HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Federation Chamber

ADJOURNMENT

Gilmore Electorate

SPEECH

Thursday, 5 May 2016

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Mrs SUDMALIS (Gilmore) (12:05): Working for the people and communities of Gilmore has been rewarding—advocating for small and large allocations of funding for both new and continuing projects that risked being defunded. In total I have delivered well over $350 million to Gilmore, and that does not include the almost half a billion dollars of defence investment in HMAS Albatross for the helicopter fleet acquisition and the Helicopter Aircrew Training System. Incidentally, we almost lost this facility but, after a tip-off, I went straight to the minister and argued to retain this development in Gilmore.

Some of the significant funds and projects include the delivery of $51 million in infrastructure investment for road safety packages, black spot funding, Roads to Recovery and heavy vehicle safety investment; 25 Green Army projects, delivering environmental improvement, youth employment and training; more than $3 million invested in local business growth grants, training, up-skilling and funding to accelerate commercialisation; and the delivery of election promises, including $2 million for the Dunn Lewis Centre, the Kiama Harbour side works, the shared walkway construction in Vincentia, skate parks and CCTV installations. There have been dozens of smaller grants, such as Saluting their Service, the 2015 commemorative Anzac grants, and the Stronger Communities funds.

I am actually pretty good at getting projects funded, but my reward is to see them completed. I just say, 'Job done; now what's next?' I am not one to seek glory for every little issue, which for a politician is not actually a good idea, because nobody knows what you are doing. However, being a federal politician can also be personal. For example, when you are asked to intervene in the potential deportation of visa holders who employ eight Australians and have a BAS payment of about $35,000 per month, you call the minister and you fix it. Or when a local kitchen business is about to go belly-up because an employee embezzled the company and the ATO is about to bankrupt them, you call the minister and get it sorted. There are endless cases, many of them heartbreaking.

It has been an honour to put my teaching and business experience to work as a community advocate while in government. I was part of the team lobbying for the hep C cure to be put on the PBS, also for Kalydeco, a cure for some forms of cystic fibrosis. I lobbied the minister and was successful in the rollout of the shingles vaccine for people aged between 70 and 79. After November this year, they will not be paying the whopping $195 for it. It has been terrific to assist community groups such as A Taste of Paradise, for their greenhouse; the Culburra Beach Skate Park; the Kiama Netball Association; Killalea State Park, for the computers to help their Green Army team to get white cards and learn to write CVs; the Sailing for Everyone Foundation, for disability pontoon access for their boats; the Shellharbour Surf Life Saving Club; the Sussex Inlet community, with the help of council, to get funds for their Learn to Ride facility; Kids Korner and their great new outdoor play equipment; the Shoalhaven Community Transport Service, for administration equipment; our wonderful Shoalhaven Youth Orchestra, for new instruments; our Ulladulla Children's Centre, for a new floor and facilities; and, most recently, there have been funds for the all-inclusive playground in Batehaven. These are projects that really make a difference to these groups, and to see the joy on their faces is inspirational. I will continue to lobby and fight for the new Nowra Bridge. It is an essential infrastructure linchpin for our residents, tourism growth, business expansion and consequential employment opportunities.

I see youth who need to be part of our social fabric rewarded for participation and taking on responsibility, like with the recently launched digital hub business, now funded for two years, that will assist around 120 young people into work. I sponsored two participating businesses. I commend the initiative of the PaTH program—described just this week in the 2016 budget—for vulnerable young people having trouble breaking into the jobs market. It will help them with solid preparation and assisted work trials while they still receive income support, taking the risk factor away from getting a job for a short time, so that people do not struggle to get back into support if the job does not work out, and then having incentive payments to the employer. This has been a hard-won change and very welcomed for the 12 per cent of our unemployed young people who do not have a working adult role model in their home. It is transformational.
Working for Gilmore and the residents has been an honour, and I hope to continue that advocacy in the next parliament, for we have only just begun to take advantage of the potential in our region. With the free trade agreements, recently announced business incentives and a plan for economic stability to take Australia to a healthy financial future, we are setting ourselves up for a great plan for our children, our grandchildren, our businesses and job opportunities. We have potential and we have great people. It is time to make the most of everything we have in Gilmore and keep it moving along.