



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Inequality

SPEECH

Thursday, 24 November 2016

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SPEECH

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Speaker	Littleproud, David, MP	Question No.	

Mr LITTLEPROUD (Maranoa) (16:08): I am absolutely floored by the disingenuous antics of those opposite this afternoon. Not once did they mention anything about regional or rural Australia, the 6.6 million Australians who live outside metropolitan areas. Not once did they talk about those people in regional or rural Australia, who actually contribute. They are not interested, they do not understand and they do not care. That is why. They are not interested in what happens west of the great divide. It is all about them, and it is all about their city people.

The reality is this: it is proven beyond doubt that, when Labor is in government, we see an underinvestment in regional and rural Australia. It is only this government, the coalition government, that continues to invest in regional and rural Australia. That is because we know that regional Australia does not actually need a handout; it needs the assistance of a government that puts the framework around it. It puts an environment and it puts infrastructure around it—an environment that actually creates jobs. We pull the economic levers that create jobs. That lets people have a future through their own volition, not by big government handing out money. That is how an economy should work. That is how a nation should work. And we do that.

We have done that through the free trade agreements—trade agreements that are putting dollars, real dollars, into rural community towns and into farmers and into small business owners right across this country. That is something we are very proud of because it has a real impact.

But we are also trying to do that with the tax cuts to small business. You do not understand what a small business is. Ten million dollars in turnover in this day and age is not a lot. But it needs to be more, because if we put money back into small businesses then they will actually go out and they will employ people. They will create the wealth for individuals in each of those towns. But that is the sort of understanding that we get from this mob. They've got no idea at all! The reality is: they are out of touch with the reality of Australia and particularly of regional and rural Australia.

Let us talk about infrastructure. Let us talk about the infrastructure that creates the connectivity to actually let us leverage the trade agreements that this government has put in place—the connectivity around the NBN. In my electorate alone, 68,000 households and premises will have the NBN over the next 18 months. It will let us connect to the global markets, to give us the tools of the 21st century that we need. We have coupled that with the mobile phone black spot program. You guys would never even have thought about the Mobile Black Spot Program. Mobile phones are only to be used in the city, because that is all you understand! The reality is: regional and rural Australians are creating jobs and running multimillion-dollar businesses that need the tools of the 21st century, and we are creating them.

But let us not just talk about the economy, because there was a real inequality in my electorate and right across regional Australia when we came into government. I had kids in my electorate who could not do distance education because they did not have the data plans. Well, this government, under Fiona Nash, has created designated data plans for distance-education children. That is absolutely abhorrent—to think there are children in this country who could not get a proper education because they did not have the connectivity and they did not have the internet to undertake that. It is only this government that has come in and created the opportunity and created equality for those kids. It should not matter where you live; your postcode should not determine your education. And this government has proudly done it—something I am proud to be part of.

But we can go further than that. We can talk further about connectivity and the important strides that we are making in getting our product out across the world. We will build the inland rail. We will move the product from Melbourne to Brisbane and out to the world. Couple that with the \$1.6 billion that we are investing in the second range crossing. Think about the \$450 million just on the Warrego Highway alone—but you would not even know where it is!

The reality is: we are connecting our producers. We are creating the wealth because we are connecting us to the world. And we are embracing the world like never before, because we, on this side, understand that we are part of a bigger global economy and that we have what the world wants. And it is our job to connect to that and to create equality for all those right across Australia, particularly in regional and rural Australia, who you would not know because you do not understand and you do not care. Give them the opportunity to create the wealth—to do it themselves. Those are the strides that we are making around that: giving them the connectivity and the infrastructure that actually connects us and creates the wealth and creates the jobs.

But then we have also got dog fencing in my electorate. Let me just tell you about the hypocrisy and the disingenuous nature of the Labor Party. It does not just stay here; it goes all the way back to the Queensland state government. They came out in Barcaldine and promised another \$5 million to put more dog fencing in. Five months later they had done nothing because they did not understand what it would do for the producers and to build the resilience of the drought-stricken farmers right across western Queensland. They did not care. They did not understand. And it was not until my actions and those of the state member to call out Annastacia Palaszczuk—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Coulton): Order! The member's time has expired. This discussion has concluded.