



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**THE SENATE**

**BILLS**

**Qantas Sale Amendment Bill 2014**

**Second Reading**

**SPEECH**

**Thursday, 17 July 2014**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE SENATE

---

## SPEECH

**Date** Thursday, 17 July 2014  
**Page** 5454  
**Questioner**  
**Speaker** Lambie, Sen Jacqui

**Source** Senate  
**Proof** No  
**Responder**  
**Question No.**

**Senator LAMBIE** (Tasmania—Deputy Leader and Deputy Whip of the Palmer United Party in the Senate) (11:01): This is not my first speech. I rise to make a short contribution on the Qantas Sale Amendment Bill 2014. Palmer United will oppose this government bill because it will enable the sale and greater foreign ownership of our national airline. This Abbot government bill, if passed, will endanger the jobs of 300,000 Australians and place in jeopardy the best national interest of Australia.

I am deeply disappointed that the Abbot government has brought this bill before the parliament. But, before I expand on that disappointment, I must address the position I suspect that the Labor Party will adopt on this legislation. The average Australian listening to Labor speeches from Senator Cameron and Senator Ludwig would think that the Labor Party were opposed to an increase in the level of foreign ownership of Qantas. This is not correct. Today the Labor party, with the support of the Palmer United Party, the Motoring Enthusiast Party and possibly other crossbench senators, could have stopped dead any increases in the current levels of foreign ownership of Qantas. Today Labor could have voted with PUP, the Motoring party and others to stop Qantas hopping on the slippery slope to more foreign ownership. However, the Labor Party of Ben Chifley have given an indication that they will vote for an amendment which will still allow an increase in the level of foreign ownership of Qantas.

I want the people of Australia to be very clear on this point: the legislation before this place—the Abbot government bill and the Labor Party amendments to the government's bill—will allow increases to the current level of foreign ownership. The only substantial difference between Labor and the Liberals is the answer to the question of: how much do you want to increase the foreign ownership of Qantas? The Abbot Liberals want to sell off Qantas 100 per cent. There is no doubt about that. The Shorten Labor opposition have presented an amendment which will allow foreign airlines to increase their ownership from 35 per cent to 49 per cent and foreign persons to increase their ownership from 25 per cent to 49 per cent. The Palmer United Party will not support an increase in any foreign ownership, so we will vote against both the Labor amendments and the government bill.

The reason the government want to sell off Qantas and every other public asset not nailed down is that, when it comes to the management of the public finances, they have only one plan—sell off the farm, privatise everything, sack all the workers and trust the forces of big business and the market. The Liberals did it last time they were in power. In the Howard years, the Liberals and Nationals sold approximately \$59 billion worth of public assets, and paid about \$75 billion of Labor debt. The Howard era Liberals made out they were financial geniuses, when all they did was sell off the farm and choose not to spend more than we earned. The Burnie CWA could have done the same job, if they had chosen to sell off the farm. The only difference is: Burnie's CWA know that income-producing assets—the farm—can only be sold off once.

What do we do to pay our bills? The first thing is: we get our priorities right. We do not spend billions of dollars on a gold-plated paid parental leave scheme which we cannot afford and which favours the rich. We do not borrow \$30 billion over the next five years so that we can give it away to overseas countries, some of which have armies 10 times the size of our own army. Why do we give \$75 million to Pakistan, a country which has a military much larger than ours and is nuclear armed?

If we want to truly grow our economy, we must have a debate about a financial transactions tax so that big banks and financial institutions pay a fairer share of tax. Last time I raised this issue, I was criticised. I am surprised that anyone could criticise me for suggesting that we should have a public debate about the amount of tax Australia's big banks pay. Since 2004, they will have almost doubled their net profits, and, according to a KPMG report, in 2012-13 they made a combined net profit of \$37 billion.

An Anglicare report found that, of the \$16 billion worth of Abbott's proposed budget savings, \$12 billion is from those on welfare, and \$3 billion is from those on high incomes. And guess where the other billion comes from? Yep, you've got it—big business. It is clear that Australia's banks and financial institutions are not paying their fair share of tax and have been afforded political protection. This is why the Liberals are slowly trying to railroad Australians into accepting an increase in the GST. This will obviously create more

disadvantage for the average worker, pensioners, the sick and our needy.

So what is wrong with proposing a financial transactions tax or Robin Hood tax? Debate. It is not a new tax. France has adopted this budget measure to ensure that their banks and financial institutions pay a fairer share, and 11 other European countries may follow suit. The financial transactions tax debate is worth having, and those who have attacked me are simply trying to keep Australians in the dark, and are part of a push for an increase in the GST, which we do not believe is the answer.

There was a time in our nation's history when every politician of substance was fiercely protective of our national airline, Qantas. The great statesmen of our fighting generation set the standard. The giants of Australian politics, Chifley, Menzies and Curtin, understood to the core of their being that we must have a strong Australian-owned and -controlled national airline to guarantee our economic prosperity and guard our national interest. Today we are governed by politicians who argue like two-year-olds and forget that, in the dark days of World War II, Australia was forced to rely on the kindness and benevolence of people in foreign nations to maintain our civil air links with the world. We also had to beg—beg—foreigners for military aircraft, equipment and skilled personnel, to defend our families against an all-conquering, brutal, bloodthirsty aggressor—an aggressor who raped, slaughtered and bombed tens of millions of innocents in their bloody advance across China, South-East Asia and northern Australia in the dark days of 1942; an aggressor who our current Prime Minister calls 'honourable'.

It comes as no surprise that a Prime Minister with such a poor grasp of what was honourable during World War II and what was not also has a poor grasp of what is in our best national interest. By presenting legislation which weakens Australian control over Qantas, he is, once again, trusting our nation's survival and prosperity to the kindness and benevolence of people in foreign nations. I have not forgotten, nor will I arrogantly dismiss, the blunt, brutal and bloody lessons of the past. The Palmer United Party fiercely opposes the change of foreign ownership laws governing Qantas.

The ACTING DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Senator Lambie, for future reference: you do need to refer to Mr Abbott either as Mr Abbott or the Prime Minister.