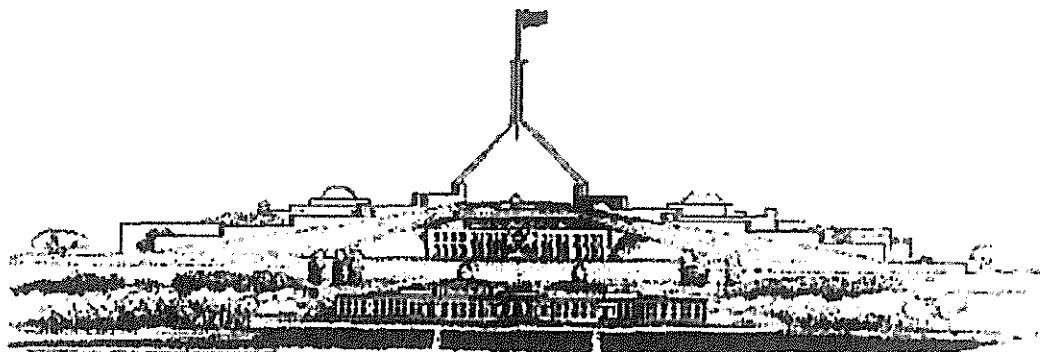




COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Marriage

QUESTION

Tuesday, 15 September 2015

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

QUESTION

Date Tuesday, 15 September 2015
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Questioner Plibersek, Tanya, MP
Speaker

Source House
Proof No
Responder Turnbull, Malcolm, MP
Question No.

Marriage

Marriage

Ms PLIBERSEK (Sydney—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (15:21): My question is to the Prime Minister. A private member's bill on marriage equality introduced by the member for Leichhardt is currently before the House. It would take half an hour of parliamentary time to allow this bill to be voted on. It could be done tomorrow. Will the Prime Minister allow a vote on this bill and allow members of his party a free vote as he has publicly called for previously?

Mr TURNBULL (Wentworth—Prime Minister) (15:22): I thank the honourable member for her question and I respect her very deep interest in this issue. Marriage equality, or same-sex marriage, is a very significant issue on which people of good faith, the best faith, honestly have different opinions both on the honourable member's side of the House and on our side of the House. Historically, issues of this type have been resolved in parliament by free votes. The honourable member is correct in referring to that. Another way of dealing with this is by a vote of the people. Our government has decided that the resolution of this matter will be determined by a vote of all the people via a plebiscite to be held after the next election.

Mr Dreyfus interjecting—

Mr TURNBULL: I hear the honourable member for Isaacs calling it 'a sell out'. It underlines the utter failure of the opposition to approach issues in other than a thoroughly ideological way. The object is to ensure that Australians—

Ms Kate Ellis interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Adelaide is warned.

Mr TURNBULL: either through their representatives or directly, can make an honest, conscientious decision. Our government, our party room, has decided that the decision will be taken by a plebiscite. Why is the opposition afraid of the people having a vote? Why don't they want all Australians having a vote? There is no greater virtue in a free vote here or a plebiscite. They are each means of resolving the matter. One of them, I grant you, is more expensive. Nonetheless, it is a very legitimate and democratic way of dealing with it. That is what we have resolved.

Ms King interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Ballarat is warned.

Mr TURNBULL: At the next election, Australians will have a choice. The Labor Party will say, 'Vote for us and marriage equality will be dealt with by the politicians, by the parliament, in a free vote after the election.' And we will say, 'If we're re-elected to government, every single Australian will have a say.' We all respect members of parliament—after all, we are all members of parliament—but we are just representatives and we are just 150 in number. Every single Australian will have a vote on the issue after the next election if we are returned to government. How can the opposition seriously and credibly say that that is anything other than thoroughly democratic? When did it cease to be democratic to let the people speak?

Mr Brendan O'Connor interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Gorton has been warned twice. This is his final warning.

Thursday, 17 June 2016

Online Leaders Debate, Sydney

E&OE...

JOE HILDEBRAND:

The first question is one that has come through on Facebook, and it's from Melissa Gringis. She says: "Given the number of changes of Prime Minister in the last five years or so, and the number of lies and back-flipping by both major parties, why is it that the Australian people should trust anything a politician says? Why should I vote for either Labor or Liberal, and not an independent?" Prime Minister?

PRIME MINISTER:

We've got an opportunity to make a very clear decision between now and 2 July. And what I'm offering, as Prime Minister, and leader of the Coalition, is a very clear economic plan that will deliver stronger economic growth and more jobs. It will because it is designed to do so, and it's affordable, we are living within our means, we have set it all out in the Budget. It is all very clear, it's not a glossy brochure or anything like that, it's a very clear plan, and it's based upon the values that will enable us to succeed in these, the most exciting times in human history, where the opportunities have never been greater, but the challenges and headwinds are very real too. And so it's based on innovation, it's based on advanced manufacturing, it's based on backing business and particularly getting behind small and medium business, it's based on opening up those huge markets in Asia, those big export trade deals that we've entered into - Japan, Korea, China, the Trans-Pacific Partnership, a new deal with Singapore. We've done all of that in the last few years, with respect to the Labor Party in six years they didn't do any of them. So we've opened up those opportunities. And I saw some of that at work today up in Alphadale, up near Lismore - where - a Macadamia nut processing business. Regional Australia has done it tough in many ways. They have expanded their exports massively, because of those opportunities. So, that's the key, a clear plan, stable leadership, a strong Coalition Government.

JOE HILDEBRAND:

Thank you Prime Minister - that is time. Just to follow-up, the question was about trust. She was talking about the churn of Prime Ministers recently. That all sounds fine.

PRIME MINISTER:

Well I...

JOE HILDEBRAND:

But how can - I actually...

PRIME MINISTER:

I am opposed to churning Prime Ministers. I'm very committed to the Prime Minister being the same after the election, as it is now! I can assure you we're on the same page -

JOE HILDEBRAND:

I find that everyone is opposed to churning through Prime Minister once they have become Prime Minister.

PRIME MINISTER:

That's true. That's exactly right. You need stability, continuity and a clear plan.

JOE HILDEBRAND:

Thank you, thank you. You have answered that. Mr Shorten, why should politicians trust you? We know the Labor Party has had a bit of churn itself.

BILL SHORTEN:

Well, going to the heart of the question the Labor Party has learnt its lesson. The truth of the matter is that Australians want to choose their Prime Ministers and they don't want political parties to overturn them midterm. So, I have been lucky. My party has learnt that lesson - we have been united in my time as Leader of the Opposition but this issue of trust goes beyond just parties, it goes to which political party trusts the Australian people to put their policies out there. I've chosen to not lead a small target Opposition. The conceived wisdom is you wait for an incompetent government to fall evidence and a small target Opposition just walks into power. Well, that's not what I think is involved in trusting the Australian people. We trust the Australian people to put forward our ideas and for them to make a choice and so I say back to the Australian people - who do you trust to save Medicare? Who do you trust to fund our schools properly? Who do you trust to make multinationals pay their fair share? Who do you trust to tackle the problems of negative gearing and make sure that first home buyers compete on a level playing field? Who do you trust to stand up for the Australian steel industry and make sure that we keep manufacturing jobs in Australia? Who do you trust to make sure that we stop sacking CSIRO scientists? Who do you trust to keep the banks to account and have a Royal Commission? For us, it is all about trust - this election - trust and the choices that people get to make between the two political parties.

JOE HILDEBRAND:

Thank you very much Bill, and I think a bonus point for coming in under time. That is just fantastic! Now as you know we've got 30 people here who have been selected very carefully by Galaxy, the very respected polling company from marginal seats around Australia because of course as well as just the great popular swell online and everything we want to have people who are representative of the seats who really matter when they change hands, if indeed they do change hands. Our first question comes from Mary. Hi Mary, how are you?

QUESTION:

Hi, great, thanks.

JOE HILDEBRAND:

Welcome. What is your question?

QUESTION:

OK. My question, thank you Mr Turnbull, Mr Shorten - I have always been a shift worker and I've missed Christmas and New Year celebrations at least 17 times. I've missed my mother's 80th birthday, I've missed weddings, funerals of close friends and family. I often feel disconnected from the life my family and friends share. And I ask you - if you believe penalty rates are too high, what value do you place on the sacrifice shift workers make and what incentive do you feel would be fair compensation? Thank you.

JOE HILDEBRAND:

Thank you, Mary. I guess the pressure to cut penalty rates is coming from the business sector, and there is calls for your Government to do it, Mr Turnbull.

