



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Education

SPEECH

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Questioner
Speaker Perrett, Graham, MP

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Mr PERRETT (Moreton—Opposition Whip) (15:42): Thank you for that protection, Deputy Speaker. Education is the great enabler in our society. In fact, it is the antithesis of those snobs who peddle the 'know your place' sort of line, because education lets you move through society by being given greater opportunity. I do not say that as poor white trash from the bush raised by a single mum; I am actually going to back it up with a quote from some author called Andrew Leigh. In his book *Battlers & billionaires*—a great book—he quotes some Harvard academics who say:

... we should think of inequality as a race between technology and education. In eras when technological advances outpace schooling attainment, the gap between rich and poor widens. But in times when the quantity and quality of education increases, so too does equality.

This very skilled author called Andrew Leigh gives us some examples and says:

Someone who completes 12 years of high school is nearly 20 per cent more likely to have a job than someone who drops out in year 9 ... a diploma boosts earnings by nearly 20 per cent, while a bachelor's degree boosts earnings by around 50 per cent.

Education gives people opportunities in life. We saw through that whole Gonski process and all the research that that is the case. In electorates like mine, there are schools that are using this Gonski money incredibly wisely, with school boards, principals and parents coming together to say, 'What will be the greatest good from this money?'

I know that in my electorate of Moreton in the next few years alone the Turnbull government will cut \$12 million. I am from country Queensland. I grew up in the electorate of Maranoa. Somewhere like Maranoa would actually lose \$33 million. Hinkler, whose member was at the dispatch box before, would lose \$23 million. Mallee would lose \$33 million.

Why is this of relevance for the National Party? Because the National Party seats benefited the most from Gonski. It was an investment in the bush and in the opportunities that flow from that. 'Why would the Labor Party invest in the bush?' you might hear. Because the Labor Party believes in doing something for the national interest. That is what the Labor Party believes in doing, irrespective of political expediency of rewarding the wealthier schools. That is how the Labor Party invests in education.

Look at the way that that money is being used in Moreton. We see at Sunnybank State High School they have created a dynamic learning environment that is future-focused on students. Corinda State School employs a maths coach to partner with teachers. Kuraby State School is doing Mother's Day and Father's Day stalls, trying to raise money so that they can invest in education. But we can never do enough fundraising. As the Deputy Leader of the Labor Party said, we cannot cook enough sausages or make enough lamingtons.

We must make a wise investment in education. Why? Not just because it makes teachers feel good but because it will boost productivity. It will make the economy hum. It will make us competitive with our Asian neighbours who are not sitting idly by and saying, 'Gee, education is not worth investing in.' We know that our neighbours—those that we compete with—are investing strongly in education.

Schools in Moreton benefited from Gonski. Children in Moreton benefited from that boost in productivity. It is a solid investment in egalitarianism. That is what it is. That is the sort of Australia the Labor Party believes in. By investing in education we let our best and brightest come forward. We cannot afford to let down that poor kid in the bush, that Indigenous kid, that kid whose second language is English or that bright kid who, but for a little bit of help and support, could be our next leader or our next CEO of Apple or whatever.

We must be investing in our brightest people, and we can only do that by investing in our schools appropriately—not by going back on election promises, flip-flopping on election promises and breaking election promises to

the Australian people. It was supposed to be a unity ticket. Why was it a unity ticket? Because it made sense. Remember, Gonski was a banker that looked at economic advantage; not at what the teachers' unions wanted.
(Time expired)