



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**PROOF**

**MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE**

**Budget: Rural and Regional Areas**

**SPEECH**

**Thursday, 29 May 2014**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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## SPEECH

**Date** Thursday, 29 May 2014  
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**Questioner**  
**Speaker** Taylor, Angus, MP

**Source** House  
**Proof** Yes  
**Responder**  
**Question No.**

**Mr TAYLOR** (Hume) (16:06): It has been pretty difficult to spend the last 45 minutes being lectured by the Labor Party on regional and rural Australia. But we have heard from the member for Hunter that, by building a highway to his front door, he was going to save rural Australia. We heard from the member for Perth that she was going to—

**Mr Fitzgibbon:** I did not say that. Retract that. I did not say anything about it.

The SPEAKER: Order!

**Mr TAYLOR:** We heard from the member for Perth that she was going to save rural Australia with a carbon tax. And we heard something from the member for Shortland. I am not quite sure how she was going to save rural Australia but I sat here wondering how many sheep yards she has in her electorate, how many live-cattle exporters she has and how many broad-acre grain growers she has. However, I am proud to represent a rural electorate, and I am proud to be a member of this coalition that is supporting rural and regional Australia with this budget and with its broader policies.

In one of the great speeches of modern political history, in 1942 Robert Menzies described the extraordinary failure of the Left in Australian politics to acknowledge the role that lifters play in Australian society. The focus of his speech was on Australia's forgotten people—the great and growing Australian middle class. But between 2007 and 2013 that speech might just as easily have applied to the great lifters of modern Australia: the men, women, children and businesses of rural and regional Australia.

The reality of modern Australia is that the majority of our export growth, the majority of our business investment and the majority of our best growth prospects are based in regional Australia. The people of rural and regional Australia have always driven our largest export industries, and that is more true now than ever. But the Labor-Greens government's forgetfulness of the people of regional Australia was absolutely breathtaking. The list of forgetfulness and failure was long, and it started with the introduction of a failed mining tax in an attempt to create the highest taxed mining industry in the world. Then there was the extraordinary attack on the live export trade, the complete failure to open up new export

commodity markets, and the abysmal failure of the Murray-Darling Basin plan as the Labor Party paid their dues to the Greens with a badly-thought-through attempt to recreate a Murray-Darling Basin that never existed. There was the total failure of the regional NBN, particularly fixed wireless, and their so-called interim satellite solution, which is no better than dial-up. We had the introduction of the carbon tax, which disproportionately hampered our exporters against ferocious competition, and we had the failure to make meaningful investment in regional transport infrastructure.

The coalition government is the great friend of the bush. We always have been, and we always will be. We stand shoulder to shoulder to enable these great lifters of regional Australia. We stand shoulder to shoulder with commodity producers and exporters, with country university students needing to live away to home, with commuters on long stretches of highway needing safe roads on which to travel, and with regional businesses trying to grow their companies and asking for internet and phone services equal to their city cousins.

I want to spend just a moment on one of the greatest failures of the last Labor government—the failure in trade. Over the Christmas holidays I was very lucky to read a book about the economic history of Australia. It was a wonderful book because the point it made was that our prosperity was built on opening up great commodity export markets. In the 1820s it was the wool industry. It moved to the gold industry in the 1850s and then back to wool. By the 1950s and 1960s we recognised the extraordinary opportunities in selling iron ore and coal to Japan. Most recently, we have seen opportunities again in mineral exports and energy exports to China. Today, there are extraordinary opportunities to open up agricultural exports to China and the rest of Asia.

Labor not only forgot those markets but destroyed the most important and fastest-growing agriculture market in recent Australian history—the live export market. We are the friends of regional Australia; the Labor Party is not.