PRIME MINISTER:

Well can I be clear to you, Mary? I respect the sacrifice you make as a shift worker. Can I say we have no plans to change penalty rates at all. Penalty rates are - and awards - are set by the Fair Work Commission, the independent arbiter, and Bill when he was asked about this not so long ago on radio in Melbourne agreed with me - he was interviewed by Neil Mitchell - it is set by the Fair Work Commission. Now, from time to time trade unions when they negotiate with employers - and this may have been a case for you - will negotiate variations to awards and variations to penalty rates, in return for concessions in other areas, higher rates of pay during the week or conditions, that's a matter for them. But I can give you this pledge - we have no plans whatsoever to change penalty rates. They are a matter for the independent umpire.

JOE HILDEBRAND:

Thank you, Mr Turnbull, and you've come in under so I get a chance to ask a follow-up question. We all know that the oldest trick is for a politician to say, "We have no plans to do this," and - suddenly we get plans.

PRIME MINISTER:

Well, I will go further. We will not. Not only do we have no plans, we will not. I give you my undertaking - we will not make any changes to penalty rates. It is a matter for the independent umpire, the Fair Work Commission.

JOE HILDEBRAND:

And that applies to your full next term in Government?

PRIME MINISTER:

For the all three years of it, yes, that's right.

JOE HILDEBRAND:

There you go. I think we have got something tonight. Mr Shorten, obviously you oppose any reductions to penalty rates, but you also say you're going to abide by the Fair Work Commission's decisions. So what if the Fair Work Commission decides to reduce penalty rates, you'll cop that?

BILL SHORTEN:

Can I very briefly ask, Mary, what industry do you work in when you say you are a shift worker?

QUESTION:

The airline industry.

BILL SHORTEN:

Okay.

JOE HILDEBRAND:

That was the airline industry, in case anyone didn't hear it.

BILL SHORTEN:

Yep. Thanks very much. Labor's committed to defending penalty rates. Now, the independent umpire first set penalty rates 100 years ago and unions made applications to improve penalty rates. But what I've done as Opposition Leader is I haven't just said what I think will get me through past the next election on penalty rates, I'm the first Leader of the Opposition to ever put a submission in to the independent umpire, supporting the retention of penalty rates. I believe that penalty rates are not an unfair burden in our system. Unfortunately despite what Mr Turnbull said to you tonight, 61 of his candidates and MPs are on the record as supporting reductions in penalty rates. When I was the Minister for Workplace Relations, I put into law a requirement that the independent umpire take into account the unsociable hours that people work and why that should be taken into account when defending penalty rates. I think if Mr Turnbull is to be serious about what he said, he should match my pledge which I'm about to make; if I win government on 2 July will put in a submission to the Fair Work Commission supporting the retention of penalty rates. Will he?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well if you want to ask that question Bill I'd just say this to you...

BILL SHORTEN:

I just did.

PRIME MINISTER:

Well thank you. I don't think it's the Government's role to be telling the Fair Work Commission what to do about penalty rates, it's meant to be independent of government. You've got to recognise, when you were running the AWU, you negotiated deals on behalf of your members, with employers to vary penalty rates. Often they are varied between the union and the employer. That is part of an open negotiation, but as far as the awards which cover everyone, subject to those agreements, that's a matter for the independent umpire and we believe the independent umpire should be independent and not be leant on by government one way or the other.

BILL SHORTEN:

Sorry I just have to say Mr Turnbull says he respects the independent umpire, there was something called the Road Safety Remuneration Tribunal. That was the independent umpire setting rates for owner drivers, he got rid of it. So when he didn't like what they did, he didn't just put in a submission, he nuked it. So –

[All speaking]

JOE HILDEBRAND:

Will you respect the independent umpire, if Fair Work Australia says “yes, we've actually decided there is a case for reducing Sunday penalty rates to Saturday levels” for example, which is one option being talked about. You respect the umpire's decision? You'll cop that, the Labor Party will say okay we'll accept that?

BILL SHORTEN:

Joe it's not going to happen because I've had a look at the evidence, I've actually read the submissions Malcolm, you've said it's not your business so you wouldn't have. I've read the submissions and I've looked at the evidence, there is currently 5 awards seeking to be varied. The case has not been made out to vary the rate. So this sort of hypothetical fear campaign that somehow they're going to slash and burn penalty rates I don't buy. The other thing is -

PRIME MINISTER:

That's your fear campaign. You're the one that's running that.

JOE HILDEBRAND:

It's everybody's fear campaign!

BILL SHORTEN:

Malcolm it's not about you or me, it's about Mary and four and a half million other Australians.

PRIME MINISTER:

It is.

JOE HILDEBRAND:

We've covered this now thank you gentlemen we're running out of time. Catherine O'Donnell has written in on Facebook. She has said she is very concerned about housing affordability and it's actually quite moving. She said, "My daughter and her young family had to move interstate to have a better chance at owning their own home. My family is being ripped apart, all because of housing affordability."

Now, I can see you are nodding your head, Bill but she says, "Please don't bring up negative gearing. That is only one part of the solution. What else is on the table?"

Mr Shorten? Is there anything else on the table apart from the negative gearing cuts?

BILL SHORTEN:

We've said that we want to sit down with the states to work out reforms which means they can free up more supply of land. So there is more than one factor which contributes to housing prices. But the truth of the matter is - why should first home buyers have to compete in a market with people who are being subsidised by all taxpayers, to bid for the same house they would like to bid? Now, our opponents say that if we get rid of negative gearing prospectively it's the end of Western civilisation, your house prices will go down. That's just nonsense. That's a defence campaign run by the real estate industry and their political representatives, to make sure they can keep getting taxpayer subsidies from everybody.

The good news is with our changes, none of our changes are retrospective, so if you're currently negative gearing. If you invest under one set of laws, we won't retrospectively change the laws.

JOE HILDEBRAND:

Thank you Mr Shorten. Mr Turnbull, what is the Coalition's housing affordability policy? Have you decided that you actually are better off protecting people who want to see their house -

PRIME MINISTER:

No. Can I say housing affordability is a real issue, particularly in Sydney where we are now. It is caused by a lack of supply. Basically what's happened is that governments over the years, state and local government, because they have the planning powers, have not either released enough land or zoned enough land for increased density, for more apartments and townhouses and so forth. So what we have had is demand not being met by supply and consequently you have had upward pressure on prices. The key is freeing that up.

Now we do have a plan for that and it is called our cities policy. What's happened over the years is the Federal Government made ad hoc investments in cities, you know it's put money into a road here, a bridge there and so forth. What we are going to do - we have announced one already with Townsville that we will seek to do with Townsville - we will enter into a deal with a city and local government, state government,

big stakeholders, perhaps universities, the major entities in the area and say, "right. Let's agree on what we want to achieve."

More affordable housing, by that I mean really affordable housing, increased number of dwellings being built, greater housing supply. Let's make sure there's greater amenity, better mass transit. Then make sure that everything we do - we being us, the feds, the state and local government and industry, education, universities in particular, what we're doing is then pulling in the same direction.

We've got to build more dwellings. Now if...

JOE HILDEBRAND:

No sorry. We have got to go on Prime Minister, I'm sorry. We have another question from the audience. Tamlyn from New South Wales. Hi Tamlyn - you're worried about the environment?

QUESTION:

So I would like to understand the personal stance of both Malcolm Turnbull and Bill Shorten on the issue of climate change and how they will be accountable for Australia's commitment to reducing global warming? Thank you.

JOE HILDEBRAND:

Mr Shorten?

BILL SHORTEN:

Climate change is a real problem. I'm very lucky that I don't lead a party who disputes me about the science of climate change. We've got plans to make sure that we take real action on climate change. We have actually set ambitious targets. I know the Liberals say the targets can't be met but you're guaranteed to fail if you don't try. What we say is 50 per cent of the energy mix by 2030 should be renewable energy. We think we can reduce pollution by 45 per cent by 2030. Indeed, other nations around the world have set comparably ambitious targets and the way we do it, we have a clear path on doing it.

We want to slow down the rate of land clearing, for instance. We want to make sure we have better vehicle emissions standards, we want to have an emissions trading scheme, which is linked to international markets. We also want to make sure that we prioritise certainty in investment and renewable energy. Do you know in the last 2.5 years under the Liberals we have lost nearly 3,000 jobs in renewable energy? The rest of world has added on 2 million jobs. I want to make sure Australia grabs the wave of the future in terms of the investment in renewable energy. We are most committed also, to modernising our electricity system our generation system. Although we do understand certainly that some of our emissions intensive trade exposed sectors, like steel and aluminium, will need special treatment.

We are very committed to proper targets, by actually standing up and we will do that also, because my party is united behind taking action on climate change. The problem is that the Government's proposal is to just pay a polluting company more money for poor results.

JOE HILDEBRAND:

Prime Minister, 45 per cent is the bare minimum the Climate Change Authority says we have to reduce 2000 level emissions by 2030. The Coalition is only going to reduce them by 28 per cent.

