



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Main Committee

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Child Care

SPEECH

Wednesday, 17 August 2011

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Date Wednesday, 17 August 2011
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Questioner
Speaker Ley, Sussan, MP

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Ms LEY (Farrer) (09:49): During the winter recess it was my pleasure to join my parliamentary colleagues the member for Wannon, the member for Higgins and the member for Aston in launching in Victoria a national petition calling on this government to reinstall the funding that it cut without warning from occasional care services throughout the country. This is set to have its greatest effect in Victoria in just a small number of weeks. Victoria is a state where 9,000 families rely on this vital short-term care option at 220 occasional care centres across the state. Let me say from the outset that, unlike Labor, the federal coalition accepts the role of the federal government in funding affordable, reliable and accessible child care for Australian families, and this includes occasional care. I thank the Leader of the Opposition for reaffirming our commitment to restore the \$12 million that Labor has wiped from this service when we are returned to government. Compare that assurance from someone that understands occasional care providing a vital role for real Australian families to this from the federal Minister for Employment Participation and Childcare. When called on to review her government's decision, Minister Ellis trots out the same old lines: 'The Australian government is ceasing funding for neighbourhood model occasional care in Victoria of \$1.1 million. But in its place, in Victoria, we are investing an extra \$116 million each and every year in increased childcare rebate.' No, Minister Ellis, come back down to the real world, because that is where you are not. You are taking a childcare option away from thousands of parents, who neither need nor can afford full-time childcare, to receive your so-called generous rebate—a rebate parents cannot even receive for occasional care anyway.

The concern in Victoria is so great that a protest rally is being staged by parents and service providers in Melbourne tomorrow. This is the second protest rally in a month. The minister should note that many of the people coming to the rally tomorrow will be from regional and remote communities where occasional care is often the only centre based care in town. Just as I can assure you that the federal coalition is committed to restoring occasional care funding when we are re-elected, so, too, is Victoria's Liberal government, which has committed to continue its 30 per cent share of funding when this occurs. Hundreds more people will put their name to the petition tomorrow, on top of the thousands who already have, in the hope that this short-sighted, penny-pinching exercise from the Gillard government will be reversed.

I look forward to bringing the petition before the House at a later date. Of course I would also welcome the minister reversing her decision prior to this to ease the desperate concern of thousands of mums and dads that she pretends to represent. We should save take-a-break funding for occasional care in Victoria. *(Time expired)*