

Contents:

1. Background.....	3
2. The Top 3: GOVERNMENT, BUDGET, TAX.....	4
3. The money: MILLION and BILLION.....	5
4. Costello's penchant for the first person singular pronoun.....	6
5. Promises, promises: NEW, MORE and FUTURE.....	7
6. And the winner is: HEALTH!.....	8
7. PEOPLE and WORK.....	8
8. PEOPLE, (WORKING) FAMILIES and NATION (BUILDING).....	9
9. Costello: a plain talking man?.....	12
10. SPENDING and SAVING.....	13
11. Rhetorical positioning in budget speeches.....	14
12. It's "the economy", stupid.....	16
Appendix 1 Word frequencies in Budget speeches, 2005-2009.....	19
13. Notes on method.....	19
14. Findings.....	21

1. Background

The Federal Government's annual budget speech is our nation's pre-eminent political speech. It is the only regularly televised political speech on the Australian calendar. We require no other annual, public statement from our government. In this regard, the budget speech can be considered our version of the "state of the union" address in the United States.

This study takes Peter Costello's final three speeches as Treasurer (2005, 2006, 2007), and the first two of Swan's term as Treasurer (2008, 2009). We will add Swan's third speech following the handing down of the budget on May 11th, 2010. We have run these speeches through a concordance programme - specifically, a high performance programme called SysConc, developed by Dr Wu Canzhong, Deputy Director of the Centre for Language in Social Life. The concordance programme allows us simply and quickly to calculate word frequencies. The report is based on the Top 20 words for:

1. all five speeches (see **Table 1**),
2. the Coalition speeches versus the Labor speeches. (see **Table 2**)
3. each individual speech (see **Table 4**)

When we consider all five speeches together, we can begin to answer questions about the budget speech as a form of political discourse. When we separate Costello's speeches from Swan's speeches, we can consider how similar or different Coalition and Labor are in their orientation to the political task of presenting a budget. We get a finer grained analysis by considering the Top 20 for each individual speech.

As outlined in our methodology (see Appendix 1), we excluded closed system words (i.e. "grammatical items" – prepositions, pronouns, conjunctions...etc) in order to generate a list of words where we can claim that choice over a lexical item has been exercised. **Table 1** shows the top 20 words when all five speeches are combined. We have chosen the "Top 20" words to consider – please bear in mind

that this is an arbitrary cut off point, but we had to stop somewhere. Some of the lists are slightly over 20 words, as we have included all words that have the same frequency as we approach the 20 word limit for the list.

2. The Top 3: GOVERNMENT, BUDGET, TAX

Table 1 presents the “Top 20” for all five speeches combined. What does it tell us about the budget speeches for the last five years? **The GOVERNMENT – represented in these speeches as the agent of benevolent action – gets top billing.** They INVEST, PROVIDE, FUND, EXEMPT, ASSIST, IMPLEMENT, and so on.

The BUDGET and TAX come next. Interestingly when we examined the “concordance lines” (the words on either side of the key word) for each instance of TAX, **we find that TAX is only used as a noun (e.g. “income tax; tax cuts”), and never as a verb** – that is, we never find the government saying “we will tax you more” or “we will tax you less”. By using TAX as a noun, it gets objectified, and therefore becomes separate from the act of taxing.

If taxes of any kind have been raised since 2005, they have not been announced in the budget speech. We find many instances of TAX CUT/S, and NO TAX ON..., TAX-FREE, TAX-DEDUCTIBLE, TAX BREAK, TAX BENEFIT. We find no instances of TAX RISE, TAX HIKE, or related phrases. **Budget speeches have warm happy news about taxes.**

The word BUDGET is big because the Treasurers are not only enacting the budget by making the announcements, they are also positioning the budget. In other words, the Treasurers are recruiting the word BUDGET not just for making announcements but for projecting the ways in which they want us to see the significance of the combination of measures announced in any given year. Costello, for instance, says: “This Budget is about sharing the benefits of this strong economic management not just with more Australians, but with all Australians”. An instance from Swan is: “It is a Budget that strengthens Australia’s economic foundations, and delivers for working families under pressure.”

