



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



THE SENATE

BILLS

Schools Assistance Amendment Bill 2011

In Committee

SPEECH

Monday, 19 September 2011

BY AUTHORITY OF THE SENATE

SPEECH

Date Monday, 19 September 2011
Page 6327
Questioner
Speaker Collins, Sen Jacinta

Source Senate
Proof No
Responder
Question No.

Senator JACINTA COLLINS (Victoria—Parliamentary Secretary for School Education and Workplace Relations) (11:29): Well—

Senator Mason interjecting—

Senator Sterle: You're scaring me, Brett.

Senator JACINTA COLLINS: Thank you, Senator Sterle, for that interjection, because that is what continues to occur here. I had hoped that Senator Mason would be in one of his better moods today, but it seems as if we are journeying back down that ideological scare campaign. He asks whether the government is proud of the national curriculum and the cross-curriculum perspectives, and the answer to that is a simple and straightforward yes. Let me address some of the concerns that Senator Mason continues to raise. He says that neither ACARA nor the government has given sensible answers to his questions. Unfortunately, he has been provided with sensible answers time and time again. What is critical here, though, is that he refuses to accept those answers.

I mentioned that from my point of view in dealing with this policy area I have yet to come across anyone raising with me these concerns about the cross-curriculum perspectives in the manner that I have heard Senator Mason raise them on several occasions. This is an opposition scare campaign which is failing to gain any significant traction. An amendment was moved in the House and it failed. These amendments have been moved here now, so let me address a couple of those in case somebody listening has some genuine concerns with the issues that Senator Mason has raised.

Liberal democracy is one of the issues that Senator Mason says should be part of a cross-curriculum perspective. The Westminster parliamentary system, Judaeo-Christian backgrounds and science and technology are present in the history and science curricula—not in the cross-curriculum perspectives but in the core subjects. Why Senator Mason feels that these particular areas must be significant cross-curriculum issues—or must be, should I highlight, at this particular point in time—is, I believe, simply to do with fearmongering. The opposition is chomping on an ideological debate because Senator Mason and Mr Pyne are outside the process involving the state and territory ministers and stakeholders and their consultations through the various measures that I highlighted before and outside the process with ACARA. It is time that the opposition simply got on board, accepted the national curriculum and let it be implemented.