

## Q+A with Federal Treasurer, Jim Chalmers

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Hello and welcome to this very special Squiz Kids Q&A, the podcast where you, the kids of Australia, get to ask the questions. I'm Bryce Corbett. Today's guest in the Squiz Kids Q&A hot seat is none other than Federal Treasurer Jim Chalmers. He's the man who controls Australia's purse strings, deciding where and how the government spends its money.

And he's someone you're going to see a lot of in the news this week, as he prepares to deliver something called the Federal Budget. It's no small thing, the Federal Budget. Just like your mums and dads make decisions every day about what to buy to keep your household going, how much to put towards food, how to keep a roof over your head, what to spend on weekend sports or holidays, what sort of car to buy, and how much to set aside to save.

The treasurer makes decisions, similar to those, about what to spend the country's money on. So, yeah, it's a big job. And it's a busy one. Not least because Jim Chalmers is also a dad of three kids. And we all know how much time dadding takes up. So, we're super lucky to have him on the podcast, answering some of the hundreds of questions that you sent in.

And a big thanks to everybody who sent in a question. So, let's get on with it, shall we? Treasurer Jim Chalmers, welcome to Squiz Kids.

*I'm really excited to be here. Thanks for having me on your show.*

You're very welcome. Now, we really appreciate you taking the Squiz Kids Q&A hot seat and taking the time to speak to us, given that you're preparing to deliver a federal budget. So tell us, how's it all looking? Is the economy in good shape? Can the kids, mums and dads expect a rosy outcome on budget night on May 14?

*We're going to do our best for the mums and dads and kids, and communities around Australia, but there's some tricky stuff to work through at the moment. And I hope we get*

*a bit of a chance to talk about that, but there's a, there's some few difficult decisions and challenges that we have to deal with, but we'll find a way through.*

Excellent. Now I read recently that when you're prepping big documents like the budget, you like to listen to hip hop. or rap music. Who are your favourite artists and what are your favourite tunes?

*Look, I like, uh, there's a certain period of hip hop music that had guys like the Notorious B. I. G. and Tupac, and Snoop Dogg and those kinds of guys. But I've got to be super careful now since I've been Treasurer and since I've had kids because the language isn't always perfect in all of those songs. And so we listen to PG music at my house now.*

Like what?

*Oh, we listen to a lot of Taylor Swift. My daughter, Annabelle, who's seven. She's a Swifty and her favourite thing is to sing Taylor Swift with her mum in the car.*

How do her brothers enjoy that?

*Her little brother loves it. Her big brother is yet to be convinced.*

Sounds like every other household in Australia. Now, mate, we've selected a bunch of questions from the hundreds that have been sent in by our audience. Shall we jump straight in?

*Let's do it.*

Okay. Our first question is a pretty simple one, and it comes from Aiden from Oran Park in Sydney's West.

Hi, my name's Aiden and I'm nine years old and I live in Oran Park. In New South Wales, my question is, why did you want to become treasurer?

*I had an amazing teacher, Aidan, and, uh, his name was Norbert, and when I was in high school, he taught me modern history, and he taught me all about the world, and he showed me that people Even from backgrounds like mine, you know, not a fancy background, not a family of politicians, not a rich family, a family from a pretty basic suburb and upbringing.*

*He explained to me that even people like me could be involved in, in politics. And so he really planted the seed in my head when I was about 15 or 16. And then as I started working in politics, I discovered I had a real passion for the economy. I care a lot about jobs and I care a lot about how we create opportunities in our economy.*

*And so putting all of those things together, I knew that I wanted to be the treasurer because I figured that was the best job in the whole government, working closely with the Prime Minister.*

It's amazing how many people we speak to about what inspires them and it always comes back to teachers.

*Yeah. I mean, I shout out Norbert too. We just lost him not that long ago. Uh, a bit, uh, a bit shy of his 90th birthday.*

Wow.

*But he was one of the biggest influences on my whole life. And, and it's not an exaggeration to say, I wouldn't, I wouldn't be here talking to you on Squiz Kids were it not for meeting Norbert. When I met Norbert, I wasn't the best kid if I'm honest.*

*And he sort of gave me some direction and a lot of encouragement and a lot of belief. And so I really owe him a big debt of gratitude.*

And a big shout out to all our teacher listeners of whom there are many for all of the inspiration you provide on a daily basis, probably sometimes without even knowing you're doing it.

