



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

BILLS

**Appropriation Bill (No. 1) 2012-2013,
Appropriation Bill (No. 2) 2012-2013,
Appropriation (Parliamentary Departments)
Bill (No. 1) 2012-2013, Appropriation Bill (No. 5)
2011-2012, Appropriation Bill (No. 6) 2011-2012**

Second Reading

SPEECH

Monday, 21 May 2012

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SPEECH

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Questioner
Speaker Hayes, Chris, MP

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Mr HAYES (Fowler) (17:33): I support Appropriation Bill (No. 1) 2012-2013 and related bills and their passage through this House. Doesn't the fact that we have targeted and delivered on a budget surplus annoy the hell out of those opposite?

Let's go back a little while. It was not all that long ago that, apart from preaching the need to have a budget in deficit, they started working through the figures—bear in mind they had a bit of a black hole to overcome—and started saying a budget would be an aspirational objective for them.

We have taken on the task of delivering a surplus budget. We have not simply said that we can; we have delivered a surplus budget to secure our economy against the persistent threats of an uncertain global environment. As I often mention here, there has not been one occasion when I have heard those opposite talk about the global financial crisis in this place. It is as if it did not occur.

Let's go back to 2008, with the fall of Lehman Brothers and the consequences around the globe. I recall it very vividly. The opposition—as a matter of fact, the shadow Treasurer—was recommending a path of action to this parliament of sitting, waiting and seeing what happens. If we had sat and waited, we would be in the same financial position as Europe, the United States, Britain and Japan.

We have had a very good result as a result of how we addressed the global financial crisis. We have shown good fiscal and budgetary management. We have kept the pressure on interest rates. What is important about delivering a budget surplus is putting downward pressure on interest rates. I think that would be in the interests of everyone in this chamber who purports to represent families, particularly those families who pay mortgages, which, let's face it, is the bulk of working families. This budget is designed to put downward pressure on interest rates.

We have just heard a lot about the issue of the mining boom. Sure, this is probably a once-in-a-generation mining boom that is occurring. It is right that we spread the benefits of that mining boom to ensure that no section of the Australian economy is left behind. I have seen the effect of the mining boom in my own family. I know the attraction there is for young to go up and work in your state, Madam Deputy Speaker D'Ath, in Queensland or over in Western Australia, where my boy has also worked. It is probably why it is very hard to attract tradesmen to other parts of the economy. Therefore, we need to put pressure on to incentivise areas, particularly in small business, to make sure that they stay competitive.

I spoke this morning on a notice of motion, which you moved, Madam Deputy Speaker. It gave me the opportunity to talk about the strong economic position that Australia is currently enjoying in relation to the rest of the world. When we talk about the global financial crisis, we should remember that our economy has grown by a further seven per cent since the crisis. We have an unemployment rate of 4.9 per cent compared to 8.3 per cent in the United States and an average of 10.7 per cent throughout Europe. Sovereign debt in most of Europe is around 80 per cent and is similar in the United States and Great Britain. Ours will peak as a debt ratio to GDP of 7.5 per cent. I hope those figures indicate we are doing a fair bit right. We are not doing what those opposite recommended: let's sit and wait and see. We decided to take very decisive action early, we decided to move and stimulate growth in our economy.

Investing in education will not only guard against the effect of a downturn in the construction industry but also in the next 10 and or 15 years be a benefit as our kids graduate and learn with modern technologies and go on to be competitive with the rest of the world. To that extent, we have only seen the first phase of the economic benefit of investing in schools. The next will be the productivity benefit as these kids who learn with the advanced technologies enter into our tertiary education system, into our workforce and make a difference for the better in our economy for the future.

That is by no means sitting back and waiting. That is taking a very strident approach, something that was criticised. I have to give credit to the opposition, they have been very consistent in their criticism. They have

been consistent in their position of voting no. That is another one they voted no to. I know from my electorate that people do not go out to the schools and say, 'We oppose this.' When we are opening school science blocks or language centres or doing other things in relation to education, everyone wants to get a piece of the local action.

Our responsible management of the economy and the budget has not come at the cost of investment in our productivity. I have just mentioned schools. The government has delivered historic investments into disabilities, aged care, dental health care, education and fundamental investment in building this nation's future, including the National Broadband Network. Despite what has just been said, this budget does have fiscal restraint at its centre in order to deliver that surplus.

