



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Federation Chamber

CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS

Abbott Government

SPEECH

Wednesday, 12 August 2015

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SPEECH

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Speaker Giles, Andrew, MP	Question No.

Mr GILES (Scullin) (10:24): I rise to give voice in this place to the concerns of the hundreds of constituents who have indicated to me their deep dissatisfaction with the Abbott government. During the winter break I held a series of community meetings throughout the Scullin electorate, from the Diamond Creek Football Club to the memorial hall in Epping. I took every opportunity I could to listen and to better understand what matters to the communities right across the Scullin electorate. I was struck both by the range of issues people raised with me and by the unity of purpose behind their concerns: the record and the rhetoric of the Abbott government. Concerns included everything from a tax on Medicare to concerns about road congestion; a lack of urban rail funding, constraining transport options; a lack of transparency across trade negotiations, threatening jobs, threatening access to medicines; university deregulation and \$100,000 degrees; broken promises on Gonski funding for schools, increasing educational inequality; and of course jobs.

Deep concern was raised in particular about what will happen following the closure of the auto industry, goaded away by Treasurer Hockey. There was deep concern about youth unemployment, which is more than 20 per cent in the western end of the Scullin electorate. There was simply disbelief that this government has not got a credible plan for jobs—just an agenda to attack wages and conditions, particularly penalty rates that are so important to so many of the people I represent in this place.

Again and again, people expressed to me, right across the electorate and in no uncertain terms, they want the Commonwealth government to do more to respond to all of these concerns. But, instead, this government seeks to do less—less funding to support GP visits, a continued refusal to fund urban rail, support for \$100,000 university degrees and a failure to fund schools on a needs basis. At a time when everyone in this place should be seeking to rebuild trust and confidence in the political process, it seems that this government is determined to make things and people's lives worse. And of course insult has been added to injury, over the three weeks before we returned to parliament, when the Prime Minister took way too long to restore public confidence in the standard-setting role of this parliament and its former speaker.

Part of every member's job in this place is to listen to the concerns of their constituents. I do not doubt that constituents in coalition members' electorates are saying very similar things to what constituents in the Scullion electorate are telling me. They want a government to listen, they want a government to support a fairer approach to education, health and infrastructure investment. They want a government that will stand up for jobs. They do not want another reset; they want a Shorten Labor government.