



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**  
**MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE**

**Economy**

**SPEECH**

**Tuesday, 7 February 2012**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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## SPEECH

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**Speaker** Ciobo, Steven, MP

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**Mr CIOBO** (Moncrieff) (16:36): I am always pleased to rise after I have been forced to listen to diatribe from members opposite about how the Labor Party has some kind of moral monopoly on the working class people of Australia. For some unknown reason—I should say for some reason only known to members of the Labor Party—it seems to be only people of the Labor Party in this chamber who are concerned with the lifestyles and the cost of living for Australia's working families.

Here is a little secret for the Australian Labor Party: it is not about the rhetoric; it is not about the glossy language; it is not about the glossy brochures; it is not about whether or not Kevin Rudd's photo is big this week and Julia's photo is small or whether in fact it is Julia's photo that is big this week and Kevin's photo is small. What actually matters to those people out there who employ us to make a difference in their lives is what you deliver. It is results that count. It is the difference that you make in their lives that matters to them. What they know about the Australian Labor Party is that it is a complete and utter fraud. It is a fraud on any measure that you are prepared to use. On any measure that you are prepared to benchmark government performance on, the Australian Labor Party is a fraud because its rhetoric does not match the results. What we know is that the Australian Labor Party likes to talk about working families. Who could forget the election of the Rudd Labor government back in 2007? Granted, there are many who would like to on that side, but that notwithstanding who could forget it when we saw Kevin Rudd looking earnestly down the barrel of the TV cameras across the land saying, 'I am here for Australia's working families.' They believed him in large measure and that is why he was elected. What we know, though, is that promises that he would be 'just like John Howard but with a softer heart' and promises that he was an economic conservative meant nothing and they were followed through with nothing.

When you look at Labor's performance in office, it has been abysmal. They have taken Australia from a \$70 billion surplus position—from budget surpluses in virtually every single year of the Howard government—to now being \$132 billion in debt. Labor members like to say, 'You are misguiding the Australian people because you do not take into account that we have had the GFC; you do not take into account that we have been so adversely affected.' The reality is that simply does not accord with the truth, because the Asian region has been through much greater economic tumult than the GFC. It was called the Asian financial crisis and affected our area of the world much more than the GFC ever did. Dr Emerson, an economist who is sitting at the table, has suddenly gone silent because he knows the truth, and he knows that Peter Costello's economic stewardship of the Australian economy ensured that, despite those economic headwinds, despite severe economic turbulence, the coalition was able to make strong effective decisions that led Australia to the lowest unemployment rate in 33 years, delivered a \$70 billion surplus and ensured that we had productivity growth that left Labor's record for shame.

What is more, we have heard Labor Party promises from mountain to seaside all over the country about how the Labor Party is concerned about Australian workers. Think back to 2007 and how Labor was going to make a difference to Australian families. There is one truly important measure on that, and that is what is happening to grocery prices, what is happening with people's budgets and the food they can put on their tables. We recall that at that time the Labor Party promised us this you-beaut initiative, this new policy pronouncement, called GroceryWatch. We all know that Labor walked away from GroceryWatch. It is very unfortunate that the minister responsible is the person sitting at the table there. I did a little Google search on the words 'GroceryWatch' and it was interesting to see that the first result that came up under 'GroceryWatch' was [grocerywatch.com.au](http://grocerywatch.com.au). It said: 'Hello world! Welcome to WordPress. This is your first post.' This was a \$13 million initiative that the Australian Labor Party tipped down the drain and all you have got is a WordPress site that says, 'This is your first post.' The fourth result was much more interesting. The fourth result was an article that ran in the *Age* by Kelly Burke on 27 June 2009. This was quite telling. It said:

...the Minister for Competition Policy and Consumer Affairs, Craig Emerson, made the decision to scrap the grocery price monitoring website, just six days before its scheduled launch.

The article said:

The Federal Government's \$13 million election promise to force grocery prices down lies in tatters.

I thought how apt because it is not just GroceryWatch you could apply that sentence to; there are so many from this Labor Party. You could say the federal government's election promise to introduce FuelWatch lies in tatters, the federal government's election promise to install pink batts lies in tatters, the federal government's decision to remove pink batts lies in tatters, the federal government's election promise to build school halls lies in tatters, the federal government's promise to deliver a surplus lies in tatters, the federal government's election promise to keep interest rates down lies in tatters, the federal government's election promise to introduce mandatory precommitment lies in tatters; and the most important of all election promises, the federal government's election promise not to introduce a carbon tax, lies in tatters. On every single measure, this is a government that has betrayed the working people of Australia.

Unemployment is up under this government. Debt is up under this government. Let us look at some facts on the Holy Grail that the Labor Party likes to focus on—that is, interest rates. Although the Labor Party is very fond of claiming that interest rates are lower under it, we know in reality that interest rates are actually lower under the coalition. We also know that inflation is lower under the coalition. The reason these things happen is that the coalition controls spending. We do not go on \$136 billion spending sprees. We actually make meaningful and considered decisions that deliver solid stewardship when it comes to the Australian economy and deliver results in productivity, inflation and interest rates.

**Mr Stephen Jones:** The worst productivity in years.

**Mr CIOBO:** I hear members opposite talking about productivity now, saying we had the worst productivity. That is fascinating. Under the coalition government from 1996 to 2007, there was 1.2 per cent productivity growth and in the same corresponding period for Labor in government it was minus 0.9 per cent. Under the coalition government from 1996 to 2007, average annual labour productivity growth was 2.2 per cent and 0.9 per cent for the corresponding period that Labor was in office. So, once again, we see the facts simply unmask the truth about how this government is completely inept when it comes to economic stewardship.

However, my concern is that real Australian families out there who are trying to put food on the table, trying to service their mortgage and trying to meet all the expenses associated with raising kids in Australia today have been left worse off as a result of this government's policies. We know that inflation is increasing at what seems to many families to be an exponential rate. Electricity prices are up 51 per cent from 2007; gas prices are up 30 per cent; water and sewerage rates are up 46 per cent; health costs are up 20 per cent; education costs are up 24 per cent; and rents on average are up 20 per cent. And it is going to get worse. When Labor introduces the world's biggest carbon tax, midway through this year, we will see that. Expectations are that electricity prices will go up by a further 10 per cent in the first year alone and that there will be a nine per cent increase in gas bills. On Labor's own figures, families will have to fork out an extra \$515 a year under the carbon tax—and that is before any of the hidden costs start to wash through the economy.

We also know that Labor is attacking other areas in the cost of living for the Australian population. Labor promised not to do anything to private health insurance. Now it is attacking that large proportion of the population that relies on the 30 per cent rebate to ensure that private medical cover is affordable for them and for their family. We have seen the price of child care escalate, up by an estimated \$80 a week, as a direct consequence of Labor's policy decisions. On every measure, this is a government that is big on one thing and one thing only: it is big on talk. But when it comes to real action, real results and providing hope, reward and opportunity for Australia's working families, this government delivers nothing. It delivers higher unemployment. It delivers lower real wages. It delivers higher inflation and higher interest rates. It is Australian working families which have suffered as a direct consequence of this Labor Party being in government. (*Time expired*)