



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Employment

SPEECH

Wednesday, 19 August 2015

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Speaker Zappia, Tony, MP	Question No.

Mr ZAPPIA (Makin) (15:46): This is a very important motion because employment security underpins the wellbeing of a nation. Indeed, it is a key indicator of a strong economy. On that score, members opposite and their government have failed miserably, and the Australian public know it and are saying it in spades. Let me just give you a quick contrast between the previous Labor government and this government. The Labor government managed this country during a period of global financial downturn worse than we had seen since the 1930s, and yet we kept the Australian economy growing, we kept unemployment at modest numbers—indeed, much better than in most parts of the world—and we even kept the national debt to a fraction of what it was in other parts of the world. In contrast, when this government came to power it inherited a stable economy, but while other countries like the UK, New Zealand and USA are rebounding from the global financial crisis Australia is sinking downwards. We have seen that with unemployment now hitting 800,000, with 300,000 of those being young people. We see consumer confidence across the country worse than it has been for years, we see an economy at below trend growth of 2.3 per cent and we see the budget deficit doubled in the last year alone.

The Abbott government has mismanaged the economy, destroyed national confidence and imposed short-sighted austerity measures which are, in fact, failing the Australian people. We have seen billions of dollars cut from programs that go to the heart of jobs growth, productivity gains and efficiencies, scaring consumers and business alike. Indeed, we have seen \$2 billion cut from skills programs alone. We have had \$3 billion cut from science, research and innovation programs across Australia. That includes \$846 million in industry support programs, including successful programs like Enterprise Connect and Commercialisation Australia. One of the worst and starkest stupidities of this government is its rollout of the NBN; a slower, more costly and behind schedule rollout than we would have had under Labor. Everyone in Australia knows that the NBN is vital infrastructure to productivity and jobs growth in this country except members opposite. Indeed, I get it all the time: 'What dopey ministers does this government have that simply do not get the importance of a high-speed NBN rollout to Australia's future?'

Mr Husic: Pretty much the entire cabinet.

Mr ZAPPIA: Absolutely. But it gets much worse than that. We have a government that believed there was no future for the car industry in Australia, killing off not only Holden but also Toyota and hundreds of component suppliers in one fell swoop. Then they destroyed the renewable energy industry, cutting investment in that industry by 88 per cent in 2014 alone. I can tell members opposite that I have spoken to people in my electorate who were affected by those cuts.

And we have seen the Australian government also trashing the reputation of the Australian Submarine Corporation, Australia's largest naval shipbuilder. The previous defence minister said that they could not be trusted to build a canoe. He did not even allow them to participate in the competitive evaluation process for the submarines, and sent the supply vessel contract offshore. There are going to be another thousand jobs lost by Australian naval shipbuilders in this country over the next three years. I have heard the remarks of the Minister for Defence about how they have brought forward contracts to 2018, but 2018 is three years away. People need jobs now, and in the meantime there are going to be another thousand of those jobs lost—particularly in my home state, where those jobs are crucial given that they come on the back of the closure of Holden in 2017.

Again, it does not stop there. We now have a free trade agreement which jeopardises the jobs of Australians, albeit those members opposite are in denial about that. The reality is that it does. Even worse than that, we have legislation that wants to send offshore Australian jobs in relation to Australian coastal shipping. Another clear example of this government not caring one iota for the jobs of Australian people but simply trying to secure jobs for people elsewhere by sending our contracts offshore, by allowing offshore labour to come in and do jobs that we could otherwise be doing and by cutting out the skills training to ensure that our young people could do the jobs that will be coming up in the near future. We have 300,000 unemployed young people in this country, and in

my part of Adelaide those figures are around 20 per cent. This government needs to have a good hard look at its policies because its policies, when it comes to unemployment, are failing the Australian people. (*Time expired*)