Families in need are clearly the beneficiaries from this budget and rightfully so. Many of these families live in my electorate. Apart from being the most multicultural electorate in the whole of Australia, my electorate is the second most disadvantaged in Australia. So extra assistance is certainly welcomed by those families—families in need, such as those who are receiving the \$410 for primary kids and \$820 for high-school students through the schoolkids bonus. That is something that is very important to me. A third of my electorate is Asian, 22 per cent is Vietnamese. The Vietnamese have only been here for the last 37 years, at tops.

When running my mobile offices, I have been astounded at the number of people who have not claimed education tax refunds for their kids. A lot of people just failed to understand they were entitled to it. Unfortunately, lack of language skills has kept a lot of them out of the workforce. When they have not had a job they have not paid pay tax and thought, therefore, they could not claim the benefits for their children. The schoolkids bonus will ensure that those families do not miss out. According to our statistics, in my electorate this will mean that 10 per cent of families who have been and always were eligible but did miss out will now receive justly deserved spending for their children's education. They will get paid this schoolkids bonus at the beginning and the middle of each year. That is certainly very welcome.

Similarly, there are 17,000 families in my electorate who will also see the benefit of the extra \$600 from the family tax benefit A payment and more than 18,000 individuals on Centrelink allowances will also receive a supplementary payment of \$210 to assist with the cost of living. For those who are truly struggling to look after their families, every cent will certainly make a welcome difference in their lives.

This budget also provides \$3.7 billion worth of assistance for small business in the form of tax breaks. There are 11,300 small businesses in my electorate of Fowler. The instant asset write-off which will be increased to \$6,500 will be well received, whether it be for the motor vehicle, computer equipment, utes cetera. For areas such as mine where there are a lot of trades personnel, this will be very welcome.

There is also the issue of the loss carryback where people can claim losses of up to \$1 million against the tax paid on previous profits. I know the Council of Small Business welcome it. Many businesses in my area are trying to regroup and reinvest in their businesses, particularly tradesmen increasing their tools and machinery. This will be the basis upon which they can upgrade. They can actually turn around their businesses and invest in their future and, hopefully in turn, grow their businesses. That means providing greater employment for local people.

Also very important is the \$3.7 billion committed to aged-care reform. It will help people stay at home for longer and not be forced to sell their homes to pay the aged-care bond. In addition to the historic and dramatic increase in the pension delivered since 2009—something the other side of politics refused to do in the 12 years they had when they occupied the government benches—more than 27,600 pensioners in my electorate alone will now receive an extra \$338 per year for singles and \$510 for couples combined. These are good things. They are things that we do need to strive to achieve. On that basis, it will certainly be welcomed by the very significant portion of the elderly that I have as residents in Fowler.

Other issues, such as the dental health scheme and being able to alleviate the public dental health waiting list, are certainly going to be of great benefit to the people I represent, but I want to particularly focus my comments on the National Disability Insurance Scheme. Disability is something I have a particular interest in. My area, apart from its demographics, is very much overrepresented by people and families who live with disabilities. I can assure you that it is not the air we breathe out the re in south-west Sydney or the water we drink. Having a child with, say, autism, is very, very expensive and very few families actually survive the challenges associated with that. So people make compromises, and one of the compromises is in land values. So the electorate of Fowler is very much overrepresented by people with disabilities.

A couple of years back I was able to show that within a 25 - kilometre radius of the Liverpool CBD resided about 52 per cent of all families in New South Wales that live with autism. Of that number, 82 per cent of those families are single - parent families. As I said, it takes a very, very strong marriage to survive some of those challenges. So it is very important to me to ensure that local families have not only the care they need now but also the lifetime care and support they will need. This is something that will certainly make our mark as a parliament — stand ing up for people with disabilities. I honestly believe that our generation is going to be judged on a range of different things but specifically on how we deliver for people with disabilities.

While we are talking about autism, I would also like to indicate my support for the Autism Advisory and Support Service in Liverpool, which provides essential support and guidance for parents of children with autism. This organisation exists entirely as a result of the dedication and commitment of its volunteers, who are mainly parents. I would particularly like to recognise its founder, Grace Fav a , and also Fiona Zammit for the good work they do. I know they are holding a fundraising function this weekend, and I wish them all the best with that. They do an extraordinary job for parents in my electorate , who are just coming to terms with the fact that their children have autism.

If I had further time I would like to talk more about unemployment in my area—which is also extremely high. I have an unemployment rate which is twice the national average. One of the things that I would like to see more attention given to is language classes to ensure that a larger number of people are given the potential to enter the workforce and become job ready. That is something that is very significant in Fowler. *(Time expired)*