*Exactly.*

Okay. Off to the sunshine state, your home state of Queensland, we go where there's an interesting question now from 11-year-old Bronte on the Gold Coast.

*I'm worried about Bronte's question. What is it?*

Don't worry. It's not too bad.

Hi, my name's Bronte. I'm 11 years old and I'm from the Gold Coast. I heard you sometimes go into Parliament in Canberra with your toenails painted. Why is that?

*Well, on Sunday mornings, my, my daughter Annabelle, she likes to have a nail clinic. And really since she was quite little, she has been painting her mum's nails or her own nails on Sunday mornings. And sometimes if she knows that I'm going to be away for a while, whether I'm in Canberra for Parliament or in other parts of the world or other parts of the country, sometimes she'll paint one of my toes with a sparkly nail polish.*

*And she likes that because it means that I've got a reminder of her when I'm, when I'm away from her, and I really like it too. It's a little bit embarrassing if I'm getting changed after a run or something like that. My colleagues say that I've got glitter nail polish on my big toe or something like that, but I really like it.*

*It's a nice little tradition that we have. And she also puts her hair bands around my wrist. And so sometimes if you see me on the TV, uh, doing a press conference or something, sometimes people will say, why do you have a pink hair tie with beads on it around your wrist? And that's, again, because it's a nice little thing that I carry around to remind me of Annabelle and her brothers.*

How lovely. And a shout out to Annabelle and her brothers too. Still in Queensland now, where the kids in Miss Phelan's Year 6 class at Rochdale State School in Brisbane have a bunch of great questions, starting with one from Milan.

Hi, my name is Milan. I'm 11 years old and I live in Rochdale, Queensland. My question is, is it hard to decide what to spend Australia's money on?

*Well, Milan, I live just around the corner from you. I live at Springwood, just down the road, and sometimes if I get my act together early enough and I go on my morning run, I sometimes run past your school. It's a wonderful, wonderful school.*

*Just on the other side of my electric border to the north there at Rochedale. Wonderful place. So shout out to you and all your teachers and friends. Great, great place. I sometimes when it's really hot, I see that pool at the front of your school and I think geez, it wouldn't be a bad idea to have a couple of laps in your, in your lovely pool.*

Have you ever had a sneaky dip?

*I haven't, I haven't, but it's crossed my mind that it'd be, obviously I couldn't do that, but I think about the students of Rochedale quite a bit actually. And in terms of your question, it is really hard. It's really hard to work out what to spend the public's money, money on.*

*And that's because you can't do everything. You can't, you know, I would like to build more hospitals and more schools and we do build a lot, but you can't do everything that you want to do. And so it's hard to work out. You know, whether to spend some taxpayer money on one thing or another thing when those things are both important.*

*And so you've got to make decisions about which ones you do now and which ones you do later, which ones you can afford to do and which ones you can't do. And so it's a really good question because it allows me to be really, really honest with you. It's not an easy job. It's a really hard job. And that's one of the things that I find appealing about it.*

*I like it that it's difficult, but it does mean sometimes you sit there with the Prime Minister and your other colleagues in the government and you try and think, well, we want to do both of those things, but we can only do one. And that can sometimes be hard.*

Yeah, I'm sure. Tough choices to make. Still at Rochedale State School and it's over to Reynald, who has to be said, has a little bit of a curly one.

My name is Reynald and I'm 11 years old. And I live in Rochdale in Queensland. My question is, what would happen if you accidentally misspent Australia's money?

*Well, I'm not sure to be honest, I don't think I've done that yet, but I think the best thing to do, whether it's in my line of work or, or at school or the jobs that your mums and dads and friends' parents do is if you get something wrong, you, you try and fix it.*

*You fess up, you try and fix it. And I haven't done that. I haven't, to my knowledge, misspent anybody's money yet. But if that did happen. Get to the bottom of it, front up, and you fess up, and you try and work out a way to fix it.*

Good advice. One final question from the Year 6 class at Rochedale State School, and a shout out to their excellent teacher, Dani Phelan. And it's a very persuasive question from Ahmed.

