



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Federation Chamber

GRIEVANCE DEBATE

Wannon Electorate: Deputy Prime Minister

SPEECH

Monday, 24 February 2014

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SPEECH

Date Monday, 24 February 2014
Page 724
Questioner
Speaker Tehan, Dan, MP

Source House
Proof No
Responder
Question No.

Mr TEHAN (Wannon) (17:14): I rise to talk about a visit that the Deputy Prime Minister made to my electorate on Friday. It was a significant visit for three reasons. I would like to place on the record my thanks to the Deputy Prime Minister for taking the time—on a Friday, after a busy sitting week—to come down to the electorate of Wannon.

We started the day by attending a celebration. It was a celebration because the local charity organisation Peter's Project, which has been spearheading the campaign to build an integrated cancer care centre for south-west Victoria, was able to unveil a block of land which had been donated by a local church, on which they are going to build a home—the builders were there—and auction off. They hope to be able to raise about \$350,000 or \$400,000 from this great community project.

That will go into a fund which will then be used to help provide updated technology for the integrated cancer care centre, when it is built. It will be built shortly, because the Premier of Victoria was also there, and able to announce that tenderers for the integrated cancer care centre have been shortlisted down to three. We will know shortly who the winning tenderer is. Then we will be able to get on with turning the first sod and building the integrated cancer care centre. That will be a great community result. The community has led the push for this centre. The state government has got on board. The federal government has got on board. Local government has also contributed.

It is going to be a terrific result for the community when it occurs. I must commend the community because, as I pointed out to Deputy Prime Minister Warren Truss, the state have provided \$15 million and the federal government have provided \$10 million. As well as the community house which is going to be built, the community is raising \$5 million towards this project. For a small community to be able to raise \$5 million it is an enormous effort, but that is what they have been able to do. We have raised \$4.2 million so far, and I am full of confidence that we will reach that \$5 million target. I am so proud of the south-west community for all they have done in making sure that this integrated cancer care centre will become a reality. It was with great pride that I was able to show the Deputy Prime Minister all that is taking place and all that has been involved in making sure that we get this outcome.

We then went on to the Sungold Field Days—the biggest dairy field days in this nation. The Deputy Prime Minister was able to address the luncheon at the Sungold Field Days. For those who do not know, Sungold is the brand of milk that is produced by Warrnambool Cheese and Butter. It has been the talk of the town and of the dairy industry due to rival bids for that key asset which is the milk factory just outside Warrnambool. Saputo, a Canadian company, has been the winner. Warrnambool Cheese and Butter board have been in consultation with Saputo and are looking forward to the extra investment that they are going to bring to Warrnambool Cheese and Butter and for the future.

The Deputy Prime Minister gave a very good and insightful speech on where he sees the Australian dairy industry going and where he sees agriculture going in the future. He made a plea, also, for Australian investment in Australian agriculture. He welcomed the overseas investment but he also said that it is an imperative that we see the future direction that agriculture will take and we seize the moment so that we see Australian investment as well as overseas investment in this key sector.

The feedback I have had on the Deputy Prime Minister's speech has been top notch. The speech went down extremely well. People were extremely grateful that he was able to go down and address the luncheon. He is one on a long list of speakers who have been to the field days. We have had the Treasurer, down there. We have had the shadow agriculture minister down there. Mr Truss was down there on a previous visit when he was a minister in the Howard government. There is a long list of very good speakers who have come down, and it was great to have the Deputy Prime Minister down again.

It was also fantastic because while he was down there he was able to make an announcement confirming that \$2.5 million to upgrade the Condah-Hotspur Upper Road—a key link road in south-west Victoria—has been committed by the federal government and will be provided. This honours an election commitment made to the electorate of Wannon by me in consultation with the then Abbott opposition. The honouring of this commitment once again shows that this government is an infrastructure government. The upgrade of this key timber road will mean that the timber trucks which are harvesting the plantation timber down in the south-west of Victoria and the south-east of South Australia will not have to travel as far as they currently do. The road upgrade will cut the distance that they need to travel to get access to an important mill, and that will mean increased productivity for the trucking companies and for the timber companies. It will also mean less travel by the trucks on the very busy Henty Highway, and that will take some of the weight-carrying load off the highway. This is a win for our local timber industry. It is also a win for our local community because buses, school kids and families all travel on the road and it is incredibly important that we have the road in a safe state.

The Condah-Hotspur Upper Road is, once again, a partnership: the federal government, the state government and local government are all contributing. In Regional Development Australia funding rounds 2, 3 and 4, the upgrade of the road was put forward as the top funding priority for the south-west. Sadly, the previous government—even though the upgrade was then ranked No. 1—was not able to fund it, so it is fantastic that have been able to step in and do so. The announcement of the upgrade of the Condah-Hotspur Upper Road comes on the back of other announcements that we have made to improve road funding, including \$25 million—which will be matched by \$25 million from the state government—to upgrade the Great Ocean Road.

The Deputy Prime Minister was able to reassure everyone—though once again we have had some doubters from the other side—that not only are we committed to delivering \$25 million in funding to upgrade the Great Ocean Road but also, because we see the urgency of it, we have brought forward \$15 million of these \$25 million to be spent this financial year. So \$15 million will be spent this financial year and \$10 million will be spent next year in the next financial year. This once again proves that the Abbott government is an infrastructure government and that the Prime Minister wants to be known as an infrastructure Prime Minister. He has my wholehearted support in that regard, because improving our road system improves our productivity and the safety of our families and our community.

So it was a terrific trip by the Deputy Prime Minister. He was able to cover three key areas. He was able to see first hand the community effort in making sure that we get an integrated cancer care centre. He was able to address our local dairy farmers, who provide such a significant economic contribution not only to the south-west but also to the nation; it is the largest dairy producing area in this nation. He was also able to announce that the road funding for the Condah-Hotspur Upper Road will go ahead—2 ½ million dollars have been committed to make sure that this key piece of infrastructure is upgraded.