



**THE HON BILL SHORTEN
LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION
MEMBER FOR MARIBYRNONG**

E&OE TRANSCRIPT

DOORSTOP

BRISBANE

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***SUBJECT/S:** LNP cuts to health and education; Abbott Government's broken promise on the GST; Racial Discrimination Act; Election advertising; Abbott Government waste.*

BILL SHORTEN, LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION: Good afternoon everyone. It is great to be in the electorate of Greenslopes with Labor's candidate for Greenslopes, Joe Kelly. Joe is a working nurse who has decided to run for Parliament. But Joe, like Annastacia Palaszczuk and all of Labor, state and federal, are very concerned about the future of healthcare in Queensland. I am here today because there is a complete convergence between the policies of Campbell Newman on the one hand and the policies of Prime Minister Tony Abbott on the other hand. They are both LNP and they are both putting forward policies which are cutting jobs and cutting funding to hospitals. There is no doubt in my mind, talking to the weary nurses, talking to the optimistic nursing students, that they are greatly concerned about healthcare in Queensland.

State Labor has proposed better policies in terms of supporting our frontline nurses, but nationally through Tony Abbott's policies, there is great concern that he will increase the cost of a nursing degree from \$20,000 to \$66,000. He will also increase the period of time in which it takes one of those bright, optimistic, hardworking student nurses to repay their university cost of studying nursing from 7 years to 17 years. This is bad news for students and we haven't heard a word out of Campbell Newman about fighting for Queensland nurses.

And then of course there is over \$10 billion of cuts flagged in last-years Federal Abbott-Hockey Budget which will see over \$10 billion of funding for Queensland hospitals taken

out of the system over the next number of years. And then indeed on January the 19th, in the middle of the Queensland election, GPs are going to have the rebates they get reduced from something like 37 dollars to approximately 16 dollars for specialist GPs and also rebate reductions for general GPs. What the rebate reductions mean in plain English is fewer Queensland doctors will be bulk-billing. More Queenslanders will have to wait when they are sick and will end up going into the medical system later when they are sicker.

There is no doubt that health is a big issue to Queenslanders – both the policies of Campbell Newman and the policies of Tony Abbott. I might ask my colleague, Joe Kelly, to make some comments, especially as a working nurse determined to see a better deal for patients and nurses in Queensland.

JOE KELLY, LABOR CANDIDATE FOR GREENSLOPES: Thanks Bill. It is great to have you here in Greenslopes, it is great to have you meeting nurses and nursing students, I invited them down here today to meet you. All nurses in Queensland really understand that the combined policies of the Abbott Government and the Newman Government mean deep, deep cuts and big trouble for health. The people that will suffer out of all of these cuts to health will be the patients and that is what is motivating me to get out and become the next member for Greenslopes.

SHORTEN: Thanks Joe, are there any questions?

JOURNALIST: Why don't you think the Prime Minister has been out campaigning?

SHORTEN: Prime Minister Abbott hasn't campaigned in Queensland because Campbell Newman doesn't want him here because he is box office poison. Everyone knows that Campbell Newman's policies and Tony Abbott's are cut from the same cloth - cutting jobs, cutting school funding and cutting hospitals. The LNP in Queensland don't want to remind Queenslanders that Tony Abbott is our Prime Minister.

JOURNALIST: Warren Truss has defended the fact that the Prime Minister isn't up here because the Prime Minister is on holidays, do you think it is just that?

SHORTEN: No, I think the amount of interest there has been in Tony Abbott's no-show shows that it doesn't matter what the Coalition or LNP spin, everyone knows why Tony Abbott is not here. The bigger issue is if the LNP can get the Acting Prime Minister of Australia to turn up in Queensland, why can't we get the real Prime Minister? He works for all of us, he should turn up. I understand that he is unpopular but he should come and defend his policies if he believes in them. There is a lot of debate about 'should politicians just speak in safe events', well Tony Abbott needs to leave witness protection. If he is on holiday this week, well that's fine, he should be here next week and he should have been here last week.

But let's face it. There is one reason Tony Abbott isn't campaigning in Queensland. It is because he is a vote loser because reminds every one of his bad policies. I mean only in the last couple of weeks we've seen the national Abbott Government dribbling out selective leaks from backbenchers and now Andrew Robb, their Trade Minister, to put a new GST tax on items which currently don't charge the GST, so that's fresh food. The reactions of the nurses and the trainees when I say to them that there is a debate by the Liberals to look at a tax on fresh food just made them shake their heads. They see the ravages of diabetes, they see the ravages of poor diet each day in hospitals wards throughout Queensland, so why on earth is the Abbott Government proposing a GST on fresh food?

JOURNALIST: Do you expect Tony Abbott to make an appearance at all during this campaign in Queensland?