Hi, my name is Ahmed. I'm 11 years old, and I live in Rochedale in Queensland. My question is, have you ever regretted a decision you've made as treasurer?

*Ah, Ahmed. So, the good thing about these Rochedale kids, by the way, is there's a good high school just around the corner. I went and spoke to their economics class. There you go. A couple of months ago. Some really, really sharp high school students as well. So hopefully some of these kids from Rochedale, go around the corner to Rochedale High. They've got a great economics program. I'm sure they will. And I'm sure if you're up for it, they'd be more than happy to welcome you into their classroom because I know the teacher there is very engaged.*

Yeah, that'd be cool. I'd love to do that.

*Look, I haven't, I haven't regretted a decision that we've taken. Um, be not a, not a big thing, but what happens sometimes is you get asked questions about something and you explain it a certain way and you go back to your office or you go home or you're sitting on the couch watching the football and you think, geez, I really wish I'd said that differently or I'd explained that differently.*

*And I think it's a really good skill for people to have, whether it's in jobs like mine or other jobs, to have the capacity to, to learn, you know, from the way that you do things. And so, I don't think I've made a big mistake or there's not a sort of a big call that I've made where I've thought later that was completely wrong.*

*But there are lots of little times where you think I probably could have explained that differently in that meeting or in that interview or there's things I could have done better or maybe that. Policy that we announced would have been better this way than that way. But in terms of the broad direction of things, I'm, I'm so far, pretty happy with the, the big calls that we've made.*

No, that's good. Let's hop across the continent now to Western Australia, where Kenzie from Beaconsfield primary school has a question.

Hi, my name is Kenzie. I'm 11 years old and I live in Hamilton Hill in WA. My question is, how do you handle the pressure of managing the government's money?

*Well, there's two sets of answers here, I think I'll, I'll try and tell you as quickly as I can. Cause I think that they are the secret to working.*

All right.

*So, two sets. The first set of two things is people do a lot of studies about what makes people happy at work. And the two things that matter at work are whether you think you're doing something that matters and whether you like the people that you work with.*

*And so in a high pressure job like mine, I don't have any trouble convincing myself that, that what I do matters. I feel like it's important, but really in terms of the pressure, I've got, you know, some really wonderful colleagues in my own team, but also in the government, there's a great friend of mine called Katie, who is in a ministry just like mine.*

*And I find that because we share the pressure, we can deal with it more effectively. So having good friends who you can rely on and trust is part of it. And doing something important. That's the first bit.*

*The second bit is having the ability to switch off. For me, it might be running. It might be swimming in the ocean. It might be listening to hip hop music. It might be reading books, might be watching football. It might be playing basketball with my kids, spending quality time with my children, all of these sorts of things to try and let off some steam. I think that's really important too.*

Good advice. All right, are you ready for another Curly One Treasurer?

*I am, I'm ready.*

All right, good, because 11-year-old Olive, from the farming community of Corowa in New South Wales, has one for you.

Hi, my name is Olive, I'm 11 years old, and I live near Corowa on the Murray River in New South Wales. My question is: we hear a lot about the cost of living and families struggling. How come the government donates millions of dollars to other countries when it could help these families? Thank you.

*Olive, I really like hard questions and I really respect people who've got the courage to ask things that might be difficult. So, I really wanted to give you a kind of a virtual pat on the back for asking a tough one, I appreciate it and I appreciate the communities like yours, the farming communities, regional communities, agricultural communities like yours. They're so important to our country. Look, the overwhelming majority of money in our budget goes to people here in Australia. There's a very, very small sliver where we try and be good citizens of the world.*

*Where we try to recognize that our own security here in Australia is a little bit dependent on whether our neighbours are safe and secure and prosperous as well. And for that little bit of money that we give out of the budget, we get a huge return on it, whether it's closer relations with our neighbours, whether it's trading relationships, whether it's national security.*

*And all of these things are really important to us. And so, I understand that when you, when I'm out and about in the community and here indeed on this podcast, some people would like us to give more to the international community. Some people would like us to give less. That's, that's fine. Everyone has a view.*

*And in my experience, most people have got good intentions, and they might strike a slightly different balance. But the balance that we're trying to strike is to overwhelmingly help people here in Australia with these costs of living pressures, which are significant. at the same time as we spend a little sliver of the budget being a good friend to our neighbours in the world.*



All right. I think, I think you handled that pretty well, don't you, Olive? Now here's a question from, and it's a question in fact we had from lots of kids, Take it away, Olive, Another Olive, this time from Fremantle.

