Ms PLIBERSEK (Sydney—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (16:07): Thank you so much, Mr Speaker. I note that the Deputy Speaker is approaching the chair; it is wonderful to have him here now for the matter of public importance.

We heard debate on a censure motion today which allowed the government to make the case for the budget they brought down a couple of days ago. The Prime Minister and the Treasurer were able to talk about why this budget would benefit Australia and benefit Australians. And what did we get? Instead of a convincing argument about a budget that can benefit Australia, we got a damp squib. We got a missed opportunity to first of all admit what the 10-year cost of the 10-year tax plan was, but we got a damp squib of defending the budget. I have to say that this unfair budget, which will hurt ordinary Australians, is actually indefensible.

When the Prime Minister rolled the member for Warringah to take over the leadership of the Liberal Party, the argument he made was that the government lacked economic leadership, that it lacked a narrative, that the country was going nowhere. Well, this budget, according to the Prime Minister himself, would be the launching pad for the government to reclaim the agenda and to go into the election campaign showing Australians what they are capable of, what this country is capable of, what that government is capable of. Instead, it has been an entirely predictable, standard Liberal budget—you cut out the people who already have the least, you cut health and you cut education, and you help out the one per cent, the two per cent, the big end of town, the multinational companies. It is an entirely predictable Liberal budget.

I will tell you what has not been so predictable about this government. After making a big fuss about the state of the economy under Labor and telling Australians that they would be responsible economic managers, what have we seen? We have seen the most extraordinary thing. We see spending up, we see taxes up, we see debt up, we see the deficit up—and they are still cutting services. How can you put up taxes, put up debt and still cut services? What a trifecta that is. This is a government that has actually tripled the deficit for next year. I tell you what: they are not telling Australians about that, are they?

Mr Bowen: No.

Ms PLIBERSEK: They are still trying to run this fiction that somehow this pain is necessary for the good of the budget. We have got to cut health. We have got to cut family payments. We have got to cut pensions. We have got to cut education. For the good of us all, we have got to tighten our belts. I tell you what: they are managing to push up debt and push up spending at the same time they are cutting these services. Why is it? It is because their priorities are wrong. It is because their priority is to help out the big end of town and people on or above $180,000 a year.

This government has presided over an Australian economy where inequality is at a 75-year high. Living standards have fallen for seven straight quarters. Consumer sentiment is down. What do those opposite do? They say, ‘Oh, it’s a problem with commodity prices.’ When we were in government, there was no drop in commodity prices. We had the worst economic circumstances in three-quarters of a century with a global financial crisis, but we did not use that as an excuse. We got on with the job of building a strong economy, as well as a fair society. What is the centrepiece of this budget? The centrepiece is a tax cut for companies with a turnover of up to a billion dollars. That is a 10-year plan without a 10-year costing. Imagine if a Labor government had walked into this place and tried to present a 10-year plan, without a 10-year costing.

There is something that is really, really bad about this budget, and I think it is something that most Australians are not aware of. They are not aware that all of the zombie cuts of the 2014 budget are still here. The health cuts are still in this budget. The education cuts are still in this budget. The attack on pensioners and the attack on university students are still all here, and loaded on top of that are further cuts. Let’s just look at the fairness...
aspect of this budget for one minute: 75 per cent of tax cuts go to the top 10 per cent of income earners. A sole parent with an income of $65,000 and two kids in high school will be about—

Mr Hutchinson interjecting—

Ms PLIBERSEK: Someone on $65,000 a year pays no tax according to the member opposite. They will be $5,000 worse off per year, while a couple earning a single income of $300,000 a year are $2,715 better off a year. Under this budget, a single working mum on $87,000 a year, with two kids in high school, will be $4,463 worse off—and that is even after the tax cut. That is after the pathetic $6-a-week tax cut. She is still going to go backwards under this government. But someone who earns a million dollars a year will be almost $17,000 a year better off. How can it be fair that these working parents, struggling to make ends meet, cop a cut, while someone on earnings of a million dollars a year gets a $17,000 tax benefit?

I will tell you this about the health cuts in this budget. In the eight months since the Prime Minister took over from the member for Warringah as Prime Minister, there has been another $4 billion in cuts to our health system. The one that I have to say breaks my heart—I mean truly, truly breaks my heart—is the kids dental program. Why did we do kids dental? Why did we invest in kids dental when I was the health minister? Because I went to too many communities where little kids had teeth rotting in their mouths and their parents could not afford to take them to the dentist. We live in a first world nation. This should not happen in Australia. We know that if children grow up with good oral health they will have good teeth as adults. But, if their teeth start rotting in their mouths and their gums start suppurating as children, they are never going to have good oral health. So what has this government done? It has completely killed off the kids dental program and said, ‘We’re going to add a few extra million people to the public dental waiting lists.’ At the same time, they have said to the states, ‘By the way, if you don’t pay for more than half of it, it’s not going to happen.’ What an extraordinary thing, to cut this scheme and throw millions of extra kids onto public dental waiting lists. It is like saying: instead of being able to go to the GP, go and queue up in hospital emergency and then you can see a doctor. Go and queue up in the emergency department. That is exactly what it means, and it is not saving money, because those kids will have lifelong problems because of what the government is doing.

This budget still has all of that e cuts from 2014. The 80,000 new mums every year are going to lose paid parental leave because on Mother’s Day a year ago they started calling new mums ‘double dippers’ if they were lucky enough to already have paid parental leave. Women who are trying to escape domestic violence will find it harder because of the cuts to community legal services. This is a budget that does the most for those who already have the most. The Treasurer has been really keen to talk about how this is for ‘average’ Australians. The Treasurer has obviously missed the fact that the average Australian woman working full-time earns nothing like $80,000 a year; on average, she earns $68,900 a year. Only 29 per cent of working Australians who earn more than $80,000 and will get this tax cut are women.

This is not a plan to grow Australia. This is not a plan to support families. This is not a plan for jobs. This is not a plan for education. This is not a plan for good dental care for our kids. This is not a plan that will grow the Australian economy because, as inequality grows, our growth will slow. This budget is a plan for the re-election of the Turnbull government. But I am pretty confident that it is not even going to work as a plan for the re-election of the Turnbull government—because Australians value fairness and at its heart, at its core, this is one of the least fair budgets this country has ever seen.