



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



THE SENATE

MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Budget, Tasmanian Freight Equalisation Scheme

SPEECH

Wednesday, 27 August 2014

BY AUTHORITY OF THE SENATE

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Questioner
Speaker Lambie, Sen Jacqui

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Senator LAMBIE (Tasmania—Deputy Leader and Deputy Whip of the Palmer United Party in the Senate) (13:46): This is not my first speech; this is however a speech which I need to make today in order to highlight a number of matters of public importance to the Australian people and my Tasmanian people. During the last five weeks, I have met with Treasurer Joe Hockey and government ministers Peter Dutton, Ian Macfarlane and Greg Hunt. I would like to thank those ministers and their staff for their kind personal efforts during our talks. While politically we will not always see eye to eye, I do appreciate their good humour and respectful attempts to explain their government's position on a number of important matters. However, I do not want anyone to think I am going soft. I still believe the Liberal Party are delusional and hell-bent on waging a class war, and they must stop because their policies are harming poor Australians.

I am ready to negotiate on \$30 billion worth of budget savings, but first the Liberal-National parties of Australia must come clean and admit their budget is not a legitimate budget; it is illegitimate. They do not have a mandate to impose on the Australian people the budget cuts outlined in this budget. Before the election, no-one was told about the Liberals' cuts to pensioners' entitlements, public health, education, family bonuses, university fees and student entitlements. And to make matters worse, the sales job on the budget almost talked us into a recession—business phones stopped ringing and customers disappeared the moment the Treasurer and the PM starting talking.

After my budget briefings with Treasury officials last week, it is clear that \$30 billion of new budget savings could easily be available to our government. The \$30 billion of new savings can simply be redirected from the Liberals' unfair budget cuts and deregulation to budget measures which protect low-income earners, parents with school-age children, university students, seniors and sick people. The \$30 billion of new budget savings over the forward estimates could easily be obtained by abolishing the \$5 billion bribe that the federal government want to pay to state governments in an effort to force them to sell assets; by reducing Mr Abbott's planned \$50 billion infrastructure budget by \$10 billion, so that it is brought back to a normal level of around \$40 billion—most of which will be spent on roads in Western Sydney and Melbourne; Tasmanians, indeed most regional Australians, will miss out on the

benefits of the Liberals' increased infrastructure spend; and by halving Australia's record foreign aid budget by \$15 billion, so it is reduced to \$15 billion from \$30 billion.

Why should billions of taxpayers' dollars be given to overseas countries—Indonesia, \$565 million—some of which have militaries that are 10 times the size of ours and in one case, Pakistan, \$75 million, which is nuclear armed? The needs of the average Australian family should be put before the back pockets of corrupt foreign aid officials, because, quite simply, charity begins at home. And I have not even included the billions of dollars worth of budget savings that could be achieved by scrapping Mr Abbott's unfair Paid Parental Leave scheme or Clive Palmer's publicly announced budget cuts. Mr Hockey and Mr Abbott need to start budget negotiations again with a different attitude and certainly different priorities.

I have spoken in this place previously about the need for the federal government to dramatically boost the funds available for the Tasmania Freight Equalisation Scheme. I have also written to the PM and I am still waiting for a reply. Whatever it costs in fuel to transport a shipping container 420 kilometres by road should be the price Tasmanians pay to transport all goods—foods, building products, manufactured products et cetera—across the waters of the Bass Strait. No other state has to incur the extra cost of shipping goods 420 kilometres across the ocean from Tasmania to Victoria, so why should we? Why should we be punished for that?

The transport of all goods to and from Tasmania, including fuel, should be the same as transport on any of Australia's highways. I, like all other Tasmanian politicians and business leaders, support a national sea highway policy once and for all for the people of my Tasmania.

Sitting suspended from 13:51 to 14:00