



The Hon David Bradbury MP

FEDERAL MEMBER FOR LINDSAY

Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer

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MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Government Election Commitments

Mr BRADBURY (Lindsay) (Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer) (4:08 PM)

It gives me great pleasure to address this matter of public importance. The Leader of the Opposition began by saying that this is a historic day. I think we all must agree that this is a historic day, but perhaps the reason for it being such a moment of history is something that we might disagree upon. I say at the outset that I find it rather strange that we are held to account in a matter of public importance brought forward by the current Leader of the Opposition on trust and delivery of election commitments, because his record in government and even beyond government in opposition and particularly as Leader of the Opposition demonstrates a man whose word cannot be counted upon. It is a word that cannot be counted upon, and we have seen demonstrations and evidence of that in the last couple of days in his failure to deliver on the agreement on parliamentary reform.

That is, of course, but one example of how the Leader of the Opposition is a man whose word cannot be taken as the truth. He said just a little bit earlier this year that there was a distinction to be drawn between gospel truth and those matters that might be crafted and scripted in a not so careful way in the heat of the moment and in the heat of battle. We saw that at a time when he was about to do a backflip on a commitment that he had previously given to not increase taxes. So he came forward and said that he would not increase taxes. That was one of the first commitments that he gave as Leader of the Opposition. The first backflip, which was only a matter of days later, was to come forward and say, 'I will increase taxes. I will slug business in order to deliver a paid parental leave scheme.' Even he did not have the intestinal fortitude to take that to his shadow cabinet before announcing it publicly. It is a policy that does not have the support of his own party room and it is a policy that did not have the support of the Australian people at the last election.

On the question of the truth or otherwise of statements that have been made by the Leader of the Opposition, let us have a look at what was said throughout the course of the election campaign. I welcome the commitment of the opposition to delivering the platform of matters that we took to the Australian people before the last election. I can only take it that it is a commitment of that nature because for the Leader of the Opposition to come forward and challenge the government to deliver its election commitments but to then stand in the way of the delivery of those election commitments would be nothing short of hypocrisy. That is the challenge. That is the point at which the Leader of the Opposition has set that bar.

There were many things that we took to the electorate in the last election that we will now be calling the Leader of the Opposition and the opposition to account on to help us deliver. That involves delivering tax reform. It involves delivering reductions in company tax. It involves simplifying personal tax with the

tick-and-flick arrangements. It involves improving retirement savings and delivering for the superannuation needs and retirement savings needs of working Australians into the future, tackling that great challenge that our government and previous governments have identified but few have done sufficient to address—and that is the ageing population. Lifting retirement savings by lifting the standard of living of working Australians as they move towards their older years in life is something that we are committed to doing. We took a plan to the election and we intend to deliver on that plan.

I welcome the fact that the Leader of the Opposition today said he believes it is important that governments deliver on election commitments that they take to the people. I do note, however, that the Leader of the Opposition is a man who in government said immediately before an election not all that long ago that when it came to the Medicare safety net he was prepared to give a rolled gold, cast-iron guarantee and then shortly after the election in which he was a part of the government that was re-elected he had to front the people and say that that was not actually the position the government was going to take. Subsequent to that he has tried to argue, 'Sometimes you get rolled in cabinet. I can't help it.'

The reality is that the Leader of the Opposition is a man whose word cannot be trusted. We were not able to trust it when he was in government and he has not been a trustworthy person in opposition. What we have seen with him welching on this agreement on parliamentary reform is a man who even though just a short time ago said, 'If it is in writing you can trust it,' is now saying, 'If it is in writing you can trust it as long as you have a QC's opinion from a QC of our choice who happens to be sitting within our party room.' I would suggest that at the very least they need a second opinion, because when it comes to Mr Gageler SC or Mr Brandis QC I know where I would put my money. At the very least they should be out there getting a second opinion. This is all smoke and mirrors, because the reality is that the only time the Leader of the Opposition ever intended to deliver on that deal was if he formed government. He did not form government and he is pretty upset about that. I can appreciate that. That is fine. But the fact is that he broke the deal. He broke his agreement. The word that he gave he has reneged on. That is true to type for this Leader of the Opposition, because he has done it time and time again.

The Leader of the Opposition said today that this is a government that is built on a lie. I suggest that the entire election campaign of the opposition was built on one of the biggest lies that we have seen in recent Australian political history. It was built on a \$10.6 billion lie. This was the lie that they tried to keep hidden. In fact, I think, Mr Abbott referred to it as an arcane debate about costings. This was about whether or not the alternative government were ever going to be able to deliver on the commitments that they were making during the election campaign.

They visited seats all around the country. I saw Mr Abbott come into my seat and sprinkle money all around—\$5 million here, a couple of million dollars there—because 'we are going to get the budget back into surplus.' Yet there was no plan for delivering these commitments which was exposed. They were very cynical and they almost got away with it. They did not win the election, and it ended up requiring the Independents to come forward and shine a light on the big \$10.6 billion hole. That is the lie upon which the opposition's election campaign was built, and it is a lie that has now been exposed. So, please do not come into this place and tell me that this government is built on a lie.

I look forward to the opposition making good on the commitment that they have made today. No-one has stepped forward and suggested that this is not the case so I am left to draw the conclusion that the Leader of the Opposition, speaking on behalf of all of his troops, is now saying that they believe—and notwithstanding that he failed to deliver on election commitments when he was in government—that election commitments are so important that he will ensure that we deliver those commitments.

The main example that is brought forward is the whole question of climate change. Both parties took a position to the 2007 election on climate change and a number of people on the other side of the chamber jumped up and down just before the last election and said, 'You failed to deliver on what you called the biggest moral challenge of our time.' Yet the only reason that commitment had not been delivered was that people on the other side, who took a similar commitment to the electorate, chose to walk away not only from that commitment but from an agreement that had been signed by the then Leader of the Opposition, the member for Wentworth.

After having knocked it back several times in the Senate the deal on the ETS deal that had been reached went through your party room, albeit with a narrow margin, and then you beheaded your leader.