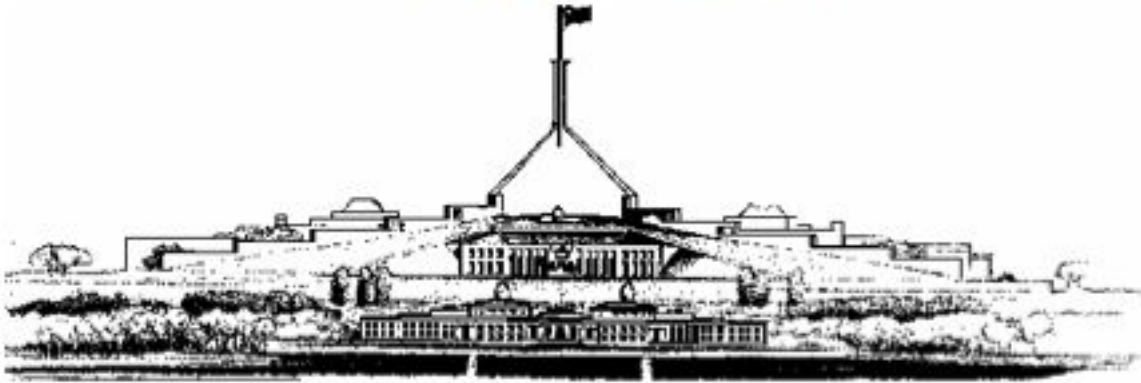




COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

PROOF

Federation Chamber

BILLS

Appropriation Bill (No. 1) 2018-2019

Consideration in Detail

SPEECH

Monday, 18 June 2018

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SPEECH

<p>Date Monday, 18 June 2018 Page 154 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) (17:22): While I'm glad to hear the member for Blaxland ask some questions quite rationally, as opposed to the member for Grayndler, I've spoken previously in this chamber about the New Colombo Plan, and, as somebody who was a student in Asia learning a language and as somebody whose background as a practitioner was predominantly doing trade deals, living and working in Asia, with the foreign minister's focus on economic diplomacy before taking on this role that she now fills, the delivery of the New Colombo Plan is being received so well, not just here in Australia but indeed particularly across the Asia-Pacific.

I was disappointed in the member for Grayndler's very emotional beat-up against the government, again unnecessarily. If I go back to the Rudd-Gillard-Rudd era, I was then based in Asia and I was doing deals, and I had my head in spreadsheets. When you're doing very large deals, often there is a cell on a spreadsheet for sovereign risk, and that usually impacts a discounted cash flow, in one way or another. At that time, Australia's sovereign risk was far higher than it was previously and certainly far higher than it is now, and that is because the Australian economy was being managed so poorly by the previous Labor administrations, which had a detrimental impact on investment coming into Australia but also on Australia's reputation internationally. If there has been something in particular that this Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment and his predecessor has done so well, it is executing those free trade agreements. Indeed, the Korea, Japan and China agreements all stalled under the previous Labor government. We saw the impact ultimately residing in the state of the national economy.

Look at our national economy now. Our national accounts came out only a couple of weeks ago. What we see is unemployment at 5.4 per cent. What we see in the first quarter of 2018 is a growth rate of one per cent, making annual growth 3.1 per cent. Business confidence is up and investment is up. This is an extraordinary set of figures for Australia's national economy. When you break down that last quarter of growth, the No. 1 one thing that drove Australia's growth for the first quarter, the biggest contribution to our GDP growth, was exports. We saw even in the last financial year \$374 billion in exports. Now that is a record for our country. In Queensland alone: Queensland's total exports of goods were valued at \$70 billion in 2017—that's an increase of 25 per cent. Of course, the biggest export good for us in Queensland is coal, followed by beef. There are nearly 25,000 people employed in the coal industry in Queensland and nearly 20,000 in beef—both enormous producers of jobs and growth to our economy.

Looking at the track record of this government, as somebody who has worked in trade most of his life, I cannot tell you how proud I am to be part of a government that has concluded seven FTAs, and to think of the FTAs that have impacted us, particularly in Queensland, such as the Japan, Korea and China FTAs and, more recently, Peru and the TPP-11—a negotiation, by the way, that the Leader of the Opposition thought we should fold on—all being delivered by this coalition government. That is what, ultimately, is opening up opportunities for us.

Negotiations are now to start with the European Union. This is a marketplace of half a billion consumers. This is a marketplace with a US\$17.3 trillion GDP economy. Again we see opportunities opening up, because we have the single most comprehensive, ambitious trade agenda that this country has ever seen—which leads me, of course, to ask a question of our Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment. Could the minister expand on how the Turnbull government is delivering on our ambitious trade agenda? And how will that agenda continue to drive opportunities here in Australia, particularly opportunities that will drive growth?