



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

PROOF

**SCHOOLS ASSISTANCE AMENDMENT
(FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE) BILL 2011**

Second Reading

SPEECH

Monday, 21 March 2011

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SPEECH

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Questioner
Speaker Sidebottom, Sid, MP

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Question No.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM (Braddon) (1.37 pm)—It is a privilege to follow my colleagues on this side, who, to a person, are vitally interested in the educational outcomes for our school students throughout Australia. I am very proud to be part of a government that has made record investment in our schools to benefit all our students, wherever they may be educated. We have a lot more to do; that goes without saying. But the investment that we have made is in terms of the quality programs to support the number of teachers and the quality of teaching that will follow from our current teachers and new teachers with their in-service training; in the better training and quality of training in our institutions for our educators; in programs for the development of curriculum both across the nation and within each of our states and territories; and of course in the absolutely significant contribution to capital expenditure in the form of the Building the Education Revolution.

The BER, I would like to remind my colleagues on both sides, was designed to achieve three things in particular, all associated with having good, effective, transparent outcomes. First and foremost, it was designed to improve teaching and learning facilities for our students and our teachers in all schools throughout Australia, and it is doing that in a tremendous way. I would particularly like to congratulate all the Tasmanians involved in the BER for the fantastic projects that have been rolled out. I know my colleague next to me, the member for Canberra, also has some fantastic projects in her electorate, as do you, Mr Deputy Speaker Slipper, I know, and all those opposite as well. Isn't it sad that the exception to the rule becomes the headline in the newspaper, to be highlighted and seized upon by those opposite? But they know deep down that the provision of these BER projects would never have happened in the past and would have been very unlikely to happen in the present without our contribution to making them happen. They know it—they know it deep down, and so do their communities. Of course, it might have gone some way towards people supporting the Labor Party at the last federal election. Those opposite know what a fantastic program it has been. So, first, it is all about fantastic teaching and learning facilities for our students and teachers.

Second, of course, was allowing the community access to those new facilities. There is nothing better

than having a good relationship between a school and the community itself. These facilities are specifically designed for the community to use them; that is part of the contractual arrangements for these projects.

Third but by no means unequal in significance to the two other components is the fact that the BER provided jobs—much needed jobs—at the time of the worldwide financial crisis. If you listened to the mob opposite or, indeed, if you read the *Australian* newspaper, you would never believe we had an economic issue in this country over the last few years; we were not part of the global financial crisis! You read the *Australian* newspaper to find out what the opposition will be doing in this parliament in question time! That is the silliness of all this. Anything that is associated with the BER that might not be the rule but, rather, the exception gets highlighted by the opposition. The opposition member looking after education comes in and tries to highlight this with all his normal bluster and 'I've got more front than Myer'. But we know what is going on. We know exactly what has been going on: jobs have sustained our economy at a most important time in our development. I congratulate all those who designed this very, very important program.

Mr Pyne—Mr Deputy Speaker, on a point of order: under standing order 76, while a lot of licence is given to members of parliament with respect to subject matter, we are discussing the schools assistance SES funding bill. We are not discussing anything to do with the education revolution, and the member for Braddon is not being the least bit relevant to the subject.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. Peter Slipper)—I would refer the member for Sturt to the words 'and for related purposes' in the title of the bill. Regrettably, that does allow a slightly more wide ranging debate than one would normally expect. However, having said that, I would remind the member for Braddon to focus on the particular provisions of this bill.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—Mr Deputy Speaker, that is why you are the Deputy Speaker. I, too, interpreted the bill in that way. Indeed, I thought this bill was talking

about schools assistance. That is what I was talking about. But anyway—

Mr Pyne—It's about the funding model, you goose! You are a goose.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER—The member for Sturt—

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—For that duck to call me a goose! Honestly. Heavens above! You have the highest pitched quack I've ever heard, mate!

The DEPUTY SPEAKER—The member for Braddon will resume his seat. I require the member for Sturt to withdraw the term he used in the direction of the member for Braddon.

Mr Pyne—I withdraw.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER—I now require the member for Braddon to do likewise.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—I withdraw. Just for the member for Sturt, I will provide a detailed outline of the bill so he gets it firmly in his head.

The Schools Assistance Amendment (Financial Assistance) Bill 2011 will amend the Schools Assistance Act 2008, within currently agreed forward estimates, to appropriate approximately \$8.2 billion for 2012-13 and \$8.9 billion in 2013-14 for non-government schooling. This includes about \$142.1 million for 2012-13 and \$144.2 million for 2013-14 so that the government can fund capital expenditure in partnership with the non-government school sector. And I reckon that has something to do with the Building the Education Revolution, because I think that has something to do with capital expenditure, which I think has something to do with building facilities, which I think the non-government school sector does in spades. In fact, while we are at it, I would like to congratulate the non-government school sector in my electorate, particularly the Catholic sector, on two excellent projects, and I was really privileged to be able to attend—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. Peter Slipper)—Order! It being 1.45 pm, the debate is interrupted in accordance with standing order 43. The debate may be resumed at a later hour and the member will have leave to continue speaking when the debate is resumed.