



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Main Committee

CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS

Regional Development Australia

SPEECH

Wednesday, 8 February 2012

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Questioner
Speaker Cobb, John, MP

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Mr JOHN COBB (Calare) (09:30): Regional Development Australia's funding round 2 was announced last month but it was very apparent that, unless it concerned a big city with a big project, it was not going to get a look in. I absolutely welcome large funding projects for Orange and Bathurst. I do not suggest for one second that I do not. They include the Mount Panorama regional infrastructure upgrade, the Orange Aboriginal Medical Service, the 'Change, the next step is ours' project, the Orange Airport extension—all very necessary and very good things. But when I looked around the electorate of Calare I saw that projects for smaller towns such as Lithgow, Cabonne, Blayney, Forbes and Parkes did not progress to the next round.

Small projects are not receiving help—for example, redevelopment of the Blayney Shire Community Centre, which is certainly not in the same category as the Mount Panorama upgrade, but it is a very necessary project; the Cabonne council project to enhance Mount Canobolas through providing infrastructure, investment and accessibility; the Jemalong Regional Education Centre refurbishment in Forbes; the Lithgow Aquatic Centre Stage 2, which the locals have been fighting for and fighting for funding for a long time; the Oberon Stormwater Harvesting project, which explains itself; the Parkes Regional Airport upgrade, which is very necessary for one of the bigger regional airports; and the Zig Zag Railway Co-op furnace fire and forge connections, which is a very popular tourist attraction and a part of local history about the way in which railways went up steep hills in the early days.

When in government the coalition's Regional Partnerships Program allowed very small towns and communities to actually apply for and obtain seed funding that they desired—not necessarily what the council thought was good, not necessarily what the biggest city in the region wanted but something that small towns could get which, under the current RDA funding situation, they simply cannot obtain.

As I said, the government seems to be focused on pleasing the people with the most money. One could almost wonder whether this was not a political ploy rather than doing the right thing for the community generally. Community organisations have to have a minimal income of \$1½ million before they are even eligible to apply. So quite obviously most towns— (*Time expired*)