



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Federation Chamber

CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS

Election Funding

SPEECH

Monday, 3 June 2013

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Questioner
Speaker Broadbent, Russell, MP

Source House
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Responder
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Mr BROADBENT (McMillan) (10:39): What a great story the member for Brand just gave to the parliament. Every morning in this place the Speaker of the House of Representatives walks into the House, acknowledges the government then the opposition, waits for the mace to be placed on the table, then acknowledges the first Australians and reads a prayer. That prayer begins:

Almighty God, we humbly beseech Thee to vouchsafe Thy blessing upon this parliament. Direct and prosper our deliberations to the advancement of Thy glory, and the true welfare of the people of Australia.

I take that last piece, 'the true welfare of the people of Australia', very seriously. It makes me question my responses to particular issues that come before the parliament and come before us as politicians. I am coming to the point, in a moment, of public funding, which the minister may be interested in. We have a responsibility to our constituents, to our parties, to our tribes, to our families, but I do not want to be owned by anybody in this place. I want each member of parliament to have the freedom to address themselves to that prayer. So when I spoke out on public funding last week, and the controversy that surrounding the public funding, it was not because I disagree that there should be a conversation with the Australian people about how we fund election campaigns, what is the right amount to fund and how we might go about it. That is not my issue; my issue is that we should never foist anything on the Australian people without having a conversation about whatever we do—whatever the deliberation is—whether it be the call from the member representing Shepparton and fruit growers about her passion for her community and the issues that affect them, or the way we have election campaigns.

I do not want any member to be owned by a union. I do not want any Liberal to be owned by a funder that funds their election campaign. I can tell you: I do not know who funds my election campaign. I write thank-you letters to lots of people. I do not know whether they have given me \$10 or \$10,000. My party knows; I do not know. I do not want to know. I want the freedom to move and exist in the place without having to acknowledge that I have been funded by a particular group or individual. That is important to our democracy and the way we run this country. And we are blessed, under that prayer, that this country has been administered without corruption for the whole of the time of this country's existence. I thank the House for allowing me to speak.