Hi, my name is Olive. I am 11 years old and I live in Beaconsfield in WA. My question is, was this your dream job and if not, what did you want to be as a kid?

*Well, thanks, Oliver. And I've got to say, if you live in Freo, that's just one of the most beautiful parts of Australia. And my buddy, who's called Josh Wilson, he's your federal member of parliament. So you hit the jackpot twice. You got Josh, and you get to live in Freo, so well done. That's two from two as far as, as far as I'm concerned.*

*But when I was a little kid, I wanted to either be a truck driver (my dad was a driver), or I wanted to be a pilot. I was obsessed with planes when I was a little kid, and for a while I wanted to do that. But once I started thinking in high school, and I met that great teacher we were talking about before, I started to think about, imagine if there was a job where you could be like a journalist and write things. You could be like a social worker and help people. You could be like an economist and care about jobs and money and wages and things. And you could be like a legal aid lawyer. Where you, if people were in trouble, you could help them out in the legal system.*

*And when I got to about 15 or 16, it dawned on me, that there was a job like that, where you could do all of those sorts of things. You could think about big things like the economy and our place in the world at the same time as you could help people, you know, get a pension, or get some help if they were having a rough trot.*

*And that's really what being a local member of parliament and being the treasurer is all about. And so, once it dawned on me that I didn't have to choose between one of those four or five jobs, which sound great to me still, but sounded great to me when I was a teenager too. I worked out, I could do all of those things if I found a way to do this job that I'm doing now, but it's not easy.*

*There's only about 150, 151, members of the federal parliament. And so really from about 15, 16, 17 years old, it took me all the way until I was 35 years old, before I could get myself elected to the federal parliament. So I had to keep my eyes on it, and keep working towards it because I knew it would be worth it and it has been.*

Excellent answer. Now, treasurer, they say a way to a person's heart is through their stomach. Is that true of you?

*Unfortunately, it is. And that's why I need to do so much running. And so my favourite thing to eat, and it comes back to what we were saying before about the Sunday morning nail clinic at our house, we like making pancakes on Sundays. Nice. And I like making a banana pancakes with the blueberries in it.*

Oh, nice.

*And so that's probably my favourite thing that we, not just because the food is delicious, but because I like the actual process of making them with my youngsters at home, my little maniacs at my house.*

*And so I really enjoy that. So that's probably my, my favourite thing to eat, but you know, I like, I like cooking a whole bunch of stuff.*

And do they, the little monsters at home, clean up after themselves or is it like every other house in Australia?

*No, I'm the cleaner upper, yeah, I'm, I'm usually the cleaner upper.*

That sounds very familiar.

*Yeah. I know my place. Yeah.*

A little change of pace now as we go to 10-year-old Lucy in Sydney, who has a question about a topic that we talk about a lot here on Squiz Kids.

Hi, my name is Lucy and I'm 10 years old from Sydney. We'll be doing new sounds in class. Where Squiz-E, the newshound, tells us to stop, think and check when we're online. My question is, have you ever fallen for misinformation or fake news? And why do kids need to be on the lookout for it?

*I can't tell you Lucy how happy I am that you are thinking about these things because one of the things that worries me most about what being a kid is like now compared to*

*being a kid when I was a kid is this just all of this stuff that comes at you guys online, and often it is hard to tell whether something is real or not real. And so learning those skills from Squiz-E is, is so important. I just can't encourage you enough. It's so, so important, and there is sometimes where I might be flicking through social media and I'll see something and I'll think, I didn't realize that and I think it doesn't sound quite right and I'll use my own frame to try and work out - well, hang on a minute. It's not from a source that I trust and it's, you know, it's in an area that doesn't sound right to me. And so we need to be questioning and in my line of work, it can be quite damaging because sometimes a piece of misinformation will take hold and it will scare people.*

