economy and returning the budget to surplus in 2012-13.

The 2011-12 budget delivered some great things for Canberra. Our nation's capital saw investment of \$82.2 million for roads, \$30.6 million for the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation, \$33.9 million for the Australian War Memorial and \$1.7 million for a new exhibition on World War I, \$6.1 million in base funding for the High Court, \$2 million for the completion of the National Gallery of Australia building and \$2.1 million for Australian Disability Enterprises to support the work of Koomarri.

Koomarri is based in my electorate. It provides a great service to disabled Canberrans and to the carers and parents of those disabled Canberrans. I attended an event late last year where I met with a number of carers and their disabled children, some of whom are quite profoundly disabled. One of the key or fundamental messages I got from the conversations I had with those parents—who were quite often in tears and very distressed and concerned about what is going to happen to their children if they pass on or if they become ill at some stage—was, 'Bring on the National Disability Insurance Scheme.' These people want the National Disability Insurance Scheme. They see the value of it, and the sooner they can get it the better. It was very strong and profound message. Many of these parents were in tears because they are terribly worried about what is going to happen to their children. Some of the children were in their early 20s. Their parents were a bit older—in their late 50s and 60s—and they were concerned about what is going to happen to their children if they get ill and eventually do pass away. The message from them was, 'Please—we love the National Disability Insurance Scheme and we want it to come along as soon as possible.'

Canberra, and the indeed the nation, has also undoubtedly benefited from a range of investments in health, training, infrastructure, small business and families. I would like to outline some of the achievements we have made in those areas today. Better health and a better health system will always be a Labor priority. We were the ones who introduced Medicare. A universal health system is in the Labor DNA. It is fundamental to Labor's identity. In the ACT, the federal government has invested \$67 million in a range of health reforms, including \$8.3 million to expand the capacity of public hospital emergency departments, \$26 million in capital and recurrent funding to deliver 21 subacute beds, \$6.8 million to boost elective surgery capacity at the Canberra Hospital and \$7.5 million in flexible capital funding.

In the past 12 months I have been out to the Canberra Hospital on a number of occasions with the former minister for health and the ACT Chief Minister, and had a number of tours of the great new facilities that are being built and expanded out there. The Canberra Hospital in Woden, which is in my electorate, is a great institution and very much loved by Canberrans. Canberrans have a great sense of ownership of the Canberra Hospital. They also have a very keen interest in its future. The Canberra Hospital services about 30 per cent of the region—so it is not just a hospital for Canberra, it is a hospital for the capital region. Through our investments, and also the investments of the ACT government, we are seeing it ever expanding, ever growing, and ever providing better health services for the people of Canberra.

Among the funding that we have provided to the Canberra Hospital and to health in the region is funding for 24 regional cancer centres around Australia to bring services closer to patients. I was pleased last year to be joined by the previous minister, Nicola Roxon, to turn the first sod on a fantastic new regional cancer centre to support and treat people from the ACT and our region—that 30 per cent in the region that are battling cancer. This centre will provide support to half a million people in the region. It will be a wonderful support to them and their families, and I am very much looking forward to watching this cancer centre being built over the next 12 months and coming years. It will provide a much needed facility to Canberrans and also to people in the region. It will also provide an opportunity for people in the region to stay in Canberra to get the support that they need

when they are battling cancer or coming up to be diagnosed with potential cancer. As we all know from our own personal experiences and the experiences of people in our electorates, it can be very challenging and confronting if you are diagnosed with cancer and then to have to go through that journey of travelling interstate or intraregion to get your treatment can also be very challenging and often quite lonely. This cancer centre will provide much needed support and respite for those cancer sufferers and for their families. It is a very welcome initiative. I was proud that the Gillard government contributed some \$30 million to this \$46 million project.

But Labor's investment in health goes beyond Canberra. For a start, we have invested \$2.2 billion in mental health, which includes 30 new headspace centres to bring the national total to 90 and provide nationwide coverage, up to 12 additional youth psychosis centres, 40 more family support services, 425 more personal helpers and mentors, and \$344 million for new support services for the severely mentally ill and the National Mental Health Commission. I am very much looking forward to speaking tonight in the adjournment debate on post-traumatic stress disorder and what is happening in this space and the range of support mechanisms that are set up to deal with this disorder. It is one of those things that does afflict many people and can often be quite invisible. So I am looking forward to bringing people's attention to that in the adjournment debate tonight. There is also another \$3 billion to improve hospitals and cancer facilities throughout Australia. I mentioned what was happening in Canberra but that applies right across the nation.

