




Speech By
Hon. Shannon Fentiman

MEMBER FOR WATERFORD

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Federal Budget

 **Hon. SM FENTIMAN** (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Communities, Women and Youth, Minister for Child Safety and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence) (2.39 pm): Last night's budget claimed to make the right choices for better days ahead. Better days ahead does not apparently extend to foster and kinship carers or our young people. Last year the Victorian Minister for Families and Children, Jenny Mikakos, and I called upon the Turnbull government to show some leadership and to consider a national approach to child and family support. Outdated rules on tax and Centrelink benefits are standing in the way of professionalised foster care, and changes are desperately needed to Medicare to ensure children in out-of-home care—our most vulnerable children—have their health needs assessed and met.

Where is the Turnbull government on these vital reforms? Nowhere it seems. Again last night the Turnbull government ignored foster carers nationwide, with none of these vital changes warranting a mention. Further, family tax benefit part B still does not extend to our hardworking foster and kinship carers. Our hardworking foster carers should not have to jump through hoops in order to be supported in their vital service to our community and to our most vulnerable kids. This does not strike me as 'fair and responsible' at all.

We are proud of our record of supporting foster carers. Yet what last night's budget confirmed is that the Turnbull government is dragging its feet on putting the needs of families and children first. As the Minister for Youth, I am deeply concerned about the impact of the budget on Queensland's young people. Not only can young people expect it to get harder to afford a house, but the degree that they will need to pay for it is even further out of reach. It is little wonder that the Australian Council of Social Service has described the budget as 'a war on young people'.

With university fees going up, a \$2.8 billion cut from the university sector, HECS repayments starting at a lower threshold and school funding cuts, the future the Turnbull government paints for young people is a lifetime of debt, all while delivering corporate tax breaks for the big end of town. Where is the help for the unemployed with proper policies to create employment—for example, reinvesting in TAFE and apprenticeships?

I would like to be able to update the House on what the budget held in store for Queensland women—but I cannot. We are again disappointed that the federal government has not reinstated a women's budget statement, a longstanding feature of the annual budget from 1983 until 2013, when it was axed by the coalition. Either they do not have anything to offer women in the budget or they simply do not care.

This was not a budget meant to give Australian battlers brighter days. This was a budget for Turnbull and his fellow millionaires. It fails the fairness test and it hurts Queensland families.