*And we will get a lot of calls in my office from people who are really scared about something that they've seen online. And, and we have the opportunity to explain to them why it's not right, but not everyone gets that opportunity. So be, I'm not sure what words that Squiz-E uses to explain it, but be careful and be cautious and be questioning, and have the ability to understand what is a trusted source and what is not a trusted source.*

*And one of the reasons why I've wanted to come onto the podcast is because for every news source, which is dodgy, which is not good, on social media, we need to make sure there's heaps of quality on there as well. So you can find important news and opinions too. And that's true of the national media landscape, but it's true of social media as well.*

Yep. You're speaking our Squiz Kids language treasure. A question now from seven-year-old Annabelle in Northcote, Melbourne. Which hopefully reveals a bit more about the man behind the politician.

Hi, my name is Annabelle. I am seven years old, and I live in Northgate in Victoria. My question is, what is your favourite sport?

*My favourite sport to play is basketball. I grew up as a basketball kid and I worked in a basketball stadium for years and I coached kids and I refereed and I worked in the office at the stadium and I, it was really a huge part of my life. And one of the great joys right now is my nine-year-old, his name is Leo and my five-year-old, his name is Jack, they both play basketball now. And so I'm back knocking around basketball stadiums on weekends, which is so much fun. I love playing it. I love watching their games. And I also love, I also love the Broncos. And so, I watch a lot of rugby league too.*

And in basketball terms of you, are you more of a three pointer or a slam dunker?

*I'm more of a, I'm more of a three-point shooter, but not elite, let's say, at that either. But the Chalmers men are not especially tall. So, we typically play out near the three-point line.*

Nice. Strategic, not obvious. Yeah, I like it.

*That's right. And we take, we take great satisfaction from, uh, passing the ball to others who might dunk it.*

Very nice. Team players. I like it. Now we're almost done, Treasure. How are you traveling in the Q and A hot seat? Just to check in. Not too squirmy. I hope.

I'm loving it. I love the variety in these questions. Yeah. Very smart questions.

Look, Australian kids are smart. Squiz Kids audience. I've never ceased to be amazed by how clever they are.

*Yeah.*

Now here's a little bit of typical 10-year-old cheek from Felix in Moorooka, who I think, you might agree with me has a bright future ahead of him as a press gallery journalist.

Hi, my name is Felix. I am 10 years old from Moorooka. My mum says being the treasurer is a bit like being the vice-captain at school. Wouldn't you prefer to be the school captain?

*That is a cool question, Felix. So well done and well done to your, to your mum. I like being the vice-captain. Not because, well, the main reason for that is, and you'd know this in your own class, if there's another student in your class who you think would do a better job of being the captain, then you support them.*

*And that's the position that I'm in. I've got a buddy called Anthony Albanese, and when the time came for Anthony Albanese to run for the leader of my group, my party in the parliament, I had to decide whether I wanted to run as well, but I decided not to because I thought Anthony would do a better job of it.*

*And I thought that the best thing that I could do was to try and be a really good contributor to his team that he leads. And my contribution is about the economy and all these things we've been talking about today. So, it really worked out perfectly from my point of view. There was somebody who I thought would be great at the job and he is, and there was a place for me to make a big, big contribution that wasn't necessarily as the captain, but as a key player in the team.*

Well, treasurer, that's it. You've survived the squiz kids, Q&A hot seat. Well done. Do you think your kids will be proud?

*Oh, I hope so. I certainly gave them a shout out. They usually like that and I think they'd like the idea that we were able to talk to so many kids around the place about the things that we like doing, and what I hope is that I hope that you think about, the sorts of things that you might want to do when you finish school and when you go to work.*

*And the sorts of things that you might want to do with your kids when you're, when you're as old as me. And if it, if it does that, then I think that would be a really, really great use of all of our time.*

Absolutely. Couldn't agree more. Well, that is what we in the industry call a wrap. Jim Chalmers, thank you so much for joining us.

*It's been great to have you on Squiz Kids. I really appreciate it and I hope to be back another time. And if you ever need help teeing up other people that you'd like to have a chat with you on Squiz Kids, let me know and I'll give you a hand with that too.*

You may be sorry you said that. Now, listeners, if this is the first time you've stumbled across us during the school term, Squiz Kids is a daily news podcast made just for kids.

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*Get out there and have a most excellent day.*

Over and out.