PRIME MINISTER:

Well, let me say this to you, I am absolutely committed to achieving a global reduction of greenhouse gas emissions to ward off unsafe global warming. We have got to try to cap it, so that it doesn't go beyond two degrees C. Absolutely committed to that. I have paid some heavy prices over the years, as you probably know, for my commitment to the climate change challenge. Here is the good news - in Paris at the end of last year, for the first time you got genuine global agreement.

All of the major countries including us, have agreed to cut their emissions by 2030 by a particular level. The cuts we have agreed to make, 26-28 per cent are substantial. On a per capita basis, which is really the best way to compare them, they are the second highest in the OECD. So they are not trivial, not insubstantial, they are very substantial.

I am satisfied that we can meet those cuts by 2030, with our existing set of policies. Bill talks about money being given to polluters. That's not true. The Emissions Reduction Fund that Greg Hunt administers has acquired \$143 million tonnes of offsets at around \$12 a tonne. The money has gone overwhelmingly to farmers and land owners and indeed Indigenous communities, to change land use in a way that ensures that more carbon is stored into the landscape and is not released through Savannah clearing.

JOE HILDEBRAND:

That is a wrap. We are over time already! What a surprise. That brings us to the end of the first part of the debate. We are going to go to Andrew from news.com.au now. What has some of the reaction been online, Andrew? How are people feeling out there?

ANDREW BUCKLOW:

There is a lot of feedback coming through which is great to see. So far the most popular reaction so far is actually anger.

JOE HILDEBRAND:

Oh!

ANDREW BUCKLOW:

Okay but a lot of comments flowing through, as you would expect. A couple of cheeky comments about the NBN, some people saying this stream would be more watchable if we had NBN.

PRIME MINISTER:

There is a million that do! More actually.

ANDREW BUCKLOW:

Also lots of people asking about housing affordability. Yvonne said "how about we just stop overseas investment driving prices up". Please, if you have a comment or a question for one of the leaders, shoot it through in the comments section below.

JOE HILDEBRAND:

Thank you very much. We are going now to a live question that has literally just come in. This is from Bob, who addressed it to the Prime Minister first. He says, "Mr Turnbull what actual evidence do you have that reducing company tax will lead to mass employment? I paid more tax last year than most of the large corporations."

Now, Prime Minister you've been on the record saying that for every dollar you cut in company tax you actually create \$4 in the economy. How on earth does that work?

PRIME MINISTER:

That's the Treasury's calculation. Because what you do, in fact Bill made this point in 2012, very well. He said any student of economics knows that if you cut company tax, you improve investment, improve employment, and jobs. And you were right then, Bill, in 2012. And Paul Keating was right when he cut company tax. If you cut company tax, what you do is you improve the return on investment. Very competitive world out there, you get more investment, therefore you get more investment, you get more employment. You get more employment, you obviously grow the economy and that does ultimately result in higher tax revenues. That is why we have gone from when Paul Keating first cut company tax, I think it was 49 per cent, and it's come down to where it is today at 30 per cent. It was when Peter Costello reduced to 30 per cent in 2001, there were only six countries in the OECD with a lower company tax than us. There is now 27. It is very competitive but the economics of it as Bill said in 2012. Chris Bowen said it in a book that he wrote - it is clear, if you want to drive stronger investment, stronger employment, then you lower the tax on investment. The problem with Bill's approach is that he is going to increase the tax on investment. It will jack up capital gains tax, he's going to ban negative gearing, and not just on residential housing, on all assets except new dwellings, which of course will mean the investors are competing with new home buyers I might add. And that will restrain investment and employment.

JOE HILDEBRAND:

Thank you very much Prime Minister. Mr Shorten, surely Paul Keating, Chris Bowen, and you yourself can't be wrong? Why are you now arguing against your own policy?

BILL SHORTEN:

This has been one of the great lies of the election. The Liberal Party keeps saying we want to get \$50 billion away, they're Treasury's figures, to large corporations. \$7.5 billion to banks, \$30 billion to overseas shareholders. And they say that because Paul Keating reduced the company rate, it's fine to do it now. What they never say, the Liberals, is that Paul Keating replaced the corporate tax that was foregone with fringe benefits tax and capital gains tax. Because the trick in what Mr Turnbull is saying is, he wants to take \$50 billion out of the Budget, away from Medicare, away from schools, away from budget repair. But he's not replacing it with any other taxation. See the problem with the Libs is they only ever quote half the story don't they? They say, we want to lower the corporate tax, but you can't lower corporate taxation. Without explaining how you will replacing that income to the bottom line of the budget. This is the great con of the Liberals and their economic plan. They've got a plan to reward big banks and mining companies, for improved profits to their bottom line, for investments they've already made, with no appreciable improvement in jobs. And they keep saying, "Labor's supported corporate tax reductions." Paul Keating, Chris Bowen and myself have never, ever supported reducing corporate tax if it means sick people have to pay more to go to the doctor, if kids can't get the resources they need in schools. You know, it's ironic when Mr Turnbull misquotes me from the past. Let me remind you of a Turnbull quote. He called the current policy of the Government, when he was not the leader of the Government, a "fig leaf for environmental change". Now all of a sudden, Tony Abbott's his climate advisor.

JOE HILDEBRAND:

Okay! We have another question from our audience - I believe that's what they call a "zinger"...

BILL SHORTEN:

It's also called a fact...

JOE HILDEBRAND:

Andrew from Gilmore, you're concerned about jobs, especially in regional areas. Tell us.

QUESTION:

First and foremost, good evening, gentlemen. My question is - young people are in growing numbers leaving regional New South Wales to head to major cities. Leaving these areas with less skilled and qualified people. What plans and incentives by way of job creation do you have in place to keep these young people in our regional areas?

JOE HILDEBRAND:

Prime Minister, we know unemployment is still steady, but we know that youth unemployment is in double figures. It's double the rest of the rate. We know it's particularly bad out in the regions. What is your comment going to be about it?

PRIME MINISTER:

About a third of the unemployed are young people, actually. You're absolutely right, Andrew. It is a very big issue. I've been down in Gilmore with Ann Sudmalis talking about this, and talking to employers, and to young people there as well. The key is strong economic growth. If companies, if there's growth than companies expand. That's why it is important to reduce tax. I mean over the next three years, the company tax rate will be reduced for companies in the first year, with a turnover of \$10 million, second year \$25 million, third year \$50 million. So that's over the next- it'll fall between this election and the next one. These are all small and medium companies. What we're doing is supporting them. We're supporting them through the innovation policies that we've talked about - really vital to get behind start-up businesses. They might become as big as Facebook, perhaps not, but they've certainly got the opportunity to grow fast. The other thing, and you'd see this in Gilmore if you're living down the South Coast, there are so many people there that are benefiting from the big trade export markets we've opened up. Those achievements, those agreements were executed, agreed, during our term of Government, just over the last three years. What they're doing is driving stronger growth in regional Australia. You're seeing that benefiting farmers, you're seeing that in food processors. Tourism in particular is benefiting enormously. So we're putting more, there is more growth and more jobs in regional Australia, and that is because our national economic plan is working.

JOE HILDEBRAND:

Mr Shorten, what's Labor's jobs plan? We haven't really heard much of one, have we?

BILL SHORTEN:

Yes, we have. We've been talking about it for the last week and a half Joe. I'm happy to talk about Gilmore and Nowra and Ulladulla and other great places to live. I don't want to see young people having to leave their country towns to be able to pursue their futures without at least having choices to be able to do so locally. So, our plan for jobs is to make sure that we've got a good education system. Give a child a good education system, and you set them up for life. I've been very disturbed that under the Liberal administration of the last three years, we've fallen from 415 thousand apprenticeships down to 295 thousand. We've seen a massacre of apprenticeships. Labor's announced policies last week, Joe, to support 10 thousand young people, to do pre-apprenticeship training. We've also said we're going to back in TAFE. We think the pendulums swung too far to dodgy private providers loading up people with debt. And we're seeing the taxpayer footing the bill. School funding, apprenticeships, making sure we resuscitate TAFE, but it doesn't stop there. We think, to have a vibrant regional economy, you should have a good NBN, a good National Broadband Network. And it should be first-level, first-class technology, not, with respect to Mr Turnbull, second-class copper technology. I want to make sure that regions, small businesses in the regions can access contracts in the region around us. It's also terribly important that we have good infrastructure so that people can have good roads and good blue-collar jobs. So we've got a plan in terms of a whole range of issues. Specifically today, I also announced we would support 20,000 long-term unemployed young people with special 20-week courses and six months of award-paid work and a Cert III apprenticeship training course so they can get real outcomes.

JOE HILDEBRAND:

Thank you Mr Shorten.