The Gillard Labor government is also investing \$53 million to help improve access to public dental services. This investment is important because in 2007 Labor inherited a health shambles: six in 10 Australians were living with doctor shortages, public hospitals were run into the ground and bulkbilling was in national decline. Since then, Labor has worked to turn this Liberal shambles around. We increased capital works with \$1.8 billion to build and rebuild 63 hospitals and health centres. We funded more doctors and nurses and boosted Medicare rebates to help bulkbilling grow. We delivered national health reform one year ago this week, ending the state and federal blame game in health. We have delivered more money, more beds, less waste and less waiting for public hospitals nationwide. There has also been our investment in nurses. We are training an extra 1,000 nurses every year and an extra 5,500 doctors over 10 years. We have increased public hospital funding by 50 per cent and reached agreement with states and territories on funding future public hospital growth via an extra 1,300 federally funded hospital beds and a further 13,000 residential aged care places. We are doing more to ensure there is fairness in our health system. This will be done through a means test of the private health insurance rebate, which looks on track. It has been passed today. So a household on \$1,000 does not subsidise the insurance of one on \$500,000.

The Gillard Labor government's commitment to health just goes on and on. We are also equipping 120 hospitals with new elective surgery equipment and/or operating theatres. We are investing in new community health programs, including plain packaging of tobacco products, tough new restrictions on tobacco advertising and subsidised nicotine replacement therapies. We are investing in the after-hours GP helpline for 24-hour day access to expert health advice. These are just some of the latest investments in health. This is because only Labor cares about delivering world-class health care for all Australians and only Labor can be trusted to keep our health and our public hospital system strong. I look forward to seeing even more investment in the health services that will be possible with the introduction of the means test for the private health insurance rebate.

I turn now to infrastructure, which is a fundamental framework for us to enhance productivity and to grow this nation. In terms of infrastructure, the Gillard Labor government has invested \$1.1 million to fix local black spots on top of the \$82 million for road infrastructure this financial year—this is just in the Canberra context. There was also the announcement by Minister Albanese of \$144 million in funding for the Majura Parkway. That is perhaps the most welcome announcement of all, as it delivers something that has been needed for many years. The ACT government will co-fund that. It is very welcome news. We have the Tuggeranong Parkway and Gungahlin Drive linking one side of the city from north to south. But we now need to have the other side of the city linked from north to south, and the Majura Parkway will allow that to happen.

Investment in infrastructure and roads in Canberra has included \$200 million for new roads and for the maintenance of Edison and Glebe Parks. We have had \$32,000 for signage and line-marking improvements in Tuggeranong in my electorate. We have had over \$240,000 for signage and intersection improvements for the intersections of Mugga Lane and Long Gully Road in Symonston.

In addition to that, we have made an \$18.5 million investment in the Monaro Highway. The ACT government has also provided about \$2 million for that. I am very much looking forward to that coming on line. That will finally, after 40 years, make the Monaro Highway a dual carriageway the whole way. We have been waiting 40

years for this to happen. At the moment, the upgrade is causing a bit of inconvenience for my constituents who work in Fyshwick. But it is a welcome development. I am very much looking forward to going out there and getting an update on progress in the near future. Thanks to both federal and ACT Labor we are seeing that huge enhancement occur after waiting for 40 years. It is a great development.

I could go on and on about the support that is being delivered to community organisations. I would just like to mention one, though—the investment that we have made in the Canberra Rape Crisis Centre, which last year received more calls than ever before. The Rape Crisis Centre is in my electorate and it does incredibly important work. I am a very strong supporter of it. Last year, we had Minister Ellis out there speaking to the workers, who do a fantastic job in providing support to men and women in Canberra. The Governor-General officially opened their beautiful new premises in Weston Creek. I am very proud of that investment and very proud of the fabulous work that the Canberra Rape Crisis Centre does.

When it comes to skills training, we have also made record investments in that area. The dignity of work is something that our government wants to help all Australians realise. I know that there are many employment initiatives in electorates across the country to get people into work and help them stay there. Better education, training and infrastructure are top priorities for the Gillard Labor government. I am always proud to tell my constituents how we have doubled investment in school education, upgraded facilities at every school and provided more information for parents than ever before. I mentioned this last night. I have nearly finished all the official openings of the projects funded through our significant Building the Education Revolution investment.

Each primary school across my electorate received between \$1.5 million and about \$3.5 million and all the parents, students and staff in those school communities are absolutely overjoyed at the investment that we have made. In many ways, they cannot believe their luck in many ways, because they would never have been able to raise that sort of money through sausage sizzles or fetes. It would not have been possible. It is beyond their wildest dreams. Not one person I have met at those schools does not think that the BER is the greatest of investments.

We have also created 130,000 new training places and are encouraging apprentices to stay in their training and to get a skilled job by investing \$100 million in a mentoring program, \$100 million in new apprenticeship models that deliver high-quality skills quickly and \$30 million to help mature age workers formalise their trade skills.

The Gillard Labor government has made significant investments in Canberra in education, health, infrastructure and community organisations—the list goes on and on. I am particularly proud of what we are doing here in Canberra. The feedback that I am getting from the community is that they love what we are doing here. I am very proud to represent the Gillard Labor government in Canberra and am very proud of the investment that we are making. *(Time expired)*