

**SENATOR PATRICK DODSON
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SENATOR FOR WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

**E&OE TRANSCRIPT
RADIO INTERVIEW
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SUBJECTS: Budget, Remote Housing, CDP, Closing the Gap, Captain Cook monuments.

MOLLY HUNT: Good morning Senator.

SENATOR DODSON: Good morning Molly.

MOLLY HUNT: Senator, what's your reaction to last night's budget?

SENATOR DODSON: Well, from the First Nations perspective it's pretty poor. It's unimaginative and disastrous.

Remote housing to the State (of WA) is not being supported by the Federal Government's budget which means over the next couple of years there will be at least 1.5 billion dollars slashed to remote housing. The Western Australian portion of that is annually is around \$100 million dollars. This means serious impacts for people in the regions in relation to housing.

We have no money allocated for roads in this budget. The Territory is getting an upgrade to the Buntine Highway; most of the roads money for WA is going into the metropolitan areas. There is very little money going into the Closing the Gap service areas, in fact there is no new money that has been allocated there. So the priorities for Closing the Gap which are linked to the reduction in housing funding is a serious worry for many of our people. And not just Indigenous Peoples, but service providers and public sector health providers.

The whole approach of this Government is neglectful of First Nations People in the remote areas. There are some positives in the procurement area in other states but that doesn't help in many of these places. There's some money allocated into Indigenous Protected

Areas, \$15 million dollars, but what take of that comes into the Kimberley is unclear at this point, but hopefully some of it comes there.

There is also some money in age care which we hope will help in some of those cases where carers have to look after their families at home. Again the detail around that in relation to the Northern part of the State is not clear.

There's a bit of a tantalising flirt with the CDP, with a promise of 6000 new wage type subsidies for a scheme that has absolutely failed First Nations peoples. There are 30,000 current CDP participants and there is no clarity about what their destinies are going to be.

Overall, it's a bit like being a kid who's in a foster home watching all the other kids get a present off the Christmas tree and being left to pick up the glittering wrappers and hopefully play with the busted toys once they have been discarded.

So the budget is very disappointing. A very sad neglect of First Nations peoples and an indictment on the Turnbull Government that pretends it wants to do things with First Nations peoples. And it's a neglect of the bush as well. There is no clarity around the mobile black spot concerns that many of our people in remote areas have got or any improvement of communication systems to the remote areas. The whole question of how that could assist families, pastoral properties and others – there is no clarity around that at all and that is a major concern.

We know there is some funding for the Cape Leveque Road which is a good thing, but that's not out of this budget, that has come with the state's contributions as well.

So overall, a very sad return for First Nations. It looks like the cuts to the IAS overall is going to mean a lot of hardship to service providers. The clarity around that we are yet to distil but there will be cuts like there are to all departments, I think of about \$32 million dollars to the IAS... but there is no reform, no insight and no real plan to move things to a better place for Indigenous peoples.

MOLLY HUNT: You're with ABC Kimberley, I'm talking to WA Senator Patrick Dodson, my name is Molly Hunt. Senator, we have about three minutes until the seven o'clock news, I just want to know, is the Government making any substantive changes to the ongoing trial of the cashless welfare card in this year's extension?

SENATOR DODSON: The Government wants to roll it out in Kalgoorlie. Labor is obviously not happy about that. There is not sufficient evidence to say its working either in Kununurra or Ceduna. The need for wrap around services obviously have to be improved. The Government wanted to introduce drug testing, we've opposed that, but it will more than likely come up in the Senate during these sittings with Kalgoorlie. But it has no other mandate from the Parliament to go further than Kalgoorlie until there is some clear and unequivocal evidence that this particular draconian measure actually works.

MOLLY HUNT: And just lastly Senator, overall impression of last night's budget?

SENATOR DODSON: Well as I said I'm like the kid at the Christmas tree watching all the other kids jumping with joy and celebrating and waiting for their wrappers to be dropped to the floor so we can pick them up.

MOLLY HUNT: Senator, do you support the money for the Captain Cook anniversary?

SENATOR DODSON: Well no, not really. I think we have got to find ways to deal with our history and we have heard from the Uluru Statement from the Heart for the need for a truth telling commission, for a Makarrata Commission, so we can come to a greater consensus around the settlement narrative, the occupation narrative and the so called discovery narrative of this nation. I think we have to get beyond these colonial and draconian measures that keep continuing to divide us.

MOLLY HUNT: Senator, thank you for your time on the show today.

SENATOR DODSON: Thank you very much.

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