



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Budget

SPEECH

Thursday, 26 June 2014

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Questioner
Speaker Snowdon, Warren, MP

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Mr SNOWDON (Lingiari) (15:31): So there you have it: we need tough love. We need tough love, the minister has just told us. The Prime Minister said in question time, 'It's the tough medicine we just have to have.' No, that is not right, Prime Minister; it is not the tough medicine we just have to have; it is what you are proposing to do to the Australian population. It is not tough medicine, it is hurtful. What you are doing to the Australian population is dangerous.

I first got elected to this place 27 years ago and I cannot recall a budget which has been condemned across the board in the way in which this budget has, because not only is it dangerous, it is pernicious. What it does is undermine many of the values that I hold dear, like supporting those who are most in need, like supporting the most disadvantaged, like giving people a real opportunity in life. What this budget does is undermine all of those precepts.

We have seen what is happening already. Today we have heard about the cuts in support for dementia care. We have seen and we know about the changes to pension indexation—the Prime Minister, getting up at the dispatch box day after day, telling us that it will still be indexed twice a year. We all know that, Prime Minister—we are not fools. But what we also know is that you changed the indexation rate and that has a material impact upon the amount of money people receive in their pockets. They know. Service pensioners around this country now know that this government has betrayed them. Age pensioners around the country now know that this government has betrayed them. We know that a single income family now as a result of these budget changes with a combined income of \$95,000 and two kids aged five and 12 will be more than \$4,900 worse off a year as a result of the budget—nearly five grand. A single parent on \$55,000 with two children will be around \$6,000 a year worse off. That is an over 10 per cent reduction in their income. These are not rich people; these are people who live by modest means at best.

And then, of course, we have the changes which have taken place in health care. I see the parliamentary secretary opposite here who is responsible for the Indigenous affairs portfolio in Prime Minister and Cabinet. Let me ask him, because I asked him the other day and he couldn't answer: what is the impact of the co-payment on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians? What impact will it have on those people who cannot afford to go and see a doctor? Today I read the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare report, *Australia's health 2014*. In it it says:

Indigenous Australians have lower life expectancy is, high rates of chronic and preventable illness, poor self-reported health, and a high likelihood of being hospitalised than non-Indigenous Australians.

It is very clear—they are sicker and they are more likely to be hospitalised. Then, at page 332, they talk about the social determinants that can restrict an individual's ability to access health services. I quote:

Cost is a commonly reported barrier to accessing health services for Indigenous Australians and low levels of income can discourage people from seeking medical care and paying ongoing medical costs.

What does that tell you? A very simple thing: the people who most require access to medicines will not get it because they will not go to it. They will not be able to afford the co-payment so they will not go and see the doctor. These are Aboriginal families in my electorate, large families and a very young population. What is going to happen to those families if they cannot access a doctor because they cannot afford it, because they are required to pay a co-payment? I asked the parliamentary secretary this just recently. Who will afford to pay that co-payment? What will the impact be on Aboriginal health and health of the whole community as a result of this co-payment? What modelling have you done? Now we know: the Prime Minister says it is a demand reduction measure. It is a demand reduction measure that will have a material negative impact upon the health and welfare of Australians and most particularly the most disadvantaged and most impoverished of Australians. It is very, very clear that this government's unfair budget has inflicted the greatest hurt on the most disadvantaged in our

community and, frankly, they just don't care, because, as the Prime Minister said today, it is 'the tough medicine we just have to have'. How stupid! (*Time expired*)