



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**THE SENATE**  
**MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE**  
**Gillard Government**  
**SPEECH**

**Tuesday, 28 February 2012**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE SENATE

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## SPEECH

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**Speaker** Joyce, Sen Barnaby

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**Senator JOYCE** (Queensland—Leader of The Nationals in the Senate) (15:48): It is obvious that we have to have this discussion and it will go on. The Labor Party, and the Greens to support them, have said that we are going into a period of stability. I have been fascinated by this announcement, this epiphany of stability. It is only in recent memory that we have had the free character assessments given by Wayne Swan about his state colleague and person from his alumni at Nambour high, Kevin Rudd, and the free character assessments dished out by Senator Conroy and Minister Burke, and there were the return serves by Mr Cameron and Mr Ferguson, and then we had Mr Albanese, who just did not know what to say. He did not know what the story was, so he said something about fighting Tories—it made no sense at all—but it was obviously a highly emotional event for him.

It is fascinating that when we are talking about stability, we are referring to a crowd that said that their government was chaotic and that it lacked discipline, method and purpose. The grand architect of this chaotic, ill-disciplined, methodless, purposeless government was the Hon. Mr Kevin Rudd. What did they do with this person? They made him the foreign minister. Of course, those are the greatest credentials for that office. What you do when you are looking for stability, when you are doing the right job for Australia, is give that person the representation of our nation in every way, shape or form in the highest meetings throughout Australia. Of course, it makes so much sense! That is obviously the reflection of a government that has the capacity of stability!

I had a week away during the floods. Before I left, I remember looking across the chamber and, correct me if I am wrong, Senator Ludwig was there—he was the Leader of Government Business in the Senate—and Senator Arbib was there. When I came back, Senator Arbib was there and Senator Ludwig was there. I do not know what happened. In the middle of the night, there was a change—a bit of a promotion. Obviously, Senator Arbib had been lobbying for a job and he got one. He bumped off Joe. But now Senator Ludwig is there and Senator Arbib is there, but Senator Arbib is going out there—he is leaving. What will we have then? We could have Senator Ludwig going there, but we have Senator Carr there, but he is going back there. We have Senator Conroy there and he is generally around at Senator Cameron's throat, but he will be there and talking to the person there. It is going to make so much sense! Senator Penny Wong is there and there. She has been all around the place. She has been in the Finance ministry. So, of course we have stability! In the other place, we have Minister McClelland. He is there, but he is going back there. Then we have Mr Ferguson. He is there. He might stay there, but he will probably go back down this way a fair bit, I would say. It is obviously stable! It is like the Rock of Gibraltar! It is completely under control! There is nothing to see here, nothing to worry about—everything is under control! All the deck chairs are arranged on the *Titanic* and it is going straight ahead.

It is all going to come unstuck. We know that, because this is just a purposeless, methodless, ill-disciplined government. Last week we had an absolutely perfect character assessment of the Labor Party by Kevin Rudd. Then we had a perfect assessment of Kevin Rudd by Julia Gillard and about 15 other people.

What else is in this stable ship? What have we got? We have the carbon tax—because of course the people who cannot even get their own ship together are going to cool the planet. That would make sense! That is obviously on the cards! In fact I could feel the chill as I came down here. It was decidedly cold—cold and nasty. It was very cold and very nasty. And it is getting chillier by the moment. There are some rooms here where it is virtually freezing and there are some where it is red hot. There are a lot of climatic themes happening around this building at the moment and they are going to keep happening for quite a while. The carbon tax is on and the Australian people are sitting back, scratching their heads, saying: 'Is this what should be running my nation or is this some extension of John Cleese's latest tour of Australia? Has he created a whole retinue of comic characters acting as the Australian government, giving us Monty Python's flying parliament?' It is beyond belief.

Then we have the debt. While this complete soap opera is happening in the foreground, in the background our debt is just racing through the roof. You should go to the Australian Office of Financial Management website and go to the front page—it is on the front page because you have to be completely transparent to the people overseas who are buying our bonds. There you will find that last week we extended our debt by \$2.3 billion—

enough to buy around 5,000 houses in regional towns or the outer suburbs. There is nothing to worry about there! The week before, we extended our debt by \$3.3 billion—enough to buy close to 7,000 houses, or you could buy a couple of towns. That was how much we extended our debt in one week. The week before that, they extended our debt by in excess of \$2 billion. We are now \$229.7 billion in debt and we are heading towards our limit. We have a limit at \$250 billion. The way we are going, we will get there very soon. They will be able to tick that box. They will have actually reached a target: our debt ceiling. What are we going to do? If they do not extend the limit, the public service will shut down. This is the chaos which is absolutely manifest in the government.

Obviously the person who is completely, totally and utterly incompetent is our current Treasurer. He is completely and utterly out of his depth—

**Senator Feeney:** He is the best Treasurer in the world!

**Senator JOYCE:** The Treasurer of the millennium! My suggestion to the Labor Party has always been: if you are going to change the sheets, change both of them. If you are getting rid of Gillard, make sure you take Swan with you as well. You have to make sure you clear this up.

Drilling down through this debt issue, we are actually going to smack up against the limit—we are coming against the ceiling. They will probably try to sneak through an extension of the debt limit. They always say, 'Don't worry; it is net debt.' But they can never actually explain the net debt. They can never explain how they get the net debt figure. We know what the gross figure is, but what they are going to take off the gross figure to get back to the net debt is a mystery. It is hidden in one of those rooms. It is obviously in the capable hands of Mr Wayne Maxwell Swan, the person who told us, when he extended the debt ceiling to \$200 billion, that that extension was because China was going to go into recession. China never missed a beat, but our debt certainly went into hyperspace.

Whilst these people are running up this debt, whilst they are completely and utterly out of control—a complete and utter fiasco—they are building themselves a little telephone company. Because what we want is another telephone company! It is all right because they are borrowing all the money! Ultimately we will end up with about another \$50 billion worth of borrowing. They will say, 'Oh, but some of it is a lease.' But you have to pay money for the lease. There will be \$27 billion in borrowings up front—but it will work its way out and they have long-term leases and so on, they tell us.

Then, on top of all that, we have the clean energy fund of \$10 billion. It is just so simple—obviously we need the Greens to be managing \$10 billion, because they are such great economic managers! They have been doing such a splendid job, and it makes sense that Bob Brown deserves \$10 billion! He is going to have \$10 billion to splurge around the economy. This is what the Australian people are seeing at the same time as our democratic process is being dragged through the mud. The honour of office has been completely and utterly sullied. It has been a fiasco.

Think of this show as the nation's local accountancy practice. We have had the vision in the last week of them throwing the staplers at one another, of them kicking over the photocopiers, of them yelling and hurling abuse and of every staff member picking the side of a partner and joining in the fray. Then they look at the Australian people and say, 'We want your business.' 'No,' the Australian people say, 'we just want you out of town.' The Australian people are going to take their business somewhere else. They have to because, if we continue on this way, Australia will go out the back door.

Tell me one thing about this government which actually suggests competence. So help me—the Prime Minister lauds, as her greatest achievement, the carbon tax. That is your crucifix, not your achievement. That is the most absurd thing. That is the thing the Australian people have the most passionate dislike for. Yet, to show how completely and utterly out of touch they are, they say that the carbon tax is the Labor Party's greatest achievement.  
(*Time expired*)