Speech By

Hon. Jeff Seeney

MEMBER FOR CALLIDE

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Royalties for the Regions

Hon. JW SEENEY (Callide—LNP) (Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development, Infrastructure and Planning) (9.44 am): During the past week I have announced a range of funding opportunities for regional communities that have been funded under the government's Royalties for the Regions program. The Royalties for the Regions program was a key election commitment of our government and it, for the first time, delivers some of the royalties that are earned from the resources industry to the regional communities of Queensland. It is a very important program for country towns and country people, and our government was determined to ensure that the Royalties for the Regions program was in place from day one, despite the horrendous financial legacy that we inherited from the former Labor government.

I want to place on record today that the Royalties for the Regions program is very strongly supported by members in this House who represent regional Queensland. It is also strongly supported in this House by the member for Clayfield, who, while he does not represent a regional seat, is very important because he is the Treasurer. We thank the Treasurer for the commitments that he has made to Royalties for the Regions and we thank the Treasurer for his ongoing support and the promises he has made to boost funding for Royalties for the Regions in the future. The people of regional Queensland appreciate your support, Treasurer.

In round 2 of Royalties for the Regions, $104 million was allocated to regional councils. Of the 64 local governments eligible to apply this round, 41 councils submitted 90 expressions of interest seeking funding for nearly $311 million towards projects that had a total cost of over $500 million. The bids were assessed, and I am very pleased to announce that 32 projects from the 20 eligible councils have been approved for funding. I table, for the benefit of the House, a full list of those projects and the funding they received.

Tabled paper: Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning: Royalties for the Regions—Round 2, shortlisted expressions of interest, dated 25 October 2013 [3881].

These projects have a total cost of nearly $230 million of which Royalties for the Regions will provide just over $100 million. We will fund road upgrades—major upgrades in the Arcadia Valley in the electorate of the member for Gregory; in Gladstone at a roundabout that has long been a problem there; in Cloncurry for a bypass there that has been raised with me every time I have visited Cloncurry over the last 14 years—

Mr Johnson: How long have they been waiting for that?

Mr SEENEY: How long have we been waiting for that? And we funded it despite the fact that the member who represents that area has never made any representation to me about it. We have funded other road upgrades of the Fairview and the Injune and Taroom roads in Maranoa. We have also funded road upgrades in the south-west and on the cape and a large number of local road upgrades in the shire of Western Downs in the electorate of the member for Warrego.

Improvements to water supplies and water treatment plants have also been funded at Banana, Baralaba, Chillagoe, Kingaroy, Woorabinda, Mackay and Rockhampton. There has also been major funding for sewerage upgrades—the sort of infrastructure that regional towns need—in the electorate of the member for Nanango. The member for Nanango and I had the great pleasure of visiting that facility on a very hot and windy day. Can I assure the House that both of us came away from there appreciating the fact that it needed to be upgraded.

The most significant and the most rewarding funding allocations, I think, were for child-care centres in communities that have never had child-care centres before. More than $1 million will go to help to establish child-care centres in Barcaldine and Blackall. I think that is the sort of infrastructure that Royalties for the Regions can fund. Last time we funded a medical centre in Dysart. This time we have funded child-care centres in Barcaldine and Blackall. Funding projects that otherwise would struggle to achieve funding from normal sources is what Royalties for the Regions is all about.

One of the key success factors of this round is the support the program has attracted from regional partners. Royalties for the Regions was designed to encourage collaboration and partnership, and that is exactly what has happened. For the 32 shortlisted projects, the following potential financial co-contributions have been received: $45 million from local government; $51 million from industry, particularly the coal seam gas industry; $26 million from other state and federal government sources; as well as $185,000 from the not-for-profit sector.

After assessing 23 eligible applications, Royalties for the Regions is also funding 14 flood mitigation projects across 11 local councils to the value of over $12 million. Over the next four years we hope to invest almost $500 million in critical community infrastructure through Royalties for the Regions. The Newman government is delivering on its promise to provide Queenslanders better services and safer communities, and we are doing that through the Royalties for the Regions program for country towns and country people.