PRIME MINISTER:

Can I just make this point Joe, just on the NBN. We inherited a project that was completely failed. And we have - it had stopped. Much of Australia had ground to a complete halt. We have connected more people to the NBN, paying customers, in the last month than Labor did in six years. 2.6 million Australians can get access to it. It's about a quarter of all the premises. In two years, it'll be three-quarters. It'll be finished in 2019-20. We are getting on and getting it built. That's what a businesslike Government does.

BILL SHORTEN:

Joe, if I can use the Facebook system we have here, I would just like to see people press "Like" if they would prefer to have fibre than copper. I'm interested to see what Facebook users who have bad connections and delays and buffering. Malcolm Turnbull says everything's fine. Let's press "Like" if you prefer fibre to copper.

JOE HILDEBRAND:

I believe that's manipulating...

PRIME MINISTER:

Also, what Bill's not telling you is that the Labor approach to do fibre everywhere, which is no longer their policy - would cost \$30 billion more and take 6-8 years longer...

BILL SHORTEN:

It's fantastic in the Turnbull world. It's always someone else's problem.

JOE HILDEBRAND:

Can I just say, from the real world, it was meant to be finished now. It was meant to be finished now.

BILL SHORTEN:

That's the promise that was made.

JOE HILDEBRAND:

That was the promise Labor also made. First it was fibre-to-the-node, then it was going to be decided the big new fibre to the premises. The numbers kept doubling, then of course you said Labor was profligate and it couldn't do its sums and kept running out of control. Now your own NBN has almost doubled from \$29 billion to \$56 billion... It doesn't sound like either you can build an NBN.

BILL SHORTEN:

No Joe, they're so excited by their NBN, they want to suppress all the facts, don't they? That's what's been happening.

JOE HILDEBRAND:

I think the facts are pretty...

BILL SHORTEN:

The facts are out there. People know...

JOE HILDEBRAND:

The facts are unpleasant whatever side of politics you're on.

We have to move on to other topics. This is a really important one too. It comes again from Facebook, from Trude Paladin, she says: "My concern is mental health. The Lindt Cafe siege, the Hornsby Westfield incident, domestic violence - these are mental health-related, yet funding to mental health services continues to be reduced. What are you going to do to improve mental health services and prevent future tragedies like these, or worse?"

Mr Shorten?

BILL SHORTEN:

Thanks. Perhaps this is a topic which, without pre-empting Malcolm's answers, one which is a little less partisan political. First of all, I think that one of the biggest challenges within mental health is suicide prevention. As I travel around Australia, I keep finding, not individuals or tens or hundreds but thousands of people who've either been directly affected by a family member or someone within one degree of separation either taking their own life or attempting suicide. That's one priority we have - setting a target to reduce the suicide rate in Australia by half by 2025.

Another really difficult issue is subacute care. If you've got the crisis, perhaps there's the hospital or someone to help but it's treatment, its recovery, its assistance. I think subacute care is an area which I know Labor's got policies on.

Also I have to say and I'm pretty pleased with this that because we've made a decision to unfreeze the payments to GPs, because we've made a decision to scrap the proposed price hike for medicines, that'll also provide just the basic support which people need when they're trying to get together.

Also I've got to say, we need to speak up about discrimination and ignorance about mental health. Mental health is not contagious. It can be episodic in nature. I think that the more we destigmatise and avoid prejudice in mental health - we'll be a better country.

JOE HILDEBRAND:

Thank you Mr Shorten. Mr Turnbull?

PRIME MINISTER:

I do agree with you Bill, what you say about de-stigmatising mental health is so important. You know, this is an issue...

JOE HILDEBRAND:

I agree with both of you - of course it is but it is also cheap to de-stigmatise it. It doesn't cost money. This person is asking why there are not the health services there? The stuff that actually hurts the hip pocket.

PRIME MINISTER:

Okay. Let me tell you, we are spending record amounts on mental health services now. Headspace, which is a frontline service, is a Coalition initiative from the Howard Government and it's one that is continuing and that we support and that will, over the next few years, be directly accountable to primary health networks. It is critical that frontline services for mental health are as close to the patients - the consumers, the customers, if you like - as possible. I passionately believe that we talk about, here, really the mental wealth of nations. Ian Hickie, the psychiatrist from Brain and Mind Institute, is very powerfully eloquent on this. The cost of mental illness is enormous. Leaving aside the human cost, which of course is the most important thing, the economic cost is gigantic. Depression alone is an enormous cost.

So you're right - we've got to focus on it. We are spending more money on it and we are continuing to grapple with it. Suicide prevention, as Bill said, is also a very critical issue. Tragically, one of the most beautiful places in Australia, in my electorate of Wentworth, is The Gap at Watsons Bay - that is the place where more people kill themselves than anywhere in Australia.

JOE HILDEBRAND:

Thank you Prime Minister.

PRIME MINISTER:

We've put a lot of effort into changing the landscape there so that it is less attractive for that.

JOE HILDEBRAND:

Thank you. We are running behind. I know it's an important issue but we can't talk about everything forever. Andrew Bucklow from *news.com.au* we've talked about the economy and company tax cuts. We've talked about jobs in regional areas and how to build those jobs there. We've talked about mental health. How are people responding? Have we got any comments?

ANDREW BUCKLOW:

First of all, the most popular reaction - please don't shoot the messenger - was actually "Like." Okay.

JOE HILDEBRAND:

Oh right. This was obviously to explain people - this is when Bill Shorten asked if everyone would "Like" if they did not want fibre...

PRIME MINISTER:

Fibre to the premises. Very good.

ANDREW BUCKLOW:

A lot of different comments flowing through about jobs from over-50s to youth unemployment. Desiree said: "Why are there no jobs for over-50s? I've been looking for the last two years and so far nothing has come through. It's very disappointing as I'd rather work than sit around."

Nudes Marshall wanted to know: "Why can the Chinese sell here but pay no tax? I had to open a company in Hong Kong to remain competitive."

Chris Hackett wanted to say: "What about youth unemployment being in the double digits?"

And Tahlia Skelton said: "How can you say it's a good idea to allow companies to pay less, when major companies avoid paying billions of tax?"

Mental health has also been a really hot topic in our Facebook comments. Mark New said: "Stuff mental illness. Fix the drug problem in this country and you will halve mental illness."

Claire Howard said: "What about more investment in mental health? It's a train wreck. We need our leaders to commit to reducing it."

Melissa Anne said: "Mental health - it's so important, particularly for the LGBTI community."

Finally Milly Ingham said: "Mental health is just as important as physical health so why isn't it as supported?"

Keep your actions flowing through on Facebook. If you have any questions or comments, just type them below.

JOE HILDEBRAND:

Thank you very much Bucky. Picking up on one of the topics you raised that people seem to be raging on about - we are now into the final section of the debate where there will just be 60 seconds to answer questions. I know it will be tough. They're coming in live, even as we speak.

Christos Nitsos has said simply: "Marriage equality - what the hell are we waiting for?"

Prime Minister, what the hell are we waiting for?

PRIME MINISTER:

I'm in favour of it. I support same-sex marriage. If we are returned to government, there will be a plebiscite and all Australians will get a say on the issue. I'll be voting yes. Lucy will be voting yes. We'll be urging people to vote yes. I'm confident - very confident - it will be carried and every Australian will have a say and it will be done.

JOE HILDEBRAND:

Why not have an act of Parliament? It can be done quicker, cheaper and everyone will be happy? Save \$160 million. You're worried about the Budget.

PRIME MINISTER:

That's a very fair point to make but my party decided, prior to my becoming Prime Minister, to have a plebiscite. It was a decision of the Government. I have to say - not that we politicians ever look at opinion polls - but every poll I've seen shows very strong support for the proposition that Australians should have a say, so it has been offered to them and promised to them and we will deliver a plebiscite. I can assure you that I will support it, I'll be voting yes and I'm confident it will be carried.

JOE HILDEBRAND:

Thank you Prime Minister. Mr Shorten?

MR SHORTEN:

If you vote Labor and we get elected on 2 July, I will put a bill into Parliament to vote upon within the first 100 days after the election to make marriage equality legal in this country.

I totally accept that Malcolm supports marriage equality. The problem is - it's just how we get there. The argument says plebiscites are very democratic but the truth of the matter is this is a debate where I don't believe people's relationships and love for each other need to be submitted to a public opinion poll.

I think we've seen two terrible events in the last week have shown that hate and extremism does exist in modern societies. I don't want to give haters a chance to come out from under the rock and make life harder for LGBTI people or their families to somehow question the legitimacy of their relationship.

This is an opportunity for him and I to lead. Tonight, I ask Malcolm Turnbull, regardless of who is elected on 2 July - please, let's just vote for marriage equality in the Parliament. We'll have the numbers. The conscience people in your party and my party - we can change this and do it without the hate and the homophobia.

