



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**THE SENATE**

**COMMITTEES**

**State Government Financial  
Management Committee**

**Report**

**SPEECH**

**Thursday, 18 September 2008**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE SENATE

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## SPEECH

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**Speaker** Polley, Sen Helen

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**Senator POLLEY** (Tasmania) (11.13 am)—I rise, too, to make a few comments in relation to the Select Committee on State Government Financial Management report. Firstly, I would like to acknowledge Steve Palethorpe and his secretariat for the work that they have done on this report and for their cooperation in putting together our minority report. I only want to make a few comments because I think Senator Forshaw more than adequately put the case for the government in response to what was without a doubt a committee that was established to target state Labor governments. It was one of a number of select committees that the opposition rammed through and was obviously designed to be more of a witch-hunt than a serious attempt to investigate financial management.

Might I say that from the outset this committee was a shameless political exercise by the opposition. That has been borne out by the comments of the two opposition senators who have already spoken. The opposition members were there to score as many political points as possible. Those of you who want to take the time to read the majority report will gather that. If the coalition had been serious, they would have recommended these issues to the relevant standing committee rather than setting up the political exercise we saw here. It is worth noting that the submission date for the committee was extended by six weeks back in March. Obviously the political motivations of the opposition behind this committee had not got the response from their state colleagues that they would have liked.

I do have some experience of financial management, having previously worked for the state Labor government of my home state of Tasmania. The Tasmanian Labor government has done a fantastic job in the last 10 years since it has been in government. It inherited an absolute mess from the previous Liberal administration when it took power. I am a bit disappointed that my opposition colleagues from Tasmania failed to ensure that there was some credit given to a state government that actually has turned the tables. It took the good management of that Labor government to rebuild the faith of the business community, to reinvest in the future of our state and to help build the prosperity that Tasmania finds itself enjoying now. Even the opposition senators from Tasmania should give credit where credit is due—although I will be surprised if they do. It is no surprise to those of us in Tasmania, though. It is a bit of a theme

in Tasmania that a Labor government seems to always have to pick up the pieces and rebuild after the Liberals have mismanaged the state.

Let us just look at what Hawke and Keating did. We are doing the same here now at the federal level after the high inflation and interest rate rise legacy of the Howard government. The government senators do not support the core conclusions and recommendations of the majority report. We do not support the first three recommendations in the majority report. While we can see merit in each state and territory government considering the benefits of implementing a charter of budget honesty, it is simply not appropriate for a Senate committee to be making recommendations requiring the direct action of other sovereign parliaments.

I also find it curious that the opposition have recommended that the prospect of state income taxes be investigated—a more complex tax system! What do we get once again from this opposition? Another layer of complexity for the Australian public to deal with. They come into this chamber relentlessly espousing the importance of small business and yet here they are wanting to introduce another level of taxation on the Australian community. I seek leave to continue my remarks later.

Leave granted.