Table 1: Top 20 words in all 5 speeches (Costello 2005-07; Swan 2008-09)

All 5 speeches			
rank	word	count	frequency per 100 words
Tokens: 10626			
Types: 2463			
1	GOVERNMENT	173	1.628
2	BUDGET	127	1.195
3	TAX	126	1.186
4	MILLION	123	1.158
5	AUSTRALIA	119	1.12
6	YEARS	113	1.063
7	BILLION	108	1.016
8	YEAR	96	0.903
9	NEW	91	0.856
10	CENT	90	0.847
11	FUTURE	73	0.687
12	TONIGHT	67	0.631
13	MORE	65	0.612
14	INCOME	63	0.593
15	FUND	62	0.583
16	HEALTH	61	0.574
17	AUSTRALIAN	61	0.574
18	AUSTRALIANS	60	0.565
19	PEOPLE	55	0.518
20	WORK	54	0.508

3. The money: MILLION and BILLION

We also find MILLION (#4) and BILLION(#7) high up on the list. Again, this is not surprising, although **Table 2** below (where we separate Coalition speeches from Labor speeches) shows an interesting difference. **For the Coalition, MILLION is more common than BILLION (79 instances as against 59 over 3 speeches), while the reverse is true for the Labor speeches (49 instances as against 44 over 2 speeches).**

That Labor speeches have a higher frequency for BILLION than MILLION does not, of course, mean that Labor is spending more. One explanation for the difference could be a tendency observed that the **Labor speeches, like apples, have a “core”** – a central announcement which bundles up a number of programmes into a

packaged announcement. In 2008 it was the “Working Families Support Package” which was at the “very core” of the budget; in 2009 it was the “nation building” plan.

Table 2 On left, Top 20 for Coalition speeches; on right, Top 20 for Labor speeches

coalition speeches (2005-07)				labor speeches (2008-2009)			
rank	word	count	frequency per 100 words	rank	word	count	frequency per 100 words
Tokens: 6363				Tokens: 4263			
Types: 1770				Types: 1461			
1	GOVERNMENT	98	1.54	1	GOVERNMENT	75	1.759
2	TAX	87	1.367	2	BUDGET	55	1.29
3	MILLION	79	1.242	3	AUSTRALIA	54	1.267
4	BUDGET	72	1.132	4	BILLION	49	1.149
5	YEAR	70	1.1	5	YEARS	48	1.126
6	AUSTRALIA	65	1.022	6	MILLION	44	1.032
7	YEARS	65	1.022	7	TAX	39	0.915
8	BILLION	59	0.927	8	NEW	38	0.891
9	CENT	53	0.833	9	CENT	37	0.868
10	NEW	53	0.833	10	FUTURE	32	0.751
11	TONIGHT	47	0.739	11	NATION	32	0.751
12	PEOPLE	46	0.723	12	HEALTH	32	0.751
13	AUSTRALIAN	46	0.723	13	FUND	31	0.727
14	INCOME	43	0.676	14	EDUCATION	30	0.704
15	FUTURE	41	0.644	15	ECONOMY	26	0.61
16	WORK	40	0.629	16	YEAR	26	0.61
17	MORE	40	0.629	17	MORE	25	0.586
18	AUSTRALIANS	38	0.597	18	ECONOMIC	24	0.563
19	JULY	36	0.566	19	NATIONAL	23	0.54
20	ADDITIONAL	36	0.566	20	BUILDING	23	0.54
21	CARE	36	0.566	21	FAMILIES	23	0.54

4. Costello’s penchant for the first person singular pronoun

As we would expect, Time features in the list, with YEARS/YEAR both in the Top 20, because budget announcements are for money spent over the next few years. Note also that TONIGHT turns up. Table 2 tells us that the use of TONIGHT is more attributable to Costello than to Swan. Of the 67 uses, 47 are by Costello (see **Table 2**), that is, an average of 16 per speech, compared with 10 for Swan.

This may seem unimportant. But its significance first of all is the immediacy that the term creates – a “seize the moment” kind of tenor. But in addition, it happens that TONIGHT turns up almost always with the first person pronoun “I” (see **Figure 1**, which shows a snapshot of the concordance lines for TONIGHT). **Costello is not only more likely to use the word TONIGHT, but much more likely to insert himself as “I” into his speeches. Thus, he projects himself *personally* through the budget announcements, being roughly twice as likely to refer to himself as Swan (see **Table 3**).**