PRIME MINISTER:

We stick to our promises Bill. We've made a promise to have a plebiscite. Can I just say, with great respect to you, I believe Australians are better than that. I believe we can have a discussion about marriage equality. It can be civil, it can be respectful and we will make a decision, as a nation and then, as a nation, we will respect the outcome.

JOE HILDEBRAND:

Okay. Thank you Prime Minister – you've established that.

BILL SHORTEN:

With great respect Malcolm, I believe that the Irish are good people. I believe the Americans are good people. But I saw the hate campaigns that come out in the homophobia. Let's just lead. Let's not just wait till you can appease the right wing of your party. Let's just be done with it.

JOE HILDEBRAND:

Can I clarify, Mr Shorten - I think perhaps you're referring to the terrible events in Orlando and in Florida. Do you really think that that level of hatred would emerge in Australia in a plebiscite? Do you really think the no campaign would be talking about massacring gay people?

BILL SHORTEN:

I don't understand homophobia. I also don't understand why kids whose parents are LGBTI should have to go to school and see stupid posters on the walls, or be subjected to taxpayer-funded advertising campaigns. Life is hard enough. We've got enough going on in our lives without taxpayer-funded campaigns challenging the authenticity of one person's love for another. We've got a lot else to do in this country. Let's just move on. I know that if Malcolm Turnbull actually ran his party, we wouldn't be having this argument.

JOE HILDEBRAND:

You had me at "Let's just move on..."

PRIME MINISTER:

I have more confidence in the decency and responsibility of Australians.

JOE HILDEBRAND:

Thank you, thank you. We've established that. We're repeating ourselves now. You have an audience member...

BILL SHORTEN:

Joe I'll be very quick. It's not that I don't have confidence in Australians. We're asking them to vote at this election. I just think that leadership sometimes means leading.

JOE HILDEBRAND:

Great. Thank you Mr Shorten.

Trent you're from Lindsay in New South Wales. You're probably all familiar with that I imagine - centred around Penrith in Western Sydney - the local candidate according to Tony Abbott had a bit of "sex appeal" I'm told. You're talking about education?

QUESTION:

Absolutely. Good evening, gentlemen. Quality education is crucial for the success of businesses, companies, individuals and the wider Australian community. So why then is going to university becoming so unaffordable?

JOE HILDEBRAND:

Prime Minister? I think this is in reference to, obviously, the deregulation of student fees that are still stuck in the Senate.

PRIME MINISTER

Yeah well, thank you, thank you very much Trent for that question. Can I say to you that education, quality education, has to be and should be - must be - available to everyone. It is transformative. I know that from my own life. I think Bill's had a not dissimilar life story where education was through a devoted parent was critically important in the way we were able to develop. It is vitally important that university is accessible to everyone, that's why we have HECS. What we are doing of course is seeking to reform and provide more flexibility to universities. We are not going to deregulate fees entirely. As you know, the Minister Simon Birmingham has announced that what we will seek to do is to offer the universities the ability to deregulate fees if you like, for a small number of flagship courses so that they can compete, so that you do get more competition between universities, but the strong support for - government support - through HECS, for higher education, is absolutely critical.

JOE HILDEBRAND:

That is time. Prime Minister, what we're talking about here, though - when you're talking about deregulating fees for in demand courses or certain particular courses - you're talking about the top eight universities or the blue-chip sort of Ivy League universities being able to charge whatever they want for law or medicine or the ones the Sydney Universities or the Melbourne Universities - and how on earth does that make education more accessible which you say is so important?

PRIME MINISTER:

As long as you've got competition Joe. You see what we need to have is more competition in the Higher Education sector so that universities concentrate on the things they can do best at, and then...

JOE HILDEBRAND:

Doesn't that just mean people with more money will get into top courses and then there'll just be, you know bottom courses for everyone else to fight between?

PRIME MINISTER:

No – I...

BILL SHORTEN:

Joe, I can see your point...

PRIME MINISTER:

Well I completely disagree with that.

BILL SHORTEN:

... But I'm conscious of time.

JOE HILDEBRAND:

No, it was a follow-up question, so...

PRIME MINISTER:

Okay.

JOE HILDEBRAND:

Sorry, Bill...

PRIME MINISTER:

Can I just say to you we have great access to universities here. I recognise - well when I went to university, university fees were free. There were no fees, right. Those were - that was clearly unaffordable, and now we now have to have - someone has to pay.

JOE HILDEBRAND:

I know I've encouraged you but - Mr Shorten, you've got 60 seconds on the clock.

BILL SHORTEN:

Trent - quick answer - Labor doesn't support Mr Turnbull's party cutting 20 per cent of university funding, and we don't support the deregulation of university fees. Instead, we've just made the hard decision not to look good and give the \$50 billion corporate tax cut that Malcolm believes will drive Australia but instead, we want to make sure that working-class kids, kids from middle-class backgrounds, are not discouraged from going to university because of \$100,000 degrees. So we've just decided, as a priority - because this

election is all about choices - that we want to be trusted on higher education and so what we will do is provide a minimum student funding guarantee of \$10,800 per student per year. Now what that does is that means that there's less pressure on universities to have to increase their fees. The problem with this theory of deregulation and some of the other things that Malcolm says is that, if you cut the funding of universities and then you deregulate the setting of fees, you put universities in the trap where they up the fees. Of course we're interested in quality. We want to see working-class kids complete their degrees. But we're the party of Higher Education.

JOE HILDEBRAND:

And just to follow up - Trent's question was that quality education is crucial for the success of businesses, companies, et cetera -

BILL SHORTEN:

Of course it is.

JOE HILDEBRAND:

I'm sure we all agree on that. You talk about education being your economic policy, but is it not true that we are only going to see the benefits of that in a generation's time...

BILL SHORTEN:

No.

JOE HILDEBRAND:

Probably at best? Well you, the growth figure you quoted was an 80-year figure -

BILL SHORTEN:

Well, no. Let's be clear. It's been run in some conservative elements of the media that somehow investing in education doesn't provide a dividend. Yes it does, every day. The idea that somehow you can be an innovation nation without being an education nation is political rubbish. The idea, somehow, that investing in young people at schools with the Gonski reforms, properly funding childcare, funding TAFE and universities - Joe, I'm just going to use common sense to answer your question...

JOE HILDEBRAND:

We agree, but it's a matter of time, isn't it? A lot of people are saying...

BILL SHORTEN:

Sorry, but if you've got kids...

JOE HILDEBRAND:

What are you going to do for jobs, what are you going to do to create jobs in the next five years or 10 years? Not in the next 12 years or 20 years...

BILL SHORTEN:

Sorry, but every child that comes out with a better-resourced school, every young person -

JOE HILDEBRAND:

They have to go into a school first.

BILL SHORTEN:

Okay, if you're talking about the babies, I guess you're right. But if we're talking - you said what's happening in the next five to ten years. I want every child now who's finishing Year 12 to be able to afford to go to university. We've announced a policy that 100,000 places - 20,000 a year over the next five years - will be HECS debt free - back to the good old days that Malcolm was talking about - for science, technology, engineering and maths. We're fair dinkum on education, and I will just submit to the jury of common sense of Australians that, if you have an educated and skilled workforce with apprenticeships, with good schools resourced, with access to Higher Education, this nation's going to go forward. Take my word for it, and you know it, because that's what every parent wants for every child.

JOE HILDEBRAND:

Thank you, Mr Shorten.

PRIME MINISTER:

Look - can I just make this -

JOE HILDEBRAND:

No we've had enough from both sides Mr Prime Minister.

PRIME MINISTER:

No, alright. No more on education.

JOE HILDEBRAND:

We've got to keep moving - I could talk about it all night, I promise you. This is another Facebook live question that's literally just come in from Michelle Thompson, and Michelle is a tough critic. She says, "When will they talk about axing politician pensions and perks? They should be treated the same as self-funded retirees." Now we know that the politicians' pension has - or superannuation scheme - has come down a little bit, but still grandfathered for the one whose are there, and it's still not as low as everybody else's, why on earth do politicians get all these breaks that we don't?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well the - Bill and I were both elected since 2004 when the old very generous pension system was brought to an end, so we have a - we benefit from a superannuation scheme which is the same -

JOE HILDEBRAND:

What's the rate of that scheme?

PRIME MINISTER:

15 per cent, it's the same as senior public servants, so it is generous.

JOE HILDEBRAND:

For everyone else it's nine per cent.

PRIME MINISTER:

That's true.

BILL SHORTEN:

Well it wouldn't be if the Liberals hadn't blocked our increases to 12 per cent.

