



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE
Western Australia: Infrastructure
SPEECH

Thursday, 6 March 2014

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Questioner
Speaker Zappia, Tony, MP

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Mr ZAPPIA (Makin) (16:10): I welcome the opportunity to support my colleagues from Western Australia and support the people of Western Australia by speaking on, and supporting, the matter of public importance that is before the House. Under Labor we saw the country get the largest ever investment in infrastructure in the history of this country. Of that infrastructure investment, as the member for Perth quite rightly pointed out and I will repeat, Western Australia got its fair share. Western Australia got \$4.2 billion during the six years of Labor, compared with the \$1.9 billion it got during the previous six years of the Howard government. The facts speak for themselves. It is not a matter of debate. Either the money was spent or it was not, and it certainly was under Labor.

We invested in infrastructure because under the previous government, the coalition government, we had seen a government that had the opportunity and had the money to do so but did not invest sufficiently in infrastructure across the country. We were left with a massive infrastructure deficit throughout Australia. When in government, the Australian Labor Party saw the need to spend money on infrastructure, and it spent the money to try and pick up and fill up that shortfall. It is important to spend money on infrastructure because it has a direct effect on the nation's productivity. Better roads, better railways, better shipping ports, better airports and better telecommunications services, like the NBN, make a difference to the national productivity and efficiency of this country. If our productivity and efficiency are improved, that means we are more competitive, and being more competitive has a direct effect on jobs.

We understood the importance of investing in infrastructure throughout this country. For Western Australia, it is even more important. We understand Western Australia is a large state, we understand Western Australia has a lot of remote communities and we understand that Western Australia is heavily reliant on the mining sector—a sector that needs infrastructure to operate. We also understand that, if you are reliant on a mining sector in which the predictions say there will be a drastic reduction in employment numbers, the one thing you should not do is withdraw infrastructure. That is exactly what the Abbott government are doing. They say they are going to withdraw \$500 million worth of rail projects for Perth—not just a few dollars, but \$500 million, worth of rail projects for Perth are likely to be withdrawn. It goes further than that. They are going to withdraw \$150 million from the Regional Australia Development Fund. Who do members opposite think are the beneficiaries of those kinds of funds? It is remote communities. So, when they withdraw those funds, they directly affect the very communities that need the most help.

Of course, they do those things because they do not care about jobs in this country. They do not understand that withdrawing investment in infrastructure directly affects jobs. They have a fine track record when it comes to turning their backs on jobs in this country. We saw it with Toyota, with Holden, with Alcoa, with Electrolux, with Forge in Western Australia, and with SPC Ardmona—when one of their own members even stood up for those jobs. Then we saw it again, only today, when they brought into this place legislation which is likely—

Mr Wyatt: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The member for Makin should come back to the matter of public importance, which is about the lack of commitment from the federal government to Western Australia as to funding, because he is straying to other issues.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Craig Kelly): I thank the member for Hasluck. The member for Makin has the call.

Mr ZAPPIA: We saw it again, only today, when they brought into this place and guillotined legislation relating to the Qantas sale which, again, directly affects jobs and puts at risk the jobs of over 30,000 people in this country.

Again, what they want the Australian public to believe is that they support Western Australia, but, as we heard today, they have an audit commission report in their hands which obviously spells out the cuts that they are going to make but are too gutless to release the findings of prior to the Senate election in Western Australia. Why? Because they do not want the people of Western Australia to know what they have in store for them.