The Budget I announce tonight is framed for the future the future opportunity want to encourage more people to join the workforce. Tonight I announce the largest ever programme designed to create 100,000 jobs. Tonight I announce details of the Future Fund an investment of \$19 billion in today's terms. Also tonight I will announce tax cuts for business and tax cuts for individuals. The Budget I announce tonight is in surplus a surplus of 1 per cent of GDP. Our proposal for reform announced tonight is to start on 1 July 2006. From 1 July 2006 the Government will announce a massive increase in outside incentives for people to move out of welfare into work, tonight I am announcing a tax cut for low income earners. The changes I announce tonight ensure that future generations can continue to reduce the number of teenagers becoming regular smokers each year. Tonight I am announcing a new Youth Campaign, which will provide support for young people. In recognition of the contribution these people make, tonight I announce as I did last Budget an additional \$1 billion to reduce this surcharge but the Labor Party has blocked it, so tonight I announce the complete abolition of the surcharge. Tonight I announce \$1.8 billion of tax cuts to enhance the competitiveness of Australian business. From midnight tonight, the 3 per cent tariff on imported business inputs will be abolished. Mr Speaker, tonight I announce further personal income tax cuts for those with taxable income below \$64,000. Under the measures I announce tonight it will stand at \$125,000.

Figure 1 Extract of concordance lines for TONIGHT

Treasurer	Year	No. of instances of “I”
Costello	2005	25
	2006	23
	2007	25
Swan	2008	12
	2009	11

Table 3 Instances of first person pronoun "I" in budget speeches 2005-2009

5. Promises, promises: NEW, MORE and FUTURE

NEW and MORE are also high frequency words. These are words that help you to make promises. The word FUTURE also makes a contribution to the act of promise making. It is sobering to read five speeches in a row, since budgets are full of promises for the future. On the basis of these speeches, Australia should have: a sustainable world class health system, jobs for all Australians, no skill shortages,

carers who feel their work is recognised and valued, a stabilised Iraq, high quality education at all levels, a high quality transport network, well funded scientists, a healthy Murray-Darling River system, a well protected environment, plenty of soldiers with lots of tanks and planes, simple and streamlined superannuation, families with plenty of money in their pockets, no illegal fishing in Australian waters, affordable childcare, affordable housing ...etc.

6. And the winner is: HEALTH!

At number 16 on our Top 20, we find the first reference to an end to which our taxes are directed, and it is HEALTH. If we examine **Table 2**, we can see that HEALTH made the top 20 more from the Swan speeches than from Costello's. **If Swan had used HEALTH with the frequency of Costello, it would not have made the Top 20.**

While HEALTH is the major preoccupation, **MENTAL HEALTH has very low visibility** (2 instances in Costello's 2006 speech). There are no instances of the phrase PRIMARY HEALTH CARE. The phrase PREVENTATIVE HEALTH turns up twice, both in Swan's 2008 speech. Costello makes one announcement involving the word PREVENTION, and that is related to prevention of skin and breast cancer. The words FOOD, DIET, EXERCISE – do not turn up at all. Neither does the word OBESITY. There are two references to DIABETES, both in Costello's 2007 speech.

7. PEOPLE and WORK

The high frequency of the word PEOPLE at number 19 in the Top 20 for all five speeches combined is an effect from Costello's speeches - 46 of the 55 instances are from Costello. He uses the term to develop categories of people, such as young people, people of working age, small business people, people with disabilities, unemployed people. There is also a vein through his speeches of the word PEOPLE recruited to moving people from benefits of various kinds into work. WORK, at number 20, is part of the same motif. **Figure 2** shows a snapshot of the concordance lines for WORK in Costello's speeches, illustrating the preoccupation with getting people off benefits into work. Swan never uses the word WORK for these purposes.

we see in Swan's 2008 speech EDUCATION AND HEALTH featuring in the Top 20, while in 2009, we see HEALTH, RAIL, INFRASTRUCTURE, PENSION, RESEARCH, EDUCATION and JOBS all making the cut.

By contrast, when we examine the Top 20 for the three Costello speeches, it is difficult to “read off” the ends to which the budget is being spent. EDUCATION turns up in the Top 20 for Costello's 2007 speeches, but otherwise, it is hard to point out a word that clearly reveals a funding area to which funds are being committed, although we do see some generic terms such as SERVICES/CARE turning up. Again, it is tempting to conclude that this is evidence for the individualistic philosophy of the Liberal party.

A caller to talkback radio reportedly said around the time of the last election “We live in a society, not an economy”, a riposte to Margaret Thatcher's claim that “There is no such thing as society”. **We found only two instances of the word SOCIETY across the five speeches – one in each of Costello's 2005 and 2006 speeches.** It is interesting to ponder the absence entirely of the word from Labor speeches. Rudd's first speech to Parliament contained ten instances of the word “society” – and a direct repudiation of Thatcherism. **But the Labor budgets appear to rely on NATION as the higher order good to which economic policy is directed.** The word NATION does a lot of work for Swan, not just to do with “nation building”. Note it rates at number 11 in the Top 20 for the Labor speeches.