PRIME MINISTER:

But if I could just go on, the politicians are well paid. There is no question about that. Their pay is set by an independent Remuneration Tribunal. The alternative is for Parliament to set politicians' salaries themselves, which obviously would not be appropriate, so that's the system we have. Look, I'm probably the worst person to talk about it, I didn't run, go into Parliament to make more money. But I can assure you, but it is a, it is - you've got to pay politicians. One of the great goals of the labour movement, the trade union movement in the 19th Century was to get payment for politicians, because if they're not paid, then only wealthy people can afford to be Members of Parliament. So you do have to pay your politicians if you want working people and everybody to be able to represent you in Parliament.

JOE HILDEBRAND:

Mr Shorten, can we finally look forward to some bipartisanship on this issue? On retaining politicians perks?

BILL SHORTEN:

Well, you use the language. The point is, I understand community outrage when they see people getting helicopters between Melbourne and Geelong. I understand there is a sense of resentment. That is why there has been a decision for the conditions and allowances paid to politicians to be set by an independent tribunal. But what I don't understand is, we get 15.4 per cent super, which is good, excellent. But what I

don't understand is why the Liberal Party keeps freezing increases to everyone else's superannuation. When I was the Minister for Superannuation we passed a law, by one vote, in the Parliament to lift every Australian worker's superannuation and increments from nine per cent to 12 per cent. What happened is, the Liberal Party said, "Well, maybe we could go with that," when they got in. You know what they're like before an election? It's all sweet, and after the election, didn't mean it. Now what happens is they froze it at 9.5 per cent. I'm committed to lifting the superannuation of every Australian but I would be - I'm the Labor guy and I want to see working people do better.

JOE HILDEBRAND:

Mr Turnbull, why won't you introduce the 12 per cent superannuation? It doesn't seem like much.

PRIME MINISTER:

All we've done Joe, is slow down the trajectory of it. Because it is an increase, we will get to 12 per cent a few years later than Bill would have preferred. But it is a real cost on business. It's a real cost, it comes out of employees' pay packets one way or another. And so what we're doing, is we're endeavouring to get the balance right. Because you see, part of the problem is this debate tonight is that I'm talking about how to grow the economy. I'm talking about how to grow the economy, because that's the foundation on which everything is based. The ability to raise the taxes, to pay for the schools, and do everything. Bill treats the economy as a given, he assumes the pie is there and you don't have to grow it.

JOE HILDEBRAND:

Ok, thank you Prime Minister. We were just talking about super. We do have one final question from Facebook. This is from Dean Troth and it is about, what I believed Paul Keating called, The Vision Thing. To both leaders, "More than anything people are attracted to a bold but realistic vision. If you become Prime Minister, what is your medium-term vision for what Australia will look like in three or six years?" Prime Minister?

PRIME MINISTER:

We have the most exciting opportunities in our history. We are at a time in the world's history when the pace and scale of change is without precedent. We've seen gigantic changes right around the world, driven by technology, driven by companies like Facebook as well. But we've seen this enormous growth, the opportunities are huge. Half of the world's middle class will be living to our north in Asia. We can do anything. But we have got to be innovative. We've got to be competitive. We've got to be productive. We have got to be on the balls of our feet and that requires a strong economy. It requires backing enterprise, backing the imagination and the innovation of Australians. So when I talk about enabling that strong economy, what I'm doing is enabling the dreams of every Australian. Everything we want to do, everything our children and grandchildren want to do, will be enabled by a strong economy seizing the opportunities of these exciting times.

JOE HILDEBRAND:

Thank you very much, Prime Minister. Mr Shorten, Leader of the Opposition, your response to that last question? What is your vision for three to six years?

BILL SHORTEN:

I want to save Medicare. I want to make sure that every school is a great school, properly resourced so kids get the best start in life. I want to make sure that working parents, especially working mums, get relief from the cost of childcare. I want to make sure that our TAFE sector is revitalised. I want to lead a country which makes steel products and has a steel industry. As well as a ship and sub-building industry. I want to make sure we have got nation building infrastructure, generating the jobs of the future. I want to make sure that we have public transport systems in our big cities to help relieve congestion and improve productivity. I want to make sure that we have a proper, first-class National Broadband Network, so small businesses in the regions can compete in our region. I want to make sure that people go to work and are paid properly, including their penalty rates and shift allowances. I want to make sure that in this country that we not only generate sustainable jobs for the future, but we do so on the basis of rigid Budget discipline, of making sure we have highly skilled workforce and making sure that we've got jobs for the future. And we will do that by having, not having a corporate tax cut of \$50 billion, and by the way, vote for us, we will have a banking Royal Commission.

JOE HILDEBRAND:

Thank you very much, both leaders. The Prime Minister, Malcolm Turnbull. The leader of the opposition, Bill Shorten.

BILL SHORTEN:

Thank you very much.

PRIME MINISTER:

Thank you.

[Ends]

2016 Federal Election House of Representatives Two Party Preferred By State						
State Name	Liberal/National Coalition		Australian Labor Party		Total	Swing
	Votes	%	Votes	%		
New South Wales	2205107	50.53	2159213	49.47	4364320	-3.82
Victoria	1657279	48.17	1783375	51.83	3440654	-1.63
Queensland	1445030	54.1	1226199	45.9	2671229	-2.88
Western Australia	731497	54.66	606840	45.34	1338337	-3.62
South Australia	496719	47.73	544017	52.27	1040736	-4.63
Tasmania	143093	42.64	192530	57.36	335623	-6.13
Australian Capital Territory	98253	38.87	154489	61.13	252742	-1.22
Northern Territory	41846	42.94	55614	57.06	97460	-7.41

Data downloaded from: <http://vtr.aec.gov.au/HouseTppByState-20499.htm>

2016 Federal Election House of Representatives First Preferences				
State	Party Name	Votes	Vote %	Swing %
W A	Liberal	611605	45.7	-1.61
	The Nationals	40160	3	-0.9
	Australian Labor Pa	434318	32.45	3.69
	The Greens	161443	12.06	2.32
	Australian Christian	34197	2.56	0.53
	Rise Up Australia P	20859	1.56	0.84
	Socialist Alliance	1404	0.1	0.04
	Australian Liberty A	1544	0.12	0.12
	Liberal Democrats	2526	0.19	0.19
	Mature Australia P	3203	0.24	0.24
	Online Direct Dem	1300	0.1	0.1
	Outdoor Recreation	2375	0.18	0.18
	Shooters, Fishers a	6022	0.45	0.45
	Independent	17381	1.3	1.03

Data downloaded from: <http://vtr.aec.gov.au/HouseStateFirstPrefsByParty-20499-WA.htm>

7:30 Interview: Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull

Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Broadcast: 18/07/2016

Reporter: Leigh Sales

Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull discusses his new Cabinet ministry, the election campaign, NBN, Liberal Party donations, when a same sex marriage plebiscite will be held, and more.

Transcript

LEIGH SALES, PRESENTER: The Prime Minister joined me from our Parliament House studio in Canberra earlier.

Prime Minister, thank you very much for joining us.

MALCOLM TURNBULL, PRIME MINISTER: It's great to be with you.

LEIGH SALES: Your first stint as Coalition leader ended in failure. In your second stint you've come close to losing the election. Where's the evidence that you have the political skills and the judgement necessary to now navigate this very challenging parliament?

MALCOLM TURNBULL: Well Leigh, we have won the election. We've won the election. I'm swearing in the ministry tomorrow. The Government is stable, it's committed, we're delivering on our commitments that we made at the election. We are delivering on our economic plan.

LEIGH SALES: In an interview a little over a week ago, the Victorian Liberal Party director Michael Kroger said that it isn't the election campaign that people should focus on, it's the period from September to May and the enormous drop in support from when you took over until you went to an election. Mr Kroger said something dramatic happened. What was it?

MALCOLM TURNBULL: Well, Mr Kroger, firstly, is the president of the Victorian division of the Liberal Party, not the director. I'm not running a commentary on the commentators. So the simple fact is that it was a close election. We went into the election 50-50 or thereabouts and we've ended up with about - on the latest count, about 50.5 per cent of the two-party preferred vote. So on a two-party preferred basis, more Australians voted for us than Labor, and of course in primary vote terms, we were way ahead of Labor. So Labor had its second lowest primary vote in its history.

LEIGH SALES: But Michael Kroger is more than a commentator and the reason that I ask is because if you want to be successful moving forward, surely you have to look at that period from September to May and ask, "Well what was I doing that caused so many voters to lose confidence in me?"

MALCOLM TURNBULL: Well Leigh, we're looking very carefully at - naturally, at the election and we learn from experience. I certainly learn from experience and my colleagues do too. But what we are doing now is looking forward and we're looking forward to deliver on our commitments. The Australian people expect us to get on with the job. And that's what we're doing. The Government has been formed - The Government has been reformed with a ministry. There's a few new faces in it, as you know, as you would've seen today, but it's substantially the same ministry that I took to the election and we are getting on with the job.