SHORTEN: I think if there is enough pressure on him he'll have to show up, but at a certain point it becomes more than just a passing issue, if the Prime Minister of Australia won't turn up and campaign alongside the Premier from the same political party. I get there are state issues, I get this is a state election, but when it comes to the fundamentals of people's quality of life, education, healthcare, jobs, federal and state governments both have responsibilities. Why on earth would you vote for Campbell Newman if all he's going to do is be a rubber stamp for Tony Abbott's unfair policies from tax increases to cutting hospitals and schools?

JOURNALIST: Do you think he's trying to avoid something like what happened in Victoria where there was the fuel tax, the excise increase during the middle of the campaign? Do you think he's trying to avoid [inaudible]?

SHORTEN: Well there was the fuel tax, where Tony Abbott increased the fuel tax in the middle of the election in Victoria and that I think did have some impact on his party in Victoria. But he's already done this in Queensland in this election. He's now allowing a debate about a GST tax to go on fresh food and school fees and other things currently not taxed, and he's also implemented changes which will see GPs have their rebates cut and will see increases in what patients pay going to the doctor from January the 19th, so Tony Abbott's already sent two torpedos into Campbell Newman's campaign.

JOURNALIST: This morning on Fairfax radio you said that voters had disengaged and you think that they would become possibly more engaged if the Labor Opposition in Queensland put out their economic credentials. Do you, when do you think they should put those out?

SHORTEN: Well clearly Anastacia Palaszczuk and her team have said that they would put out their policies, they'll roll them out during the election which has now been called, and I've got no doubt that we'll see more policies from Labor. When I say

disengaged, Australians know in January that when they're watching the cricket they don't necessarily want to see politics. But Campbell Newman's made his decision to call the election so I think, travelling around Queensland as I have in the last few days, that Queenslanders are engaging more in the election, and I do think they do want to see what are your health policies, what are your education policies and what are your jobs policies?

JOURNALIST: What do you make of Cory Bernardi's comments?

SHORTEN: I've just seen them. I think it's distasteful and it's pathetic that even before the dust has settled and families are still mourning their lost ones in Paris, that we see an Abbott Government MP trying to turn the tragedy in Paris into a domestic political issue in Australia. I respect the right of people to debate ideas, but in the immediate hours and days after the loss of 17 lives in France, I do not believe Government MPs should be seeking to use that tragedy to make domestic political points in Australia, and I'd call upon them to stop.

JOURNALIST: [inaudible] should we start talking about it though?

SHORTEN: Of course people are going to talk about what happened in Paris, of course they are, and we all need to work together and I've made it really clear, and Tony Abbott's been good enough to acknowledge this, that when it comes to fighting terror, Labor and Liberal are in this together. But I think it is an inappropriate stretch, we haven't even had the funerals, to see Government MPs trying to use what happened in Paris to justify divisive debates in Australia. You don't fight hate with hate, you don't give the green light to hate speech when in fact it's hate which we're all united against.

JOURNALIST: So do you think that Labor, will Labor agree then to pass George Brandis' terror laws?

SHORTEN: The Labor I lead has an excellent track record of working with the Government. Part of our contribution to making Australia safer has been to make sure that our Parliament engages in the vigorous review which Australians expect of us. It is important that in the white heat of upset and concern that cool and calm heads prevail and that we have laws which get the balance right between our security and our liberties. The changes that we made to the Government legislation in their first two tranches were accepted by the Government and they were grateful for them. So we will work with all appropriate commitment to make sure that we get the best laws to protect Australians, we'll do it in such a way that we make sure that the Parliament makes its contributions to not only the liberties of Australians but the safety of Australians.

JOURNALIST: Malcolm Turnbull has today said he wants to review the election eve ban on parties advertising on television [inaudible] is that something that you'd like to see as well?

SHORTEN: When I see Liberals talking about making it easier to spend giant amounts on campaigning I become suspicious. We all know that the Liberals have opposed greater disclosure and fundraising laws. What we need to do at all times is make sure that Australians know that fundraising for elections is transparent, and so I think that I'd rather see the Government focus on not on making it easier to spend big slabs on money, but making it easier for Australians to see who is donating to the political parties. One more question thanks.

JOURNALIST: The new figures out today reveal that the Government expenditure continues to rise, is Labor damaging the Budget at all by blocking the Government cuts in the Senate?

SHORTEN: Well the figures that you reveal today, that you speak about today, show that the Abbott Government is a government who says 'do as I say not as I do'. Under this Government we're seeing their expenditure blowing out. They love to give Australians a lecture about pulling their weight, about lifters and leaners. Joe Hockey famously said at the last Budget that we needed to have more lifters and less leaners. What today's numbers reveal in *The Australian* show is that we are a nation of lifters and lead by a Government of leaners, thanks everyone.

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