



PARLIAMENT OF NEW SOUTH WALES
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT

Question Time

24 November 2021

STRONGER COUNTRY COMMUNITIES FUND

Ms SONIA HORNERY (Wallsend) (14:48):

In directing my question to the Deputy Premier, I refer to the Stronger Country Communities Fund. The member for Terrigal assessed the Wyong electorate, which received one grant, and the Gosford electorate, which got none. Meanwhile his own electorate got five grants. Is pork-barrelling out of control in the New South Wales Government?

Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst—Deputy Premier, Minister for Regional Transport and Roads, and Minister for Regional New South Wales) (14:49):

I thank the member for Wallsend for her question, but again I point out that funding is based on local government areas. If she had been listening to previous answers she would know that local government areas were given a base amount. Amounts on top of that depend on the population as to how the funding is given. I hear the member coming in here and complaining. Again we are seeing investment in regional New South Wales like never before. We are seeing projects being delivered by the Government. That is what you get with the Liberals and The Nationals in Government: You get the investment that our communities missed out on for so long.

If the member for Wallsend wishes to receive a briefing, she should come and see me and see the department. I will allow departmental officers to sit down with her and explain exactly how the program works so that she knows how grants are assessed and how projects are delivered. Good, hardworking local members would have been approached by councils and community groups. They would have been asked to put through a letter of support for their projects. That is something that those

groups have done with the Government throughout this process. I want to look at some more of these projects. The member for Wallsend comes into this Chamber talking about the Stronger Country Communities Fund. Let us not forget about the investment that we are seeing in places like the Wyong hospital. There is a massive investment—\$200 million—that this Government is making.

We are investing in hospitals, roads, community infrastructure, schools and education. These are the things that Labor members turned their back on. I have seen it. I want to mention the regional seniors travel card because I know it is a favourite of the member for Wallsend. It is a great program that is being well received by people in regional areas of New South Wales. It is a program that the member for Wallsend and her party would not support.

Ms Prue Car: Point of order—

Mr PAUL TOOLE: You are a regional person.

Ms Prue Car: Clearly, my point of order relates to Standing Order 129. If the Deputy Premier is so sure that this is based on local government areas—they are actually from the same local government area, but they rorted it within the same local government area.

The SPEAKER: I thank the member for Londonderry. I do not need to hear a speech.

Ms Prue Car: Fair cop! We just want an answer to this question about pork-barrelling.

The SPEAKER: If the member for Londonderry's point of order is relevance, I rule that the Deputy Premier is being relevant.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I point out that many projects have gone into Liberal and Nationals electorates and many have gone into Labor seats. They are important investments. I want to point out this one: \$345,143 to construct an inclusive memorial playground at Veterans Park in the Cessnock local government area. Is the member for Wallsend telling me that that is not worthy of funding? I think that project is one that has been assessed as worthy of delivery. What about this one: \$128,000 to provide shade shelters for playgrounds at Heritage Park in East Maitland? That is another important investment and another project that will support that community.

Mr Ron Hoenig: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: What is the member's point of order?

Mr Ron Hoenig: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129.

The SPEAKER: The Deputy Premier is being relevant. The member will resume his seat.

Mr Ron Hoenig: Mr Speaker, can you just hear me?

The SPEAKER: The Deputy Premier can resume his answer.

Mr Ron Hoenig: I am entitled to be heard.

The SPEAKER: I have ruled.

Mr Ron Hoenig: But I want to be heard.

The SPEAKER: You have been heard. You raised your point of order and I have ruled. The Clerk will stop the clock. Previous points of order have been taken on relevance. I will not have the Deputy Premier's time eaten into by further points of order on relevance when I have ruled that he is being relevant.

Mr Ron Hoenig: But I want to—

The SPEAKER: Is it a different point of order?

Mr Ron Hoenig: Yes. I want to invite your attention to the specific—

The SPEAKER: Is it a different point of order?

Mr Ron Hoenig: Yes. It is the same point of order, but a different matter. I want to invite—

The SPEAKER: I will hear further out of deference to the member for Heffron being the leader of Opposition business in this House.

Mr Ron Hoenig: The question was specific. It was about why the member for Terrigal selected grants and the member for Wyong—

The SPEAKER: I am aware of what the question was.

Mr Ron Hoenig: The Deputy Premier has to at least get to the nub of the question. There is a definition of relevance—

The SPEAKER: The Deputy Premier is being relevant. He will continue.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I was relevant on questions 66, 68 and 69. I have been relevant on all of those questions, but those opposite do not want to hear the truth. They do not want to hear that they forgot about and turned their back on regional New South Wales. What they are seeing from us is a government that is investing in and caring about our regions. It does not matter where we live. I see the member for Orange, but the Barwon electorate receives the most funding through that program because it covers the most local government areas across the State. We will continue to invest in regional New South Wales, whether it be through the Stronger Country Communities Fund or Resources for Regions. We know that programs like those make a difference in our communities.