NATION is quite a different choice from SOCIETY. SOCIETY means “of or pertaining to the life, welfare, and relations of human beings in a community”, while NATION invokes a political entity, defined as “a large body of people, associated with a particular territory, that is sufficiently conscious of its unity to seek or to possess a government peculiarly its own”. **Given that we were a nation before the Rudd government came to power, the government must have another meaning for “nation building” than “nation” in the dictionary meaning of the word, although it is not clear from the speeches what this other meaning is.**

Table 4 Top 20 for each of the five individual speech

2005				2006				2007				2008				2009			
rank	word	count	per 100 words	rank	word	count	%	rank	word	count	%	rank	word	count	%	rank	word	count	%
Tokens: 2074				Tokens: 2094				Tokens: 2195				Tokens: 2246				Tokens: 2017			
Types: 860				Types: 907				Types: 902				Types: 906				Types: 936			
1	GOVERNMENT	30	1.446	1	TAX	38	1.815	1	GOVERNMENT	34	1.549	1	GOVERNMENT	52	2.315	1	BUDGET	29	1.438
2	BUDGET	28	1.35	2	GOVERNMENT	34	1.624	2	TAX	30	1.367	2	YEARS	38	1.692	2	MILLION	24	1.19
3	WORK	28	1.35	3	MILLION	31	1.48	3	YEARS	28	1.276	3	BILLION	34	1.514	3	AUSTRALIA	23	1.14
4	PEOPLE	25	1.205	4	AUSTRALIA	28	1.337	4	YEAR	25	1.139	4	AUSTRALIA	31	1.38	4	GOVERNMENT	23	1.14
5	MILLION	23	1.109	5	NEW	28	1.337	5	MILLION	25	1.139	5	CENT	27	1.202	5	NATION	20	0.992
6	BILLION	20	0.964	6	YEAR	27	1.289	6	BILLION	22	1.002	6	BUDGET	26	1.158	6	BUILDING	17	0.843
7	YEARS	20	0.964	7	BUDGET	24	1.146	7	BUDGET	20	0.911	7	TAX	26	1.158	7	BILLION	15	0.744
8	FUTURE	19	0.916	8	AUSTRALIAN	21	1.003	8	AUSTRALIA	20	0.911	8	FUND	25	1.113	8	NEW	15	0.744
9	TAX	19	0.916	9	BILLION	17	0.812	9	CARE	18	0.82	9	FUTURE	23	1.024	9	GLOBAL	15	0.744
10	YEAR	18	0.868	10	CENT	17	0.812	10	CENT	18	0.82	10	NEW	23	1.024	10	ECONOMY	14	0.694
11	CENT	18	0.868	11	YEARS	17	0.812	11	INCOME	16	0.729	11	MILLION	20	0.89	11	HEALTH	14	0.694
12	AUSTRALIA	17	0.82	12	ADDITIONAL	16	0.764	12	TONIGHT	16	0.729	12	FAMILIES	20	0.89	12	RECESSION	13	0.645
13	TONIGHT	17	0.82	13	PROVIDE	15	0.716	13	FUND	16	0.729	13	EDUCATION	20	0.89	13	TAX	13	0.645
14	AUSTRALIANS	16	0.771	14	INCREASE	15	0.716	14	FUTURE	15	0.683	14	YEAR	19	0.846	14	RAIL	12	0.595
15	NEW	16	0.771	15	TONIGHT	14	0.669	15	MORE	15	0.683	15	NATIONAL	18	0.801	15	INFRA- STRUCTURE	12	0.595
16	MORE	15	0.723	16	RATE	14	0.669	16	ADDITIONAL	14	0.638	16	HEALTH	18	0.801	16	PENSION	11	0.545
17	SERVICES	15	0.723	17	INVESTMENT	14	0.669	17	FUNDING	14	0.638	17	INFLATION	15	0.668	17	RESEARCH	11	0.545
18	JULY	15	0.723	18	PLAN	13	0.621	18	WANT	13	0.592	18	MORE	15	0.668	18	CENTRAL	10	0.496
19	INCOME	14	0.675	19	INCOME	13	0.621	19	EDUCATION	13	0.592	19	ECONOMIC	15	0.668	19	PRIVATE	10	0.496
20	CARE	13	0.627	20	BUSINESS	12	0.573	20	NATIONAL	12	0.547	20	SPENDING	15	0.668	20	MORE	10	0.496
21	ECONOMIC	13	0.627	21	SECURITY	12	0.573	21	PROVIDE	12	0.547	21	WORKING	15	0.668	21	SYSTEM	10	0.496
22	ANNOUNCE	13	0.627					22	JULY	12	0.547					22	EDUCATION	10	0.496
23	AUSTRALIAN	13	0.627					23	CHILD	12	0.547					23	PROJECTS	10	0.496
								24	AUSTRALIAN	12	0.547					24	JOBS	10	0.496
																25	CENT	10	0.496
																26	YEARS	10	0.496

9. Costello: a plain talking man?

There is some evidence of a slightly more “verby” style in Costello’s speeches, meaning a tendency towards a more plain “unpacked” style.

