



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ADJOURNMENT

Budget

SPEECH

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BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Speaker	Littleproud, David, MP	Question No.	

Mr LITTLEPROUD (Maranoa) (19:55): Tonight I rise to speak about last night's budget and the benefits that it has given to the electorate of Maranoa, which I proudly represent. I think we as a government should be very proud of the fact that we have put in place a budget that gives real focus to rural and regional Australia, real focus around infrastructure and environment for those people in regional and rural Australia to prosper. That is what our job is as a federal government. It is not to get involved in the daily lives of people but to put in place the infrastructure and environment to allow them to innovate, to grow, to build their businesses and to build their communities. That is what this budget has done.

I think one of the proudest things for which we as a government should stand tall is the \$8.4 billion that we committed to inland rail. This is no longer a pipe dream. This is not something that has been sitting out there for 20 years and will never happen again. This is now real and happening, and it is because our government has made a serious commitment, understanding that it will be a corridor of commerce that will open up inland Australia. It adds to the \$894 million that we have already spent on this, and, no matter the outcome of the next federal election, no government of any persuasion will be able to turn back this great decision that our government has acted on in this budget. This is a forward step for the people of rural and regional Australia and a forward step for the nation because, if you have healthy regions, you have a healthy nation.

But it also complements the infrastructure that we have already put in place, particularly around my electorate and my good friend John McVeigh's electorate, which I border. There is \$1.6 billion that we have put in place for the Toowoomba Second Range Crossing and \$550 million for the Warrego Highway. The investments that our government has made have attracted private enterprise to go and invest. The Wagner family out of Toowoomba have created an export hub at an airport that they have created there in Toowoomba that is opening up my community to those trade agreements that each one of us in this government have put in place over the last three or four years. We can proudly look our people in the eye and say they are getting real value for the hard work that they do for the commodities that they produce in Maranoa. The story of Maranoa is 'just add rain'. If we get the rain, the people of Maranoa will be some of the wealthiest people in this nation because we have what the world wants and we have been allowed to open that up through the work that our government has done through the trade agreements.

But we have also understood that we need to invest in our communities, and the extension of the \$200 million in the Building Better Regions Fund is just an example of that. We spent over \$1 billion in this program that has invested in communities. It is not just about growing wealth for the individual; it is also about us putting back into local communities, building their resilience. I was in Winton only two weeks ago to turn the first sod on the rebuild of the Waltzing Matilda Centre. We have put \$8 million into that project to rebuild what is a national icon that we as a nation should be proud and fiercely protective of to ensure that that is preserved as our nation's history.

But I also have to congratulate Senator Nash for reintroducing the Stronger Communities Program, which also allows those smaller organisations right across regional and rural Australia and metropolitan Australia to take advantage of a funding program that will help them do the things that they probably would not have the capacity to do. In Warra, a little community of 200 people, in this last round of this Stronger Communities Program we were able to get them money to invest into their local hall—a hall that brings people together two or three times a year. It is their social event. It holds the fabric of their community together.

We have also done a great job of setting the environment for our youth. I am proud to say that we are now investing in every school across Maranoa—all 167 schools across Maranoa and all 25,000 students across Maranoa—with an additional \$391 million in funding over the next 10 years. Couple that with our investment in the NBN and dedicated data plans for distance education children. We should be proud of the fact that we are investing in the young people of regional and rural Australia, because, if we have good education facilities in electorates like Maranoa and in regional and rural Australia, we will keep the human capital that we need to remain in electorates

like Maranoa to invest in and to build this nation, to build regional and rural Australia and to drive the nation's economy.

We should be proud of the fact that we have done this to ensure that those communities get the infrastructure and investment coupled with the tax cuts that we have done. We have set the right environment for the people of Australia.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Coulton): Order! It being 8 pm, the debate is interrupted.

House adjourned at 20:00