



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**THE SENATE**

**PROOF**

**MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE**

**Turnbull Government**

**SPEECH**

**Tuesday, 21 August 2018**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE SENATE

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## SPEECH

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<b>Speaker</b> Colbeck, Sen Richard	<b>Question No.</b>

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**Senator COLBECK** (Tasmania) (16:04): The presentation from Labor just then demonstrates exactly where they are in the broader policy debate. They've got one focus—politics, climate change—and that's about as far as it goes. That's all they're worried about. They're not interested in the economy. They're not interested in delivering jobs for Australians. They're all just interested in politics and climate change.

The government, over our two and a bit terms of parliament, have been focused on delivering economic returns for the Australian people, and we've been successful. The prediction, particularly after the 2016 election, was that we weren't going to be able to get anything done: this chamber was too complicated; the diversity of the crossbench would not allow us to get anything done. In fact, the opposite has been the truth. We've managed to get media reform through this parliament after a 20-year hiatus. We were told it couldn't be done. We have done it. It has been achieved. All credit to Minister Fifield for negotiating that process with industry, and then, of course, we negotiated it through the parliament.

We have delivered tax cuts for Australians. We were told it couldn't be done. The Labor Party opposed those tax cuts for Australians. They proposed instead to tax our nans and pops up to 30 per cent of their total income, raising billions of dollars over a decade to pay for their proposals for tax reform. It was: take money off your nan and pop to get a tax cut. It's a pretty average way of raising money when Nan and Pop have to have a reduction in their total income of up to 30 per cent to pay for somebody else's tax cut. That's not looking after the community like the Australian government has.

We've achieved tax cuts for small business. We were told we wouldn't get them through the parliament, and we have. While the Labor Party try to decide what a small business is—they still can't work out what that might be—we have achieved, passed through the parliament, tax cuts for small business. We've also passed through the parliament tax cuts for businesses with a turnover of up to \$50 million. Because we persisted, because we were prepared to negotiate with the crossbench, we got those tax cuts past the parliament. In the by-election campaigns recently, the Labor Party tried to pretend that they were going to match those tax cuts and wouldn't be reversing them or passing any legislation to wind them back. They lied to the Australian people. They lied to Australian businesses when they said that there wouldn't be any legislated rollbacks. They knew that their tax cut regime was going to be 27½ per cent, when the government had already legislated to reduce the taxation regime for small business, or businesses with a turnover of up to \$50 million, to 25 per cent. The then candidate for Braddon, now the member for Braddon, Ms Justine Keay, said to a chamber of commerce lunch that I was at that there would be no legislated rollback. She knew that wasn't true. In a prepared speech she said it to the assembled members of the Burnie Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Devonport Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Central Coast Chamber of Commerce and Industry. She tried to con them into believing that they would pay the same tax rate under a Labor regime as they would under the coalition government's already legislated process. It was a lie. If Labor get elected, they will raise taxes for business from the legislated rate that currently exists, 25 per cent, up to 27½ per cent.

But we were told we wouldn't get those things through the parliament.

We've passed reforms to the Corporations Act. We've increased penalties for businesses who are misbehaving. We've passed legislation to ensure that international businesses operating in Australia pay their fair share of tax. We've put in place a range of economic measures that are paying dividends to the Australian people.

We've just heard again the lie that we're cutting funds to the health system. Even the ABC fact checker agrees that we are increasing health funding to record levels—an increase of 42 per cent in my home state of Tasmania—and yet the Labor Party continue to peddle the rubbish that we're cutting it. The fascinating thing is that the electorate is now starting to tell us that they know the Labor Party is lying to them. They know Bill Shorten's not being straight with them, and that's why they're not interested in engaging with Mr Shorten.

One of my favourites is in defence. When we came to government, we looked to see what the Labor Party had done in the Defence portfolio. The cupboard was completely bare. They'd done absolutely nothing—not a thing. They hadn't even commissioned a study on a canoe, to quote a famous phrase in this place. So what have we done? There have been 54 ships, including 12 submarines, commissioned since we came to government. The Land 400 project has been commissioned since we came to government. The training academy for shipbuilding is being developed in South Australia in conjunction with the Australian Maritime College in UTAS, I'm very proud to say—as would be Senator Bushby, as a graduate of the Australian Maritime College. It is one of the key partners in the development of that project.

These are all things that the Labor Party just kicked down the road for six years. They did absolutely nothing in the context of defence of the nation. Something that I'm very pleased to talk about—and I know Senator Bushby is also interested in it—is the feasibility work that's going on right now into a defence innovation hub based at the Australian Maritime College in Tasmania. This is a concept brought to the parliament by the coalition. The other side is completely devoid. They are not looking at the future. They are not looking to see what positives the R&D that could be developed out of defence might have for the economy in Australia, let alone in the northern part of Tasmania. If we can get that defence innovation hub up and running, doing the R&D for the build of those 54 vessels, including 12 submarines, at the Australian Maritime College in Launceston, that R&D could then be commercialised and spun off into new businesses operating in the Tasmanian community. It would be a huge opportunity, and there would be potential for growth in employment.

These are all serious, solid economic proposals that this government has put into place. The other side of politics has given them nary a thought. I've been into the businesses that are already benefitting from the defence spend in Tasmania. Taylor Bros is a great business doing work in the accommodation space for Defence. Direct Edge in Burnie is looking for another 35 people—with 15 of those to be apprenticeships—as a direct result of the Australian government's decision to have a domestic defence-building capacity. This opens up opportunities for global export markets. These are real achievements. We are not trying to scare the Australian people with stories and misinformation around funding. We are working on and delivering an economic plan that has put a million jobs into the Australian economy since we came to government, and we're continuing to build proposals that will continue to grow the economy and will provide opportunities for businesses like Penguin Composites, whom Ms Justine Keay said she stood beside. In fact, she's standing in the way of them getting a tax cut. She's just standing in the way.

These are the things that this government is doing. They are practical measures. We were told we couldn't get legislation through the parliament. Yet under the leadership of Senator Cormann we have been continuously successful. In fact, we are still discussing tax cuts for larger businesses, because we know it's good for the economy. The Labor Party used to believe that. We still do, and we will continue to act in the interest of the Australian people.