For instance, Costello uses SAVING as a verb, as in “We *are saving* over \$8 billion per annum in interest payments.” Here SAVING is, in the traditional (although inaccurate) definition of a verb, “a doing word”. Swan never says “we *are saving*”. Instead, he says things like “ “Mr Speaker, the *savings* decisions we have taken will allow us to offset fully our new spending...etc”. (Note the proximity in this example of the words SAVINGS and SPENDING – more on this below).

Table 4 shows us that Costello’s Top 20 lists includes some words that either unequivocally verbs (that is, not only are they verbal in their form, but they can only be used as verbs, e.g. PROVIDE) or which are exclusively used as verbs (e.g. WANT). While verb forms are apparent in Swan’s Top 20, the words are actually predominantly used as nouns. So for instance we find FUND, BUILDING, SPENDING and WORKING in the Top 20 for 2008 and 2009, but as Table 5 shows, these words are almost always used as nouns by Swan.

Table 5 Verbal forms and their usage as verbs in Swan’s speeches

ITEM	Total no. of instances across 2008-09 speeches	Number of times word turns up as a verb
FUND	31	4
BUILDING	23	3
SPENDING	18	0
WORKING	17	3

In addition, a “lexical density” measure was applied to the opening moves in the first two Costello speeches, and the two Swan speeches (see Appendix 2). This means we counted the number of “open system” words per unit clause. That is, we left out all grammatical items, and counted the “content” words. In the example below, we have underlined the “content” words:

This budget is designed to meet the big challenges of the future.

A higher number of content words indicates more information being packaged into the unit of message (see Appendix 2). The consequence is the language is more dense. It is more “wordy”; more like written language than like spoken language. Costello’s rates were 4.76 and 4.7 content words per message. Swan’s first two speeches have a lexical density of 8.3 and 6.2. A higher lexical density means more work is done by nouns than in language where there is a lower lexical density. We would need to test this finding further across the data to see whether it holds across the corpus more generally.

10. SPENDING and SAVING

As noted above, the word SPENDING makes the cut in Swan’s first speech as Treasurer. Budget speeches are, of course, all about spending, so this should not be a surprise. However, while Costello was busy announcing spending in his speeches, the word itself was not prominent. As Table 6 shows, **Costello was three times more likely to say SAVE/ING than to say SPEND/ING**. In addition, the two words are not found in each other’s company in Costello’s speeches.

Swan by contrast is saying SPENDING more (average 10 per speech versus 2.3 for Costello), and saying SAVING much less (3.5 per speech versus 7 per speech for Costello). For Swan, the word SAVING half the time appears in the environment of SPENDING – e.g. “the savings decisions we have taken will allow us to offset fully our new spending” – we are saving so that we can spend. An example of this collocation is Swan’s claim for a “surplus built on disciplined spending”. While the spending is described here as “disciplined” there is an inherent contradiction in a “surplus built on spending” – the surplus is the money that you don’t spend; how do you build a surplus by spending? It is like the arguments for going to war in order to achieve peace. We should reiterate that this finding does not mean Labor is doing more spending than the Coalition government did; only that they talk about it more.

The figures in brackets in Table 6 show how many instances of these verb forms are actually used as verbs. We see here, again, a bit more evidence that Costello has a more “verby” style than Swan.

Table 6 Use of SAVE/ING and SPEND/ING in Costello and Swan speeches

Treasurer	Save/Saving/Savings	Spend/ing
Costello	21 (9)	7 (4)
Swan	7 (0)	20 (1)

11. Rhetorical positioning in budget speeches

What do these findings tell us in relation to the tendency for a majority of Australians to believe that the Coalition are the better economic managers? Are they better economic managers, or have they more successfully presented themselves as “better” economic managers?

