



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Federation Chamber

BILLS

Appropriation Bill (No. 1) 2013-2014

Consideration in Detail

SPEECH

Tuesday, 4 June 2013

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SPEECH

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Questioner
Speaker Macklin, Jenny, MP

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Ms MACKLIN (Jagajaga—Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and Minister for Disability Reform) (16:47): I thank the member for Throsby for his ongoing interest in Indigenous affairs. Today, the Minister for Early Childhood and Youth and I announced that there would be a new Closing the Gap target that we want to see met. This target is to make sure that all Indigenous four-year-olds right across Australia not only have a preschool place to go to but are attending regularly. We will negotiate that with the states and territories. I am very pleased to inform the member for Throsby that that was announced just today. There is money behind this initiative that the minister for early childhood is responsible for.

Specifically in the area of the health that the member for Throsby asked about, there are two areas. In particular this year's budget includes a \$777 million ongoing commitment to Indigenous health. This is to make sure that the commitments we made a few years ago continue. We know that we have a lot of work still to do to make sure that we close an unacceptable gap in life expectancy. The problems in this area go to terrible chronic illness experienced by many, many Indigenous people. Smoking rates are too high. We want to make sure that Indigenous babies are born healthy. We want to make sure that pregnant mums are getting the advice they need about how to look after themselves and their babies when their babies come along. There is a very substantial commitment to Indigenous health.

We had a number of other important announcements in this year's budget. The minister for school education has a very substantial commitment as part of the school-improvement program for additional, specific funding to make sure that Indigenous children at school get the targeted support they need with literacy and numeracy, and with their other education. We have targets for literacy and numeracy. We also have targets for year 12 completion. We want to see those met, and the only way they will be met is by making sure that our Indigenous children get the very best education, both at primary and secondary school levels.

There were some other very important initiatives in this year's budget. One area that is very significant is the ongoing funding commitment to the Cape York welfare reforms. These have been shown, as a result of a recent evaluation that was published, to have been very successful at making sure that we see improved social norms in the Cape York welfare areas of Coen, Mossman Gorge, Aurukun and Hopevale and the money that this government is allocating in this year's budget will make sure that those Cape York welfare reforms can continue.

I have been very concerned, to make sure that we get an ongoing commitment from the Queensland government as well. We do have some additional funding coming from Queensland but we certainly do not have what has traditionally been provided by the Queensland government. This government is pressing Queensland to make sure that they meet the same level of commitment that they have met in the past. I would say to those opposite how important it is, in this area of Indigenous affairs. This government has been prepared to make 10-year commitments in Indigenous affairs, whether it be remote Indigenous housing that has been a 10-year commitment or the commitment we made in the Northern Territory to Stronger Futures, which was the major focus earlier. Each of these are long-term commitments, because we know that meeting our Closing-the-Gap targets will require that level of determined investment. I do hope that we will see that agreed to by those opposite.