



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Federation Chamber

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

G20

SPEECH

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Questioner
Speaker Champion, Nick, MP

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Mr CHAMPION (Wakefield) (12:58): I rise to support the motion and I commend the member for Brisbane for moving it. I am particularly pleased to do so, because it shows that support for Brisbane and this crucial meeting is bipartisan. We need to show the world that, when it comes to our engagement with the global economy and its decision makers, we do not play politics. It was disappointing to see the Prime Minister breach this convention earlier in the year, but hopefully the blowback from those comments in Davos will act as a disincentive next time he is tempted.

I want to pay tribute to the people who secured this meeting for Brisbane—people like the member for Lilley, who just spoke, working alongside prime ministers Rudd then Gillard. Engagement with the global economy via the G20 is one of the proudest legacies of Labor in government. It is one of the reasons why Australia did so well to stare down the global recession, create a million jobs and achieve three AAA credit ratings for the very first time in Australia's history.

I have some experience with these G20 meetings, having gone to finance minister gatherings in places like Mexico City, Paris and also, less formally, in Washington, DC. I have seen representatives of our government treated with a great deal of respect, regard and interest because of what we managed as a nation when the world was imposing all kinds of challenges on us, challenges that many other nations could not conquer.

It is a very big deal for Brisbane to host such an important gathering of the world's most influential people. Probably not since the Commonwealth Games in 1982 has Brisbane hosted something which attracts this kind of attention. But this is an even bigger event than those games, because every nation on earth has a stake in what representatives of the 20 biggest economies will be discussing in November. It is a tremendous opportunity for the city and all its businesses. I agree with much of what the members for Brisbane, Leichardt and Lilley said in that regard—about Cairns in the case of the member for Leichardt. These meetings give our people and businesses and community groups the opportunity to show what we are made of—that we are capable of putting on a big event like this and that our community has the capacity to rise to the challenge. When we are tested like this, we generally succeed. This time will be no different.

A lot of my confidence comes from knowing that the Australian officials charged with the responsibility of delivering a great meeting in Brisbane are some of the finest public servants in the country. I have worked alongside many of them. I know their professionalism and their commitment is boundless. I wish all of them the very best as they go about this very important task. I can assure the House and the broader community that the process cannot be in better hands than theirs.

Every single Australian has an interest in the success of the meeting, not just the logistics and the organisational side but, more importantly, the outcomes—whether or not it helps build momentum behind important issues. These important issues include trade, cracking down on profit shifting in the tax system, climate change—ideally—and more. The most important issues of all, however, are those around growth and job creation, not just targets but tangible policies and actual progress that endures beyond the discussion and beyond the day-to-day newspaper coverage of the event.

For our part, Labor will seek to play a positive role in the debate leading up to November, always with an eye to the Australian national interest. Ideally, people will look back on the Brisbane meeting as the time and the place the G20 re-established itself as the most action oriented of the world's economic institutions and transitioned into something more than a tremendous crisis manager during the GFC, which it sure was, into a body that can be a real force for good in more normal times.

The global economy is not in the awful nick that it was a couple of years ago, but it still is an uncertain place. There are good signs and bad signs. There are reasons to be confident and reasons to be cautious. We need to see the G20 as an important way to seek agreement in the global economy about key domestic and international

policies—so that those policies are part of the solution to our global and domestic challenges and not part of the problem. This is the responsibility of those meeting in one of the two best cities on earth—Brisbane—the other of course being Logan City to its immediate south. Ipswich is also a good city.

Mr Neumann: Hear, hear!

Mr Champion: I commend the motion and I happily support it.