What the frequencies don’t show is the clear message from Costello in this regard. **His speeches do not merely announce – they project a consistent, indeed unrelenting message, to the effect that the good economic times all boil down to the “sound” “disciplined” and “prudent” economic management.** Costello’s 2005 and 2006 speeches both begin and end with this take home message. Costello’s positioning of the Coalition government reaches a crescendo in his final budget speech – ironically, his “swansong” – where a substantial part of the opening of the speech is devoted to a contrast between the good economic times of 2007, with the state of play “back in 1996” and “in the decade before 1996” – for which read “when the Labor Party was last in government”.

Figure 3 shows the concordance lines for the word LABOR in Costello’s speeches. **It is easy to see what the word LABOR is associated with in Costello’s speeches: debt and deficit.**

esented to this House. Before that the last Budget of the Labor Government was in deficit a deficit of 2 per cent reduced that net debt by \$90 billion. We are paying off Labor's debt and soon we can begin saving saving fr

The surcharge was introduced in 1996 when Labor left a large Budget deficit. We have now paid off r

left a large Budget deficit. We have now paid off most of Labor's legacy. We have previously tried to reduce this

ve have previously tried to reduce this surcharge but the Labor Party has blocked it, so tonight I announce the con

After we balance our budget, reduce Labor's debt, and fund our services we should reduce

st rates affordable, to balance our Budget, and to repay Labor's debt.

We have now eliminated the \$96 billion of net debt that Labor left the Australian Government when it left office. (

Figure 3 Concordance lines for LABOR in Costello speeches

Costello not only clearly positions the previous government as economically irresponsible, he also clearly and consistently positions the policies of the Coalition government as *the cause of the positive economic indices*. For instance, he announced in 2005 that unemployment was at a 28 year low. While unemployment levels are the result of a number of factors (including how one defines “unemployed” for the purposes of data collection), Costello took all the glory: “This is not an accident. This is not a fluke. This is the outcome of sound economic management.” He goes on: “Things could have been very different”. What is unvoiced, but implied, is “...if Labor were still in government”.

Swan has begun the long hard road of establishing his own economic credibility in the face of the popularity of Costello, the greater trust Australians seem to have in the Coalition as economic managers, and what appears to be a more complex financial environment. **Swan does critique the previous government, but in a less explicit fashion than Costello.** For instance, in 2008 Swan stated:

“For too long, our national budgets have squandered the proceeds of the mining boom and failed to invest properly in our country’s future”.

Note where Swan puts the responsibility for squandering. If I ask “who squandered the proceeds of the mining boom”, the answer is not actually a “who” but a “what” – it was “our national budgets”. Later in the same speech, he says that the present Labor government “has no intention of hoarding the strong surplus for its own sake. This money is not ours, it belongs to the

Australian people”. It is difficult not to read this as an implied criticism of the previous government. **Swan was, therefore, accusing his predecessors of both “squandering” and “hoarding”. You can’t have it both ways.** Swan also accused the previous government of politicising the budget:

“For too long, our national budgets have focussed on the next election, not the big challenges facing our country in the next decade and beyond”.

He also claims the Coalition favoured the wealthy. There is a hint of a class wedge in his rhetoric (e.g. “The government does not believe hard earned tax dollars are best spent on cash payments to the wealthiest Australians”; “For too long, working families have watched the proceeds of the boom directed elsewhere, in the form of tax cuts skewed to those already doing very well.”). Note in all these examples he does not directly accuse the Coalition. **Indeed, the word COALITION has so far not been used in either of Swan’s budget speeches.** We searched for alternative formulations – e.g. references to “the previous government”. There is one only, and it has no rhetorical charge (“The previous Government forecast a surplus of only 1.2 per cent for 2008-09”.)

In the 2009 speech, there is neither explicit nor implicit reference to the previous government. **The rhetorical foundations Swan was trying to lay in his previous speech in terms of a new narrative about the previous government go completely unreferenced and undeveloped in his 2009 speech.** This is very striking when compared with the almost rapier like style of Costello in his demolition of the previous Labor government.

12. It’s “the economy”, stupid.

It is always instructive when investigating any kind of language use to look at the etymology of crucial words. The word “economy” has its origins in the Greek word *oikonomia*, from *oikos* meaning “house” and *nemein* meaning “to manage”; a related term is *oikonomos*, meaning “household manager.” Thus,

the origins of our modern day usage go back to a verbal form – economy was originally a *process* not a *thing*. What is encapsulated by the term is not one but many processes. Their interrelations and trajectories are multidimensional and often unpredictable. Indeed, some of these processes are no doubt not well understood.

But by coining “the economy” as a noun, we objectify it. It comes to have the look and feel of a discrete, singular, countable thing – an object, and not a process or processes. This means we have to work harder to keep the complexity of the notion in the picture. The rhetorical drive of these speeches militates against keeping this complexity in view.

