



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**THE SENATE**

**QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE:  
TAKE NOTE OF ANSWERS**

**Economy, Taxation**

**SPEECH**

**Tuesday, 8 May 2018**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE SENATE

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## SPEECH

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**Senator COLBECK** (Tasmania) (15:22): The Labor Party are starting to sound increasingly desperate in their arguments around this matter. I have to say the shrill presentation that we just heard from Senator Cameron is sounding desperate, and there is nobody on this side who will be lectured to by the Labor Party on economic management. I think Senator Abetz was right to note that the only economic manager that the Labor Party were prepared to quote in their questions in question time today was former Treasurer Peter Costello. They can't find one of their own to quote. Perhaps they have an obsession with Treasurers from this side of the House—I'm not sure—but they could not find anybody else to quote.

Let's not forget that, when the Labor Party came to government in 2007, there was zero debt. There was money in the bank. Over the following six years they increased debt levels. They spent without constraint. I have to say I was proud to be in this chamber to vote against the second tranche of spending that was announced during the GFC. And I will acknowledge there was a GFC; I think it is only reasonable. We supported the first tranche of spending for the GFC, but we didn't support the second tranche of spending. Unlike Senator Cameron, I won't acknowledge that it was spent wisely, because it was spent on things like pink batts, a program that still has impacts in the economy. It was spent on things like overpriced school halls, which were so overpriced that the building economists who measure cost spending wouldn't even include any of those projects in their national cost spending tables. There were the \$900 cheques that went to dead people. So the Labor Party cannot lecture us on economic management.

They then embedded spending at growth rates of somewhere like 3.7 per cent per annum over the forward estimates. Then, when this government came into place in 2013 and attempted to restrain the spending, the Labor Party with the Greens have voted against us at every single turn. As Senator Abetz said, even though they took \$5 billion worth of savings to the 2013 election, they then voted against those same savings following the 2013 election. How can the Labor Party, in any good conscience, lecture the coalition on good economic management? We have constrained the growth in spending from 3.7 per cent, which we inherited from Labor, to 1.9 per cent over the forward estimates. We have constrained the debt that was projected to reach \$1 trillion when we came to government to the figure of about \$640 billion, where it stands today. How can the Labor Party, in any good conscience, come in here and try to claim to be good economic managers? We remember promise after promise from Wayne Swan that there would be a surplus, to the extent it became a running joke—that the Treasurer of this country, every time he got to his feet, promised a surplus.

**Senator McAllister:** When are you going to get to your surplus?

**Senator COLBECK:** You wait and watch tonight, Senator. We won't be lectured by Labor on economic management because everybody knows that Labor can't manage the economy. Go out into the community and watch people's heads nod as you make that statement, because people understand that. They know that the coalition has to be brought back to government to bring things under control, because the Labor Party just cannot restrain their spending and they're going into this next election promising \$200 billion of increased taxes into the economy. They will not be constrained in their spending and they've already acknowledged that they won't be prepared to constrain their spending growth as the government has committed to do, so they have no credibility in this space. Taxpayers know that the Labor Party cannot get enough of their money. They cannot take enough of it. They think they can spend it better than they can and they will promise more and more taxes. So, coming into the next election, there is one thing that is sure—you will pay more tax under Labor than you will under the coalition.