



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**BUSINESS**

**Rearrangement**

**SPEECH**

**Thursday, 7 February 2013**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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## SPEECH

**Date** Thursday, 7 February 2013  
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**Questioner**  
**Speaker** Bowen, Chris, MP

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

**Mr BOWEN** (McMahon—Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills, Science and Research and Minister for Small Business) (15:36): I join with the Leader of the House in opposing this motion. The Leader of the House, on behalf of the government, has said that we are more than happy to discuss science funding at an appropriate time—and why wouldn't we be more than happy to discuss science funding? Why wouldn't this government be more than happy to discuss the record \$1.72 billion of support to university research and training through its grants in 2013?

Why wouldn't we be happy to discuss the \$879 million in funding to the Australian Research Council for the Competitive Grants Program in 2012-13, or the record funding of \$736 million to the CSIRO this year, or the fact that since 2008 we have provided more than \$300 million in additional support for the research workforce by doubling the number of Australian Postgraduate Awards by 2012 and increasing the stipend from \$20,000 to \$24,000 with indexation? They are just a few of the initiatives of this government in science and research.

As the Leader of the House indicated, we have made record investment in higher education, which the Howard had government ripped up. It was one of the few Western governments to reduce funding for higher education in real terms, and we had to reverse that when we came to office. On this side of the House, we understand the importance of science and research to being a country which is innovative, which believes in science, which believes in productivity.

This is a debate we are more than happy to have. The member for Melbourne has been told that. The Manager of Opposition Business has been told that. Instead what we see today is a Liberal-Greens stunt. Instead what we see today is an attempt to pull a stunt in the House of Representatives, to knock off, as the Leader of the House said, my honourable friend the member for Dunkley, who has a rare MPI. He had the MPI on small business taken off him yesterday by the Leader of The Nationals. This is a stunt for no good purpose. We can have this debate. We are more than happy to have a debate about science funding. We are more than happy to have a debate about science and research. If I were the opposition, I would not want a debate about science and research; I would want a stunt just like this, and that is what they have done—pulled a stunt on a Thursday afternoon as a distraction.

Science and research are important. I am very proud to be the science and research minister in this government, because this government has a proud record in science and research, and we are going to continue to invest very solidly in science and research, unlike the Howard government, which cut, slashed and burnt funding for science and research. I am very proud of the fact that this government has appointed a Chief Scientist, that this government has embarked on record funding in science and research.

**Mr Billson interjecting—**

**Mr BOWEN:** He says, 'Do you talk to him?' I had a meeting with the Chief Scientist yesterday, Member for Dunkley. That is something else that we are more than happy to talk about in this place in a debate on science and research. This is a government which has also secured, on behalf of our nation, a very remarkable initiative—the Square Kilometre Array, one of the great scientific developments in this country.

**Mrs Prentice:** Hear, hear!

**Mr BOWEN:** I thank the honourable member opposite for her support for this very important initiative, which is a great step forward for Australia's scientists. This is a serious debate which we are more than happy to have. This is a serious discussion which we are more than happy to go to.

The **SPEAKER:** The time for the debate has expired. The question is that the motion be agreed to.