



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



THE SENATE
QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE:
TAKE NOTE OF ANSWERS

Aged Care

SPEECH

Monday, 11 September 2006

BY AUTHORITY OF THE SENATE

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Date Monday, 11 September 2006
Page 42
Questioner
Speaker Brandis, Sen George

Source Senate
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Responder
Question No.

Senator BRANDIS (Queensland) (3.24 pm)—We have just heard two remarkably fatuous, graceless, inaniloquent speeches by Senator McLucas and Senator Ludwig pretending to address the issue of aged care. These two Labor senators have detained the Senate this afternoon while they pursued a political attack upon the Liberal Party in Queensland in relation to Saturday's state election and, in Senator Ludwig's case, a self-congratulatory spree about the historical success of Mr Beattie in winning four consecutive terms of government. We can see how interested Senator McLucas, who is meant to be the shadow minister for health, and Senator Ludwig, who is also a shadow minister in a different portfolio, are in aged care that they would waste the Senate's time by diverting a debate about aged care into a fatuous—I am sorry, Senator Ludwig, I have succumbed to a fit of lethologica, having listened to your remarks; I cannot remember what I was about to say, I am so taken aback by you—tedious rant about the Liberal Party and its internal affairs and self-congratulatory statements about the success of the Beattie government. That is all they are concerned with.

Let me put the facts on the table; let me put those facts into context. The aged care sector, as Senator McLucas as the shadow minister above all people should realise, is a sector of growing importance to all Australians, including Queenslanders. With respect to residents of aged care facilities, there are medical, psychological, behavioural, dental, hormonal, emotional and gerontological issues—the whole range of issues that afflict people as they move into the twilight years of their lives are presented for these institutions to deal with. But what have we heard from the Labor Party? No concern whatever to come to grips with that range of important issues.

Let me tell you what the Howard government has done in relation to the aged care sector. What it has done is what the sector has demanded: increased the number of places. That is what has happened. Senator McLucas implausibly, bizarrely accused Senator Santoro of, to use her words, 'talking in telephone numbers' because he was always talking in statistics. I would be interested to know, Senator McLucas, how it would be possible, without descending into a fit of echolalia, to convey changes in statistical aggregates without explaining those in terms of numbers. Of course Senator Santoro is talking in terms of numbers—big numbers—because he is quoting the figures, putting on the public record, the increase in the provision being made for people in aged care homes.

Let me remind you that the number of Australian government subsidised aged care places continues to increase. The ratio has been increased from 100 operational places to 108 operational places for every 1,000 people aged over 70, and double the proportion of places are offered in the community so that more older Australians can receive care in their own homes for as long as possible. While you, Senator McLucas and you, Senator Ludwig, divert this serious debate, which is of importance not only for older Australians but also for their families, into a tawdry political rant and an exercise in self-congratulation about the political success of the Australian Labor Party in Queensland, the Howard government has, in fact, been getting on with the job of increasing the aged care places. The best your shadow spokesman can do is ridicule the minister for talking in telephone numbers because the number of places is a large number. (*Time expired*)