



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



THE SENATE

PROOF

MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Education Funding

SPEECH

Monday, 22 June 2015

BY AUTHORITY OF THE SENATE

SPEECH

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Questioner	Responder
Speaker Lambie, Sen Jacqui	Question No.

Senator LAMBIE (Tasmania) (16:45): I rise to participate in the matter of public importance discussion titled 'The Abbott government's plan to abolish universal access to free public education'. I congratulate Senator Moore for raising this matter. Despite the education minister rejecting the proposal in the government discussion paper to make wealthy parents pay to send their children to public school, it is clear that this option floated in the federal government discussion paper, which considers a radical overhaul of the nation's education system, is on Minister Pyne's and Prime Minister Abbott's list of things to do. This plan to make wealthy parents pay to send their children to public school's is just another attack on a fundamental Australian social right, namely, an attack on access to free public education. It goes hand in hand with the ideological political attack the Liberals have carried out on universal access to public health care and access that young people have to higher education.

While Minister Pyne is on social media saying his government does not and will not support the means test for public education, we are smart enough not to trust a word that comes out of his mouth. This is the same man who tried to make our young people pay \$100,000 for their university degrees when there was not one word of warning before the last election. Mr Pyne's leader Mr Abbott is the Prime Minister who promised there would be no cuts to education before the last election. But in his first budget he announced cuts of \$80 billion to health and education over the next decade, including a \$5 billion—20 per cent—cut to university funding and deregulation of uni fees and schools funding. That is in addition to the Liberal Party's promise not to cut the budgets of health, ABC, SBS and pensioners entitlements.

The public education system in Tasmania is struggling, despite the fine effort of teachers, teachers aides, school principals, parents and parent helpers. The last thing Tasmanians need to hear in the media is the Prime Minister sidestep the issue of means testing. The Prime Minister is reported by the ABC as saying:

I think it's good that some of the states and territories at least are thinking creatively about how they can responsibly fund their operations ...

Given the Abbott government's blatant disregard for the truth and lack of integrity, if means testing of parents for public schools is in a Liberal discussion paper now, you can almost be guaranteed, because of past behaviour, that should the Liberals be returned as a government after the next federal election, means testing for public schools will be introduced. There is absolutely no doubt about that.

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Senator Whish-Wilson): Order! The time for the discussion has expired.