



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

PROOF

Federation Chamber

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Coral Bleaching

SPEECH

Monday, 16 October 2017

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SPEECH

<p>Date Monday, 16 October 2017 Page 118 Questioner Speaker O'Brien, Ted, MP</p>	<p>Source House Proof Yes Responder Question No.</p>
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Mr TED O'BRIEN (Fairfax) (11:16): This far-reaching gibberish that the member for Shortland has just extended was actually originally put by the member for Griffith. It is ironic, because it was in fact her predecessor who had the opportunity—on two occasions, may I say—as Prime Minister to do something about what he proclaimed to be the greatest moral challenge of our time before he dropped it like a hot brick.

Every element of this motion is ideological claptrap laced with pseudoscientific hyperbole. The core proposition, the mover asserts, is that if Australia would only adopt a clean energy target in line with our obligations under the World Heritage Convention and stop the development of a single coal mine in Queensland, which is much hated by Labor's left, then we will save the Great Barrier Reef. This is preposterous stuff!

Australia's total greenhouse gas emissions were 1.3 per cent of the total global average in 2013, which was the last year for which we have reliable data. That equates to 580 million tonnes of CO₂. The United States was 6,280 million tonnes. China was 11,735 million tonnes. By the way, in that one year of 2012-2013, China's growth in CO₂ was 504 million tonnes, almost the same as Australia's total. So here we have just one country's annual increase in CO₂ equating to almost Australia's total annual emissions. Our 1.3 per cent contribution therefore is miniscule. Any suggestion that what we do or do not do here in Australia is going to have an enormous impact—that by shutting just one coal mine in Australia is going to have an impact on the state of the Great Barrier Reef—is complete rubbish.

The extent to which there's an impact on global warming—an impact on emissions—is, in fact, by ensuring that our relatively cleaner coal is used and extracted from Northern Queensland through the Adani mine. It is better for the environment because the hundreds of millions of people in India who still do not have electricity are ultimately going to be using something, and we know for a fact that, if they do not use the cleaner coal from the Adani Carmichael mine, then they are going to be using poorer quality coal or other substitutes, which will have a net adverse impact on the environment.

There is no environmental ground to be opposing the Adani mine, as those opposite like to claim. At the end of the day, we should also be reminded the Great Barrier Reef has periodically faced challenges, from cyclones to crown-of-thorns starfish and other bleaching events, but there is no evidence to suggest that any of these events are due to man-made carbon dioxide, let alone coal. Vast sections of the Great Barrier Reef have been written off before and yet have recovered. Despite all the doom and gloom from those opposite, the Great Barrier Reef is not on the World Heritage Committee's in danger watch list. In stark contrast to Labor's own hapless record while they were in government, the Turnbull government continues to invest record funding to help protect the reef, including the joint \$2 billion Reef 2050 Plan. Here we have the current government in defence and protection of the Great Barrier Reef, while those opposite are prepared to do anything to tear down the possibility of the Adani mine—a mine that is 300 kilometres inland from the Great Barrier Reef and a mine that promises not only a net environmental positive for the globe, because of the substitutes, but also enormous boon for the Queensland economy.