It would be an extremely useful extension of this study to understand how these speeches project a view of “the economy” – in that these speeches are one of the means by which Australians get a picture of what “the economy” is, what mechanisms are considered to drive the economy, and how the economy is positioned in similar or different ways by different governments. Ross Gittens’ columns for the *Sydney Morning Herald*, and his books such as *Gittonomics*, are a kind of antidote to the simplistic modes of representing “the economy” and “economics” that we find in discourse of many politicians.

An example of what I am suggesting above about the image of “the economy” that we find in these speeches is that “big is good”. For instance, if we combine all instances of the words GROW, GROWTH, GROWING, they would make it into the Top 20 for all five speeches. A good economy is a big economy. “Growth” is the objective. As Costello said in his 2005 speech, the “the aim of economic policy is to grow an economy and create jobs”. As you read the words GROW, GROWTH, GROWING, you can’t help but have a happy feeling.

This is a deep ideological bias in our language. Our grammar predisposes us to see GROWTH as good. The linguist M.A.K. Halliday identified this ideology and called it “growthism”. In his study of “growthism”, Halliday notes that

English and many other European languages construe our natural resources as mass nouns, and not countable nouns. Countable nouns, as the name suggests, are things that can be counted, like apples and oranges, tables and chairs. Mass nouns are things that can't be counted – like *air* and *water*. The implication of this grammatical distinction is profound, as Halliday has shown:

Our grammar construes *air* and *water* and *soil*, and also *coal* and *iron* and *oil* as 'unbounded' – that is, as existing without limit. In the horizons of the first farmers and the first miners, they did. We know that such resources are finite. But the grammar presents them as if the only source of restriction was the way that we ourselves quantify them: a barrel of oil, a seam of coal, a reservoir of water and so on – as if they in themselves were inexhaustible.

This unconscious grammatical construal of our natural resources as unbounded goes hand in hand with another grammatical motif, where “the grammar of ‘big’ is the grammar of ‘good’”. In this case, a good economy has to be “big”; and “growth” must be the aim. This is one of the messages that is more deeply expressed in these speeches. When economists say that consumption grew, it inevitably seems like a good thing, even if there are lots of negatives about higher levels of consumption.

This is but one of the deeper messages that these political speeches entail. **The basis of a more complex public debate on what the economy is, and how it relates to our everyday lives, requires a more detailed analysis of the ways both experts and politicians talk about the economy.** We are, unfortunately, not offering such analysis in this small scale study, but hope that we might be able to in the future.

For further discussion, please contact the study's author, Dr Annabelle Lukin (annabelle.lukin@mq.edu.au; mobile: 0431 402490)

Appendix 1 Word frequencies in Budget speeches, 2005-2009

13. Notes on method

Data set Word frequencies were determined using SysConc, on eight data sets: the five individual Budget speeches from the years 2005 to 2009, the set of three Liberal Party Budget speeches (years 2005, 2006 and 2007), the set of two Labor Party Budget speeches (years 2008 and 2009), and the set of all five speeches together.

Exclusions The frequencies were initially generated for all words (i.e. both lexical and grammatical items) but excluding numerals from the count. Because we are initially interested in the top 20 words in each data set, the top 20 to 25 words by rank were scanned for grammatical items, and these were then entered into SysConc as feature sets that could be excluded from the counts.

The subcategories of the feature set 'grammatical items' are:

1. prepositions
2. pronouns
3. conjunctions
4. demonstratives
5. articles (*the, a, an, some*)
6. terms of address (*mr, mrs, speaker, etc.*)
7. verbal operators (*be, have, do* and their conjugations; modal operators)
8. numeratives (cardinal and ordinal numbers spelt ialphabetically; also nonspecific numerative terms such as *many, any, etc. but not comparatives such as more or less*)
9. modal items (other than modal operators; mostly modal adjuncts)

These subcategories are fairly 'loose' – several of them take in more than might usually be expected from their name.

Other subcategories that we might want to consider excluding in future if we look at a bigger set of words:

10. general verbs (e.g. *make, go, take, affect*)
11. relational verbs (e.g. *remain, turn, look, stand*)
12. aspectual verbs (e.g. *try, continue*)

Choosing the 'top 20' words In the five files of individual speeches, the data sets are small and the word counts are fairly low. This means that for each of these smaller data sets, there tend to be a number of words at the same 'rank' within the top 20 ranks. so that many or all of the tokens fall within the top 20 by frequency. For example, in the 2009 speech, all 936 lexical types fall within the top 20 by frequency, with 50 words, each of which occurs only once in the text, being in 20th position. Even in the larger data set formed by combining the five files, there are two positions in the top 20 ranking that are filled by more than one word, as shown in Table 1: the words 'health' and 'australian' are both ranked 16th, with a count of 61, and the words 'additional' and 'economic' are both ranked 20th, with a count of 51.

