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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Federation Chamber

ADJOURNMENT

Economy

SPEECH

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Questioner
Speaker O'Brien, Ted, MP

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Mr TED O'BRIEN (Fairfax) (12:46): The previous speaker, from the Labor Party, yet again displays the complete ineptitude of that side of the House when it comes to economics. Yet again, they do not understand the link between economics and people's daily lives. It's of no real surprise, because, at the end of day, we all do live very crazy, busy lives—not just us in this parliament but also Australians right across this country. Very often, when one is busy, you just gaze down at each one of your steps and lose sight of that end game, or there might be others who are just dreamers who love to look at that end game but who stumble along the way. One of the tricks, and, indeed, one of the imperatives for government, is to ensure that you have a clear line of sight to where you're going—the end game—and what the steps are along the way.

This is where the economy comes in. What the Labor Party fails to recognise is that the economy is not the end game. The economy is the means to an end. The end game is individuals, families and communities living happy, fulfilled, safe and healthy lives—that's the end game. But, unless you pull the levers of the economy, you can't deliver on that. You cannot have vital public services of health, education and caring for those who are underprivileged unless you have the means to do so. This is where the Labor Party continues to get it wrong, with its blockage of the government's economic plan. Indeed, the runs are already on the scoreboard, because we're already halfway through this term. As the good member leaves the chamber—since I'm addressing his points—he might like to do a quick Google search or ring the Parliamentary Library. He'll find that last year 403,000 new jobs were created. I'm only one person, and, Mr Deputy Speaker, you're only one person—we're just two people. Every single day last year 1,100 new jobs were created. That is the means by which families look after themselves, feed themselves and ensure that they can go on a holiday together—that's the end game—but without a strong economy they can have none of that. Isn't that one of the reasons we are here?

National unemployment is 5.5 per cent. On the Sunshine Coast, where I live, it's 4.8 per cent. It's 4.9 per cent in the seat of Fairfax. Since the election we've had 637 jobseekers complete 226 Work for the Dole projects in my electorate of Fairfax alone. How often have we said 'jobs and growth' as a government in the lead-up to the last election and since?

We have a scoreboard that proves that we're delivering on just that, yet the Labor Party will again come into this chamber and into the House and try to deny Australians the means by which they can start having that end game of a fulfilled life that they want.

Youth unemployment is something that I'm particularly passionate about, and I have spoken about it in this chamber and in the House many a time. I want to congratulate the minister, because the Youth Jobs PaTH program is working. In my electorate of Fairfax alone, 170 disadvantaged young people have now found work. We have 134 young people undertaking employability skills training and another 60 signing up for internships.

We still have a long way to go with youth unemployment. It's 12.3 per cent nationally and 11.5 per cent on the Sunshine Coast. Often, youth unemployment is twice the rate of the general unemployment rate. But the only way we can ensure our younger generations have an opportunity with work is to continue on that path of economic reform, particularly with corporate taxes. Only by allowing businesses to reinvest will they create jobs, and then we will have the means by which people can achieve that end goal of a fulfilled life.