



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



THE SENATE

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE: TAKE NOTE OF ANSWERS

**Gillard Government,
National Broadband Network**

SPEECH

Monday, 27 February 2012

BY AUTHORITY OF THE SENATE

SPEECH

Date Monday, 27 February 2012
Page 792
Questioner
Speaker Joyce, Sen Barnaby

Source Senate
Proof No
Responder
Question No.

Senator JOYCE (Queensland—Leader of The Nationals in the Senate) (15:04): I move:

That the Senate take note of the answers given by the Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills, Science and Research (Senator Evans) and the Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy (Senator Conroy) to questions without notice asked by the Leader of the Opposition in the Senate (Senator Abetz) and Senators Brandis and Birmingham today relating to the Labor Government and the National Broadband Network.

I noted three truths as I was going around the streets last night to grab a meal. One was that Prime Minister Gillard would win the vote today quite convincingly, and she did. The second was that Mr Rudd would get around 30 votes, and he did. The third was that Mr Shorten is currently planning to have another pitch at the leadership within six months, which he will. These things are absolutely obvious.

Whilst I was away during the floods, people were asking me who was pairing me. Apparently it was Dougie Cameron. He was doing a great job bringing down the government. He was hard at work with some other people. Obviously a whole range of them are out there basically tearing themselves apart. The problem with that, of course, is that our government has been cut loose. Our government is on autopilot. The metaphor that kept going through my head whilst I watched this fiasco, this disgrace—which in former times was supposed to be called a government—was what it would be like to go into an accountancy practice to find one partner screaming at the other partner, kicking over the photocopier, throwing cups of coffee and hurling the staplers around the office. And the other partner would be decrying them and absolutely pulling the rug out from under them—saying quite clearly that the partner was incompetent, that they obviously struggled, that they had no method, purpose or discipline and that they were chaotic. And then both of them would look at me and say: 'But we want your business.'

It is a remarkable thing to look back and find that Mr Swan has said that Mr Rudd was 'dysfunctional in his decision making' and that he was 'deeply demeaning in his attitudes towards other people'—obviously the perfect candidate for the Minister for Foreign Affairs. That is what we want: we want to take that chaos to a global scale. That is the decision that an obviously competent government makes. And then I ask the question: wasn't this the government that saw us through the GFC? Wasn't it the steady hand of Rudd at the tiller that got us through the GFC? Surely it cannot have been just the Chinese demand for our resources that got us through the GFC. No, it was Mr Rudd and ceiling insulation; it is so obvious, it is so clear. That is what got us through. The trouble is, of course: they are still there. I look at them today and there is Senator Cameron and Senator Conroy. I could not have done a better job myself than Senator Cameron did on live television this morning. It is beyond belief that this totally dysfunctional outfit is running our country. It is a disgrace—and that is the word I picked up on the street—what they are doing to our country. They are hopeless.

Whilst they have been using Australia as a plaything like a ball of string, our gross debt has gone beyond \$229 billion. We borrowed an extra \$2.3 billion just last week. The week before we borrowed \$3.3 billion. The week before that we borrowed in excess of \$2 billion. Our limit is \$250 billion. You promised you would never get near it and you are racing towards it. Whilst this fiasco is happening in the foreground, something very serious is happening in the background. Who do we believe these days? Who do we honestly believe? The question has to be asked whether there was a lack of truth about the position of the government and the key officeholders in the past. Was that not the truth or is it not the truth now? The two stories are completely and utterly incongruous.

For Kevin to say that the bickering and destabilisation must stop, there is a good idea; that is a great idea. It started way back in the last election and has been going on ever since. Were they not the people who got rid of him? Was he not the elected Prime Minister, Mr Emerson? What was that, Mr Emerson? Was that just helping him out a bit? This destabilisation is endemic. Once the ingredients are in the Mixmaster, once the political intrigue is afoot, you can never get the ingredients back into the packet. (*Time expired*)