#	Word	Count	%
1	GOVERNMENT	173	1.628
2	BUDGET	127	1.195
3	TAX	126	1.186
4	MILLION	123	1.158
5	AUSTRALIA	119	1.12
6	YEARS	113	1.063
7	BILLION	108	1.016
8	YEAR	96	0.903
9	NEW	91	0.856
10	CENT	90	0.847
11	FUTURE	73	0.687
12	TONIGHT	67	0.631
13	MORE	65	0.612
14	INCOME	63	0.593
15	FUND	62	0.583
16	HEALTH	61	0.574
	AUSTRALIAN	61	0.574
17	AUSTRALIANS	60	0.565
18	PEOPLE	55	0.518
19	WORK	54	0.508
20	ADDITIONAL	51	0.48
	ECONOMIC	51	0.48

Table 1. Top 20 lexical items in Budget Speeches 2005-2009

In this initial round of investigation, therefore, we selected the first 20 words in each list, rather than the top 20 words by frequency. Where the 20th word in the list is equal in rank with some that follow, these are included too. Table 2 shows how many ranks the first 20 words encompass for each of the six data sets, and the total number of words included in the 'first 20' for each set.

	Combined 2005-2009	2005	2006	2007	Lib	2008	2009	Labor
Rank of 20 th word	19	12	13	12	15	12	11	16
Number of	1	4	2	5	3	5	9	3

words at above rank								
Actual number of words in 'first 20'	20	23	21	24	21	20	26	21

Table 2. The difference between the first 20 and the top 20 words in each data set.

14. Findings

Words that are in the first 20 of all five speeches (the order is taken from the combined set; this varies in individual speeches):

1. government
2. budget
3. tax
4. million
5. Australia
6. years
7. billion
8. cent (as in 'per cent')

Words that are in all but one of the five speeches (missing year in brackets):

1. year (2009)
2. new (2007)
3. more (2006)

Words that are in at least two of the five speeches, but are not exclusive to liberal or labor speeches:

1. future (2005, 2007, 2008)
2. fund (2005, 2006, 2009)
3. economic (2005, 2008)
4. education (2007, 2008, 2009)
5. national (2007, 2008)

Words that appear in first 20 of liberal but not labor speeches (years in brackets):

1. tonight (2005, 2006, 2007)
2. income (2005, 2006, 2007)
3. Australian (2005, 2006, 2007)
4. Australians (2005, 2007)
5. people (2005)
6. work (2005)
7. july (2005, 2007)
8. additional (2006, 2007)
9. care (2005, 2007)
10. services (2005)
11. announce (2005)
12. provide (2006, 2007)
13. increase (2006)

14. rate (2006)
15. investment (2006)
16. plan (2006)
17. business (2006)
18. security (2006)
19. funding (2007)
20. want (2007)
21. child (2007)

Words that appear in first 20 of labor but not liberal speeches (years in brackets):

1. health (2008, 2009)
2. families (2008)
3. inflation (2008)
4. spending (2008)
5. working (2008)
6. nation (2009)
7. building (2009)
8. global (2009)
9. economy (2009)
10. recession (2009)
11. rail (2009)
12. infrastructure (2009)
13. pension (2009)
14. research (2009)
15. central (2009)
16. private (2009)
17. system (2009)
18. projects (2009)
19. jobs (2009)

Appendix 2

Lexical density calculations

Calculations based on Halliday's definition of lexical density. See M.A.K. Halliday, 1985. *Spoken and Written Language*. Geelong: Deakin University Press, for a full discussion of the concept and method.

Calculations are open system words per unit message. See Hasan, R. (1996b). Semantic networks: a tool for the analysis of meaning. In C. Cloran, D. Butt & G. Williams (Eds.), *Ways of Saying, Ways of Meaning* (pp. 104-131). London: Cassell.

	Costello	Swan
2005	218 items over 26 messages = lexical density of 4.7	
2006	157 lexical items over 34 messages = lexical density of 4.6	
2008		191 items over 23 messages = lexical density of 8.3
2009		249 items over 50 messages = lexical density of 6.2

ⁱ (see <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2007/12/04/2108688.htm>).