



Speech By  
**Peter Russo**


**MEMBER FOR SUNNYBANK**

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Record of Proceedings, 4 June 2015

**PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENT**

**Federal Budget**

 **Mr RUSSO** (Sunnybank—ALP) (3.30 pm): I rise in this House to voice my concern about another horror budget brought down by the federal Treasurer, Joe Hockey, and the Abbott government. In fact, it is the second horror budget in 12 months. Once again, the federal government has utterly failed the people of Queensland.

The federal budget has failed Queenslanders on health, education, infrastructure and jobs, leaving us to face a multibillion dollar funding shortfall. Long-term investment in infrastructure, education and jobs is largely missing from the Abbott government's second budget. Many of the worst elements of last year's budget remain: the \$80 billion cut from hospitals and schools; \$100,000 university degrees remain in place; and the cuts to family payments.

There are more cuts to health in this year's budget, including confirming the government is committed to a four-year freeze on Medicare rebates which will rip \$1.3 billion out of general practice over the next four years. There are also cuts of \$125.6 million to child dental benefits and a \$252.2 billion cut to PBS listed drugs. These measures will have a detrimental impact on both young and old people across our community.

In particular, I refer to an article on 20 May 2015 in the *Australian* newspaper entitled 'Victims at risk in legal aid overhaul'. What the federal government is doing here is preventing ordinary Australians from accessing legal advice when they are at their most vulnerable. In many cases, legal advice is needed urgently to prevent matters that would escalate the case at hand. It is needed to provide accurate information and vital support, and it is an essential part of our legal system.

These cuts will impact on the community legal centres which are at the coalface helping victims of domestic violence who have been placed in vulnerable situations by violent partners. In these situations, plans need to be put in place urgently to adequately protect victims and their children. Legal aid was designed for this purpose—to be the first port of call for people seeking urgent legal advice and help. Checking someone's bank balance should not be the focus.

Community legal centres are best placed to put victims in touch with the appropriate services. This quick response is essential to arrange the necessary protection to prevent loss of life and serious injury.