



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**ADJOURNMENT**

**Housing Affordability**

**SPEECH**

**Wednesday, 15 February 2017**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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## SPEECH

<b>Date</b>	Wednesday, 15 February 2017	<b>Source</b>	House
<b>Page</b>	1222	<b>Proof</b>	No
<b>Questioner</b>		<b>Responder</b>	
<b>Speaker</b>	Littleproud, David, MP	<b>Question No.</b>	

**Mr LITTLEPROUD** (Maranoa) (19:35): I am proud to say I have lived and worked in Maranoa all my life. Maranoa takes up 42 per cent of Queensland, predominantly Western Queensland, and it has provided me with the opportunity to have a career, to travel the world, to start a business but, above all, to raise a family.

We hear a lot about housing affordability in metropolitan Sydney, Brisbane and Melbourne—that is real; I take that for granted—and that is why I support the Deputy Prime Minister in his quest for decentralisation, particularly his commissioning of the Productivity Commission inquiry into the transitioning regional economies. In my electorate alone, in just my three major centres of Warwick, Dalby and Kingaroy, there are 400 homes available under \$250,000. But couple that with the over 860 jobs available across those communities, ranging from truck driving to professionals in the health and education sectors, there are enormous opportunities to be grasped by those who want to venture to regions right across Australia, not just Maranoa.

It is important that we understand and appreciate that this government has already started that journey. We started that journey with the investment we made in regional and rural Australia. A federal government's responsibility is not to get involved in the daily lives of the citizens but to create the environment and the infrastructure around them, for them to create their own lives and to be able to innovate and create wealth in business investment. This government has done that through the three trade agreements with Japan, South Korea and China.

They are having an enormous impact on the profits and losses of the businesses in my electorate right here, right now. They are putting real wealth into businesses and communities in regional Australia—wealth that is flowing into small businesses and allowing the growth of those small communities. One in seven people are employed in the retail sector across my electorate, and that is coming from the direct impact of the trade agreements that are putting money in primary producers' pockets.

But it is also about the next step that we are trying to undertake with our tax cuts for small businesses. For the Labor Party to say that this is for big business is absolute nonsense. The first tranche of this goes to those businesses with a turnover of up to \$10 million. That is not a big business; that is a mum and dad operation. That will put real dollars back in their pockets and help them reinvest in their communities and employ more people in regional and remote Australia. That is a real economic lever that we are pulling that will create wealth and prosperity in regional and rural Australia.

Then we move on to infrastructure. The key word in infrastructure for the people of Maranoa and regional and rural Australia is 'connectivity'—connectivity with the tools of the 21st century to take advantage of the trade agreements that we put in place. That is around the Mobile Phone Black Spot Program—for example, in my electorate alone, 35 new towers, and 16 of those are all up and going. The reality is that 68,000 households and businesses across Maranoa will have the NBN put into their premise before the end of 2018—long before a lot of metropolitan areas. I am proud to say that we have done that. But it is not just the economic benefits but also the social benefits. We have done this in consultation with the ICPA to ensure that those kids who are on distance education are able to have a designated distance education plan to ensure that they can stay in the regional communities and we keep that precious human capital that is out there.

It is also about the roads—and it is good to see my good friend the member for Groom here. We are putting \$1.6 billion into Second Range Crossing. There is \$65 million going to the Warrego Highway, connecting our product to the world and allowing the effects of that trade agreement to flow into the pockets of the people of Maranoa. It is an enormous investment. Couple that with inland rail. I acknowledge Darren Chester, the minister, for the courageous and brave step of actually undertaking inland rail and making sure it will start and make the difference for all those who are connected to it. But it is also about our health—and it is good to see the regional health minister here today. I am proud to say that we as a government only recently committed to put in place a rural health commissioner. That ensures that the health of those people living in rural and regional Australia

is protected, so that we in rural and regional Australia become a community of choice—to live and to be able to do commerce in.

That is the advantage of living in regional and rural Australia. We have a lifestyle to celebrate and to excel in. We have put a framework around the environment and infrastructure that we should be proud of. We have done the hard work but now is the time to take it to the next level, because healthy regions mean a healthy Australia. We should be proud to invest in regional and rural Australia. We should be proud of the investment this government has made in three or four short years. It would never have been done under anyone else but this coalition government.