

Barton Deakin Brief: Budget in Reply 2024

17 May 2024

On Thursday 16 May 2024, the Leader of the Opposition, the Hon. Peter Dutton MP, delivered the “Budget in Reply” speech in the House of Representatives. While the Budget in Reply is not a comprehensive statement of spending on the part of the alternative government, it is an important speech outlining the values and objectives of the Federal Opposition. This Budget in Reply outlined key themes of Liberal National Coalition policy, and related initiatives, heading into an election year.

Response to the 2024/25 Federal Budget

Mr. Dutton announced that the Opposition would support a number of Budget initiatives:

- \$3.4 billion for medicines on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme,
- the extension of emergency payments to support women and children fleeing domestic violence, which the Coalition established in 2021, and
- \$300 energy rebate for every household.

Mr. Dutton criticised the Budget as “irresponsible”, noting:

- In its three Budgets, the Labor Government has lifted spending by \$315 billion, or \$30,000 per Australian household,
- The inflationary impact of increased spending and the Labor Government’s responsibility for any future interest rate increases,
- More than 16,000 businesses around Australia have gone insolvent since the 1 July 2022,
- Productivity has fallen by 5.4% under Labor,
- Household buying power has fallen by 7.5%,
- Last year’s increase in average tax rates, the largest in the developed world, and
- double-digit increases for essentials including electricity, gas, milk, bread and rent.

Mr. Dutton asked Australians:

- “Are you better off today than you were two years ago?”, and
- “Do you feel safer or more secure than you did two years ago?”

The Coalition’s Economic Plan

Mr. Dutton outlined a ‘back to basics’ economic plan to get Australia back on track:

- reduce inflationary spending to decrease inflationary pressures
 - the Opposition, if elected, will not expend \$13.7 billion on corporate subsidies for green hydrogen and critical minerals,
- remove regulatory roadblocks
 - condense approval processes and cut red tape,



- remove the complexity and hostility of Labor’s industrial relations changes which place unreasonable burdens on businesses
 - for example, Mr. Dutton said, the Coalition will revert to the former Coalition Government’s simple definition of a casual worker,
- lower, simpler and fairer taxes for all,
- competition policy which gives consumers and smaller businesses a fair go, and
- ensure Australians have more affordable and reliable energy.

Mr. Dutton announced that a Coalition Government will extend the value of assets eligible for the instant asset write-off to \$30,000 and make it ongoing for small businesses.

To alleviate pressure on the housing market, Mr. Dutton announced a Coalition Government will:

- Reduce permanent migration, from 185,000 to 140,000 for two years (then 150,000 in year three and 160,000 in year four)
 - compared to the Labor Government’s 1.67 million migrants over five years, more than the population of Adelaide,
- Return the refugee and humanitarian program planning level to the long-term average, from 20,000 to 13,750,
- Permit Australians to access up to \$50,000 of their super to buy their first home, extended to separated women to help restart their lives, with money returned to super when the house is sold to support retirement,
- Reduce the numbers of foreign students at metropolitan universities, increase the student visa fee and apply it to foreign students who change courses, and
- Implement a two-year ban on foreign residents purchasing existing homes.

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Mr. Dutton also outlined measures to:

- Increase workforce participation, by recommitting to doubling the work bonus for around 80,000 pensioners,
- Deliver more affordable and reliable energy by ramping up domestic gas production,
- Incentivise junior doctors training in general practice,
- Improve community safety with tougher knife laws, tight bail laws, improved online safety and by tackling antisemitism, and
- Boost Defence by reprioritising spending, including the \$24 billion over four years Labor has set aside in the Budget for an additional 36,000 public servants.

Further Information

Peter Dutton’s Budget in Reply speech is [here](#).

For more information, please contact [Anthony Bensch](#) on 0438 439 431.

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