



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Budget

SPEECH

Thursday, 17 July 2014

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Questioner
Speaker Bowen, Chris, MP

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Mr BOWEN (McMahon) (15:45): I will be talking about this government's budget, just like people around Australia are. Everybody is talking about the budget except members opposite. They did not send a minister in to defend their budget today—they are too busy backgrounding against the Treasurer. They sent in the B team to defend a C-grade budget. The budget was brought down two months ago. As much as we former treasurers would wish otherwise, normally budgets have receded into people's memory by now—but not this budget. Around Australia people are still expressing their white-hot anger at this Treasurer for his deceit, for his dishonesty and for his lack of care for the fundamental Australian value of fairness. They are still angry and they not have forgotten this budget.

We have seen ministers question the judgement of the Treasurer. We have seen ministers question his ability to sell this budget, as well they might. But these ministers should be questioning his values. They should be questioning the Prime Minister's values, too. They should be questioning their values and their prejudices—their prejudices against hardworking Australians who commit no crime other than to need some support from the government. They are hardworking Australians who commit no crime other than working hard and saving for the future and relying on their government to care about them. The values of this Treasurer tell him that it is okay to rip away universal health care; his values tell him it is okay to impose debt on people who commit no crime other than wishing to better themselves through tertiary education; his values tell him that it is all right to reduce the age pension because apparently the age pension is too generous, according to this Treasurer. This is a Treasurer whose values tell him it is okay to say that if you commit the crime of being under 30 and temporarily unemployed, you get nothing. The values of this Treasurer tell him it is okay to deliberately create an underclass in Australia. That is what these ministers should be questioning—the values of the Treasurer, not just his salesmanship and his judgement. We on this side of the House question his values, and that is what people are questioning right around the country.

We have seen the spectacle of this chaotic management approach adopted by the Treasurer of Australia. Yesterday he said that they had alternatives up their sleeve; they had secret plans that they could reveal to go further unless the Senate passed their legislation. We were told by everybody there were no alternatives, but now apparently there are alternatives. I am going to surprise the House—I agree. There are alternatives. We gave the Treasurer four at question time. He could drop his \$5.5 billion a year Paid Parental Leave scheme. There is a saving he would get some support for. He could drop direct action—so-called direct action; this scheme which subsidises polluters. He could drop that, and it would have a pretty easy passage through the parliament. He could drop his plan to give a billion dollars back to multinational companies who should be paying a fair share of tax in Australia. This government talks about small business, but why don't they give small business a break by letting multinational companies pay their fair share so that small business can compete on a level playing field? Here is another alternative: why don't you say to high income earners in Australia, 'You can pay a fair share of tax on your superannuation.' A modest measure was proposed by the previous government to make the superannuation system a little fairer, and this government says, 'Oh no, we can't have that.'

So there are alternatives, but they are not ones that this Prime Minister or this Treasurer want to hear about because they do not fit their prejudices against ordinary, hardworking Australians and they do not fit this government's determination not to shrink the state—no, this government does not want to shrink the state—but to shift the state to give more support where they think that is important, like sending \$50,000 cheques to somebody who happens to have a baby while taking money away from Australia's age pensioners, while saying to unemployed people that they will get nothing, while cutting child care and while saying to people who dare to dream for the future and study for the future that they will have to go into debt. (*Time expired*)