LEIGH SALES: Well, I'm going to ask you about some of those policies in a minute, but firstly, on the point that you've learned from experience, what have you learned though? What will be different?

MALCOLM TURNBULL: Well we - what we'll be delivering is a very clear economic plan. We took our economic plan to the - in the Budget, we took it to the election, we took it to the Australian people. We've been returned with a majority in the House of Representatives. We are forming - we formed government. We'll be swearing in the new ministry tomorrow and government goes on. It's stable, it's committed, it's strong economic leadership delivering on the plan that was approved by the voters at the election.

LEIGH SALES: But what are the lessons that were learned from the experience?

MALCOLM TURNBULL: Well Leigh, the - I guess the lesson we always - we always learn is that you need to take a strong - you need to take a clear plan, you need to be consistent, you need to lay out what you're seeking to do and we've done that. We did that very plainly with the Budget. No Australian had ...

LEIGH SALES: But then what's the lesson that you have to learn then? Like, because if you took - you're saying that you did that and so - and yet you nearly lost the election. So what I'm asking is: what were you doing wrong in that period from September to May that caused people to not vote for you?

MALCOLM TURNBULL: Well Leigh, that's for you to analyse. I'm focused on my job as Prime Minister of Australia. I'm not a political commentator, I'm not a pollster, I'm not a pundit, I'm not a journalist.

LEIGH SALES: But how can you ... ?

MALCOLM TURNBULL: My job is to lead the Government of Australia. My job is to ensure that 24 million Australians get the economic leadership and the stable government that they seek and they deserve and that's what I and my colleagues will deliver.

LEIGH SALES: One more election-related question before I turn to some policy questions. There've been reports that you donated some of your own money to the Liberal campaign. Is that true, and if so, how much?

MALCOLM TURNBULL: Well Leigh, all of the donations that I've made in the past to the Liberal Party and any donations that will be made or have been made will all be disclosed in accordance with the Electoral Act. So there is a very straightforward legislative arrangement or provision for disclosing donations to political parties and I've always complied with it.

LEIGH SALES: Why can't you just answer it now though?

MALCOLM TURNBULL: Because the disclosures are made in accordance with the act and they will be made in accordance with the act.

LEIGH SALES: I'm not suggesting that you've done anything improper, but broadly, does it raise questions about a situation where a party's dependent on donations from senior figures within the party, particularly the leader, because if the party requires your money, how can people be confident in telling you what they actually think or they might be worried about offending you or saying no to you?

MALCOLM TURNBULL: Leigh, I think you'll find that the Liberal Party is a very robust organisation. The question of the real issue about financial dependence should be addressed to the Labor Party, which has come increasingly under the domination of militant trade unions, under the domination of the CFMEU. You see - look at the example in Victoria with Premier Andrews where at the behest of, really at the direction of a militant trade union, he sought to subvert the autonomy and independence of 60,000 volunteer fire-fighters.

LEIGH SALES: Let's stick with ...

MALCOLM TURNBULL: Now that shows you that the Labor Party is a wholly-owned subsidiary of a small number of very rich, very powerful, very militant trade unions. The Liberal Party is thoroughly independent.

LEIGH SALES: Let's stick with what the Coalition's (clears throat) - excuse me - going to be doing in government. In your press conference this afternoon you said that one of the key performance indicators you had set for yourself was looking after small business. If you talk to many small business owners, they will tell you that one of the things that hobbles them is penalty rates. If you're serious about helping small business, when will the Coalition take a look at that?

MALCOLM TURNBULL: Well we've said in the - during the campaign and it's our position that the - any variations to penalty rates and awards is a matter for the - for Fair Work Australia, for the independent tribunal and that's our position. The - it was the Labor Party accused us, falsely, as always, of having plans to change penalty rates. It's a matter for Fair Work Australia.

LEIGH SALES: You mentioned those KPIs, as you put it, that you set for yourself. What are the other ones and what should

the public judge you against?

MALCOLM TURNBULL: Well the public should judge us against the delivery of the commitments that we have made, and in particular why I'm very focused, as you know, on the big investment decisions and plans that we have. We have our commitment to Western Sydney Airport, for example. Our commitment, above all, in terms of dollars, to the defence industry investment plan. That was part of the Defence white paper. That's why I've appointed Christopher Pyne as the Minister for Defence Industry. This is a - this is a gigantic and very complex set of projects which will transform Australian advanced manufacturing. It is creating or building a substantial defence industry in Australia, the benefits of which will go right through the economy.

LEIGH SALES: That is part of your ...

MALCOLM TURNBULL: Now Australians will - Australians are entitled to expect us to be seen in three years' time to be delivering on that.

LEIGH SALES: And to measure if you're delivering on that, because that's part of your jobs and growth plan, should it be measured purely against the figures on job creation and unemployment and the figures on economic growth?

MALCOLM TURNBULL: Well, Leigh, the - it'll be measured against all - many different criteria, but the fundamental measurement of course is: are the projects under way? Are they being delivered? Are they being delivered on budget and so forth? It's - and I'm not unfamiliar with this kind of thing. When I became Communications Minister three years or so ago, I took over an utterly failed gigantic infrastructure project, the NBN, and I turned that around and it is now well on the way to being completed. It will be substantially complete by the time of the next election.

LEIGH SALES: On other parts ...

MALCOLM TURNBULL: And that is - and that's - and that was because we'd a focus, a dedication, a commitment to getting the job done. Australians expect results and that's what we'll deliver.

LEIGH SALES: On the other parts of your agenda, will your company tax cuts be before the Parliament by the end of the year?

MALCOLM TURNBULL: We certainly will be presenting our budget legislation before the end of the year. Yes, indeed.

LEIGH SALES: On your superannuation legislation, why not remove the backdating of the lifetime cap back to 2007? Would that not be a reasonable compromise?

MALCOLM TURNBULL: Well Leigh, there's no - there's no - there's been an allegation or a suggestion that the changes to superannuation are retrospective tax. That is completely wrong. A retrospective tax is when you impose a tax on activities some years past that under the law at the time they were engaged in was not subject to tax, for example, or a tax at that rate. So, there are - there are debates, issues in the community concerning the superannuation package. It is a very good package, it is very important reform, widely welcomed and recognised as timely.

LEIGH SALES: Well if it's a very good package, are you prepared to take a look at it and compromise, because as you know, there are some people who aren't happy with it?

MALCOLM TURNBULL: Well Leigh, of course there are some people that unhappy with it and all of these budget bills will go through the cabinet process, they'll go to the - they'll go through the backbench committee, they'll go to the joint party room and there is always consultation and work on transitional and implementation issues. So - so the - but overall, that package of superannuation reforms not only creates substantial savings for the budget and for other purposes, but it makes superannuation fairer and more flexible. It makes it much fairer for women, it makes it much fairer for self-employed people, independent contractors, it makes it much fairer for people on low incomes and it makes it much fairer for older Australians.

LEIGH SALES: Just to keep running down some of your agenda, when will you put forward legislation for a plebiscite on same-sex marriage?

MALCOLM TURNBULL: That - well we - we will bring that legislation forward in the course of this year. As to when it passes

the Parliament, obviously that'll be a matter for the Parliament.

LEIGH SALES: And do you have any thoughts yourself as to when the actual plebiscite would be held?

MALCOLM TURNBULL: Well, we would like the plebiscite to be held as soon as practicable, but again, that will depend on when the legislation is passed. But there'll be - we are not - we'll be bringing it forward as soon as practicable.

LEIGH SALES: And does - is "soon as practicable" - I mean, I don't know about the logistics that are involved in these things. Is that something that can be done inside three months or does it take two years or ... ?

MALCOLM TURNBULL: It doesn't take two years. Look, it would - if it is not held in the latter half of this year and recognising that Parliament'll be sitting for the first time on 30th August, then it would be held early next year.

LEIGH SALES: You've repeatedly ...

MALCOLM TURNBULL: But my commitment to get it - to have it dwelt as soon as practicable is there, but we are of course in - for legislation, we have to obtain the support of the Senate. We don't even know who the senators will be at this stage.

LEIGH SALES: You've repeatedly raised your concerns about the dishonesty of Labor's claim that the Coalition had a plan to privatise Medicare. Given that, will you move to extent truth in advertising laws to cover truth in political advertising?

MALCOLM TURNBULL: Well Leigh, let me - before I come to that particular question, this is a very big issue and it's good to be talking about it with you, because when Bill Shorten raised that lie - and that's what it was - you - he came on your program and he was humiliated by his inability to produce any evidence for such an extraordinary false claim. And what did he do? He doubled down - he quadrupled down. Labor spent more and more money. The fact that their lie, their so-called Medi-scare was exposed as a lie in the media was ignored and they just spent more money and it was - frightened a lot of people.

