




Speech by

Hon. Dean Wells

MEMBER FOR MURRUMBA

Hansard Tuesday, 14 February 2012

MOTION: PRIVATE HEALTH INSURANCE REBATE

 **Hon. DM WELLS** (Murrumba—ALP) (6.11 pm): An extraordinary air of unreality pervades this chamber when, just days out from an election campaign, an opposition comes in here arguing about a federal issue—a matter that this state government for all the areas that it can control, for all the decisions that it can make, for all the things that it can do, can do nothing about. If this motion were carried, the state government could do nothing about it. It is entirely a federal issue. How bizarre it is that we have in this House an opposition, led by a retired councillor, coming in in the middle of an election campaign arguing about a federal issue. Honourable members on the other side of the House do not even seem to know where they are. If they want to have some sort of effect on that issue, then they should get preselected for the federal parliament. But if on the other hand they want to affect any of the thousands of issues that the state government can affect, this is where they should be. This area of unreality comes from the fact that the members opposite want to debate an academic and entirely hypothetical issue.

If—heaven forbid—the ‘member for nowhere’, Mr Campbell Newman, were to some day ride into office on the back of the honourable member for Callide, it would be the most out-of-touch and irrelevant government since Master Blaster ruled in the Thunderdome. The members opposite have no sense of what they are supposed to be talking about in this place. If they were—heaven forbid—in government then they would presumably come in here and try to legislate federal issues and local government issues, because they fundamentally do not know what they are doing.

But there is something that the members opposite do know. They all know what this document is that I am holding above my head. This is a parliamentary pay slip. They get one of these every two weeks. This happens to be a pay slip of a humble backbencher. That honourable member, along with every other honourable member in Australia, if you take into account the allowances that they get, is prima facie within the threshold. If you take into account the allowances, every member of parliament gets more than \$166,000 a year, which is within the threshold.

What honourable members on the other side did not say when they made their speeches was that they were arguing in favour of their own vested interests. In defiance of the rules and the spirit of the laws relating to the pecuniary interests register, those honourable members did not get up and say that they were arguing for the maintenance of their own income. They were arguing for their own greed and avarice.

Mr Rickuss interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Lockyer, I cannot hear the speaker. That is not an interjection; it is just yelling out for the sake of it. I do not find that particularly edifying and I do not think that anybody listening to the parliament does either.

Mr WELLS: This rebate ought to be called the politicians’ rebate, because a person has to earn at least as much as a politician in order to get the benefit of this rebate. So honourable members on the other side who are saying that they are opposed to this rebate ought to come clean with their constituents. When they go out on the hustings, in addition to wearing their little LNP badge why do they not wear another one that says ‘Unrepentant recipient of social welfare’, because that is what they are: \$0.8 billion of this rebate goes every year to income earners of the income level of honourable members of this House that could

otherwise be going and would otherwise be going into the state hospitals system. Were it not for them receiving that money, the Queensland government would be receiving more money to look after the state hospitals system and to look after its other responsibilities.

When the members opposite have one of their battlers in their electorates come into their office and say, 'I can't get an operation because I am one of the more than 52 per cent of Australians who do not have private hospital cover and I do not have an urgent condition but I need an operation,' instead of just sympathising with them they should tell them that, rather than them having an operation, they would prefer to have a few extra dollars in social welfare payments paid into their own account because they do not care about them. I do not think politicians should be receiving this rebate and I do not think people who earn more than politicians should be either.

(Time expired)