

PREMIUM PROPERTY TAX

398. Mr D'ORAZIO to the Treasurer:

I refer to the Leader of the Opposition's suggestion that the premium property tax is a de facto death duty. Does the tax fit the definition of a death duty?

Mr RIPPER replied:

Of course the premium property tax is not a death duty. It is no more a death duty than are local government rates that can also be deferred by pensioners in exactly the same way as the premium property tax will be able to be deferred by people who have a Seniors Card or a commonwealth health care card. The deferred tax is payable on the transfer of the property. The Leader of the Opposition knows that the transfer of a property can occur for a number of reasons. He has been quick to defend the interests of his constituents and he has made his first unfunded campaign promise for the next election, because he has said that - in the unlikely event he holds office after it - he will repeal this tax.

I would like to ask the Leader of the Opposition about another tax. If he read the *News Chronicle*, a newspaper with which I hope he is familiar, he would discover that another tax is raising the anger of his constituents; that is, the goods and services tax on funerals. That is a death tax. If he read the *News Chronicle*, he would know that the chief executive officer of the Metropolitan Cemeteries Board has said that the extra cost that the GST has imposed on funerals has affected the arrangements that families make for funerals. He has also said that he has noticed that there has been a downturn in families arranging for a plaque as a memorial after cremation. He has said that the GST is an impost on top of the trauma of bereavement. That is what the Leader of the Opposition's tax does to people, and it applies to everyone, including a Belmont battler or a Mosman Park socialite. It is different from the old sales tax system, which exempted funeral directors. Successive Governments said that they would not take away those exemptions.

The SPEAKER: I call the Leader of the Opposition to order for interjecting. He can make interjections, but to make them six or seven times does not improve his point.

Mr RIPPER: It was not a very good point and it did not improve after seven repetitions. The Australian Funeral Directors Association President, Stephen Parry, has said that to impose an additional tax on a non-optional purchase such as funeral has made families more upset at a very emotional and distressing time. He has also said that the GST is perceived by consumers to be akin to the reintroduction of the death duty. What is the Leader of the Opposition's position on this tax? The average cost of the GST on a funeral is \$400. Will the Leader of the Opposition join with Kim Beazley and roll back the GST on funerals?

Mr Barnett: Absolutely not.

Mr RIPPER: Absolutely not, he says! He will support the death duty that is the GST on funerals. He will defend people who have millions of dollars worth of assets in Peppermint Grove, but he will not roll back the GST on a pensioner's funeral.