LEIGH SALES: The Coalition also is no stranger to scare campaigns and hyperbole and exaggeration, so just to come back to ...

MALCOLM TURNBULL: But Leigh - Leigh, if I may just interrupt you, this is not hyperbole. This was not hyperbole or exaggeration or rhetoric. This was a - this was saying black is white. This was an absolutely outrageous falsehood for which there was no basis in fact.

LEIGH SALES: And so then to come back ...

MALCOLM TURNBULL: And when Labor was and Labor leaders like Mr Shorten were brought to account on this, they laughed.

LEIGH SALES: And so then to come back to ...

MALCOLM TURNBULL: They laughed at how clever they were to fool so many vulnerable people.

LEIGH SALES: To come back to my key question, will you extend truth in advertising laws to cover political advertising?

MALCOLM TURNBULL: Well I know there is - Senator Xenophon, for example, is a strong advocate of that. We are going to have a very close look at a whole range of issues associated with this election. That will be done through the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters which reviews every election, but there are a lot of issues associated with this election because there is a - it is something about which Australians should be very concerned, that powered by millions of dollars of union money, the Labor Party came close to winning this election based on a shocking lie. Can I tell you, it was - yeah, sorry, go on.

LEIGH SALES: Sorry, actually, we're - sorry, no, we're absolutely out of time and I've already stretched the friendship enormously with the producers out the back, so I'm sorry to cut you off, Prime Minister, but we'll have to go.

MALCOLM TURNBULL: OK. Thank you very much.

LEIGH SALES: Thank you very much.

LEIGH SALES: Thank you very much.

LEIGH SALES: Thank you very much.

LEIGH SALES: Thank you very much.

LEIGH SALES: Thank you very much.

Well Neil we obviously have to look right across the board, but plainly there are vital areas of Government concern. I mean let me give you for example Medicare. You know, Medicare and health spending, we know that we will need to spend more on health in the years ahead. We budget for that, particularly as our population ages. But what we need to do is ensure that we can - so far as possible - constrain the growth in health spending and at the same time ensure that every Australian gets the health services they need.

NEIL MITCHELL:

So how do you do that?

PRIME MINISTER:

You do that by being more efficient. You see at the end of the day, a Government is no different to a household budget or a business.

NEIL MITCHELL:

Yeah, but...

PRIME MINISTER:

You've got to try to ensure that you make every dollar work as hard as it can to deliver the services you need.

NEIL MITCHELL:

Are you saying the health section, the health sector, the hospitals, have to be more efficient? Are they wasting money?

PRIME MINISTER:

Neil I'm not saying that, I'm saying to you that we have a whole strategy with hospital funding, as you know, that is based on a national efficient price and that has had success in bringing down, through efficiencies, the cost of procedures.

NEIL MITCHELL:

Prime Minister could I just – quickly something else - I noticed you put \$5 in a street beggar's cup in Melbourne the day before yesterday. We're told not to do that, do you think it's a good idea to give money to beggars?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well I know people have got different views on that. But you know, every time I see someone in that situation, I always think: "There but for the grace of God, go I." So, it was a human reaction and I'm sorry

if that has disappointed some people. Maybe they think you shouldn't give money to people who are sitting on the street.

But look Neil, I felt sorry for the guy and I think that we should all remember: "There but for the grace of God goes me."

NEIL MITCHELL:

18C, which makes it illegal to offend people, do you accept it needs to be changed?

PRIME MINISTER:

Neil it's an issue that I've certainly looked at, and it was considered as you know during Tony Abbott's time as Prime Minister.

NEIL MITCHELL:

Well he says he regrets not doing it.

PRIME MINISTER:

Yes, yes.

NEIL MITCHELL:

So will you do it?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well it is not a priority for us. Can I just emphasis this; we have a very extensive legislative programme on the policies we took to the election. We have to deal with the CFA, we have to make the Fair Work Act changes that will protect the CFA Volunteers. We have to deal with the Australian Building and Construction Commission, we have to deal with the Registered Organisations Bill, those are the bills that triggered the double dissolution. We have to bring in all of those budget measures we were just talking about before and we have deliver on our budget and our economic plan. We obviously have to hold a plebiscite on same-sex marriage. So my Government has a lot to do...

NEIL MITCHELL:

So 18C isn't a priority isn't it?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well no, it's not a priority. With all due respects to the very worthy arguments surrounding it, it is not going to create an extra job. It is not going to ensure that your listeners are going to get to work or get to school, or get around their business sooner. It's not going to build an extra road.

NEIL MITCHELL:

I accept your point on priorities but where do you stand on it? It is reported today that you had general support for attempts to amend it as expressed to the crossbencher Bob Day. Do you support the need to amend it? Not now, but in the future?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well it depends how you amend it Neil...

NEIL MITCHELL:

Well how would you amend it?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well Neil I'm not going to go through the intricacies, with all due respect, of 18C in this radio conversation.

NEIL MITCHELL:

Oh but you know it's a problem within your party don't you? I mean you've got Tony Abbott talking about it, you've got the right wing of the party wanting to change it, you've got the crossbencher issue, Senator Derryn Hinch says it's urgent.

PRIME MINISTER:

Well, you know there is no shortage of people who list for me all of the challenges and difficulties I face as Prime Minister. But my job is to keep my eye on the key objective, which is to ensure that we drive strong economic growth, delivering more and better jobs for Australians and that we bring our budget back into balance, we live within our means and ensure our kids and our grandkids are not crippled by a mountain of debt.

NEIL MITCHELL:

Prime Minister is China a security threat to Australia?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well Neil I would say that there are security challenges around the region. Obviously I'm not going to start picking out one nation rather than another, but there are obviously differences of opinion between us and China in some security areas. Obviously as you know - without labouring the point - we have continued to urge China not to engage in island building, if you like, in the South China Sea, and to resolve territorial disputes there by negotiation and in accordance with international law.

NEIL MITCHELL:

They seem to be expressing interest still in the New South Wales power grid, and there has been some interest in the Port of Melbourne, would you be open to the Port of Melbourne being sold to Chinese interests?

PRIME MINISTER:

Neil we'll assess all of these issues. National security issues are assessed very, very carefully and they are not matters that you would expect me, or your listeners would expect me, to go into in detail on the radio.

NEIL MITCHELL:

Fair enough. Will you be setting up a banking tribunal so complainants can go to a tribunal to take up their issues with the banks?

PRIME MINISTER:

This is something that Warren Entsch has proposed and also a similar proposal has been made by a Parliamentary Committee. There is a Financial Ombudsman service at the moment. This is something that - I would say - the Government is certainly looking at that. I would say that our focus – and this is a big difference between us and Labor in this regard – our focus with respect to the banks and financial services is to take action.

We want to ensure that where there are failings, where there are problems that we deal with them. That's why we gave ASIC \$127 million, because they can get on and take the investigations and prosecutions now. In terms of improving the way customers and particularly retail customers are dealt with, we're very open to looking at action in that regard and that is the difference between taking real action now, on the other hand proposing a royal commission which would go on for years and years, cost hundreds of millions of dollars and then write a report, and help nobody, except the legal professions no doubt.

NEIL MITCHELL:

And if I may, just quickly, are you looking at lifting the non-concessional superannuation contribution limit from \$500,000 to \$750,000?

PRIME MINISTER:

I read that report in the press. As you know the Treasurer is consulting with colleagues. Our policy is the one we took to the election, the one that was set out in the budget, but he is - and I'm staying in very close touch with him on this of course - he is carefully consulting with his colleagues, our colleagues, and of course other interested parties and stakeholders.

NEIL MITCHELL:

Olympics drawing to a close, we haven't had a great performance, will you be reviewing - and we're talking tough financial times –the amount of money that goes to Olympic sport?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well all of these matters are constantly reviewed but at this stage we're celebrating the success that we've had. I think our athletes deserve our support and our congratulations.

NEIL MITCHELL:

I was a bit spooked by that security scare in Melbourne with the protester on the stage, how did you feel about it?

PRIME MINISTER:

I felt, as you could see, I felt safe and comfortable - relaxed and comfortable as John Howard would say – at all times. But the AFP is looking into that and they'll be presenting me with an incident report.

NEIL MITCHELL:

We've got to do better. We've got to do better for any Prime Minister than that, don't we?"

PRIME MINISTER:

Well again, I don't want to be unhelpful but I think the less I say about that sort of personal security, the better. You know, many people have made the point that you've just made.

NEIL MITCHELL:

Thank you so much for your time.

PRIME MINISTER:

Thank you so much Neil.

[Ends]

