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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

PROOF

Main Committee

APPROPRIATION BILL (NO. 3) 2009-2010

APPROPRIATION BILL (NO. 4) 2009-2010

Second Reading

SPEECH

Tuesday, 23 February 2010

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SPEECH

<p>Date Tuesday, 23 February 2010 Page 72 Questioner Speaker Sidebottom, Sid, MP</p>	<p>Source House Proof Yes Responder Question No.</p>
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Mr SIDEBOTTOM (Braddon) (4.52 pm)—Good afternoon, colleagues. I am very pleased to speak on Appropriation Bill (No. 3) 2009-2010 and Appropriation Bill (No. 4) 2009-2010 before us because it gives us an opportunity to highlight some areas of expenditure. I would like to localise it for my particular electorate of Braddon, which takes in the north-west coast of Tassie, down now into the west coast, and also includes King Island. It is a fantastic slab of earth and paradise in Australia.

I am really pleased to be part of a government that has brought us through very difficult times, times that are often ignored by those opposite. There have been difficult financial demands on this nation and, in relative terms, we have come through much better than other parts of the world. During all this time of economic pressure the government made decisions to stimulate the economy to keep it working, to keep people in this economy working, and to keep communities working. These appropriation bills, in part, deal with how that stimulus came about and how it is continuing to come about.

In particular I would like to highlight two areas, if I may. The Building the Education Revolution is one aspect of the stimulus. It was designed of course not just as a jobs and community stimulus but also as an intellectual stimulus as well, and in terms of construction in my electorate the Building the Education Revolution has indeed been that. As so many members on all sides of the House have noted, there is construction, there is activity, there are jobs going on all around our local communities.

The Building the Education Revolution contains many aspects but, in particular, computers in schools, Primary Schools for the 21st Century, the National School Pride Program, trades training centres, and science and language centres. I am very pleased to say that in my electorate there has been considerable activity in all of these areas. On the other side of the ledger, in terms of stimulating the economy and getting and keeping the place working, and adding to our community infrastructure, we have had the Regional and Local Community Infrastructure Program along with other local community infrastructure programs.

I would like to very briefly take the House through some of these as they affect my electorate. For instance, King Island and its local infrastructure—\$635,000 and the BER \$135,000; Circular Head \$1.1 million in local community infrastructure and \$9.4 million in the BER; Waratah-Wynyard Council \$854,000 in local community infrastructure, \$8.3 million in the BER. And so on it goes, even the west coast with \$924,000 in local community infrastructure projects and \$3 million in Building the Education Revolution. In all, in my electorate \$22.2 million is provided in local infrastructure programs and \$84.6 million for the Building the Education Revolution for a total of something like \$106.8 million, which is a massive investment in infrastructure, a massive investment in jobs, and a massive investment into community capital in my region.

On top of that, there is something like \$49 million worth of special projects that have been allocated to Braddon and some of these have taken on a much broader regional role as well as a state role. For example, on the weekend I was joined by the Minister for Resources and Energy and Minister for Tourism, the honourable Martin Ferguson, when we turned the sod for a \$15 million investment in the renewable energy demonstration project on King Island. This project has pioneering prospects for renewable energy for the whole of remote and rural Australia. An autism centre has been launched, based in Burnie, to a value of \$4.8 million. We have two GP superclinics allocated to our region—Burnie-Cooee at \$2.75 million and Devonport at \$5.5 million—the latter well and truly under way. The Sisters of Charity received counselling service funding for their excellent work to the value of \$2 million. Enterprise Connect has been established at Burnie for manufacturing as a centre for the state and the wider region and that has a value of \$12 million. The O Group training project, based in Devonport, has a value of \$900,000. There is also improved and increased patient accommodation at the North West Regional Hospital with a value of \$3.1 million; an integrated health-IT project to the value of \$1.2 million; improved cancer services to the value of \$1.4 million; and the tarmac upgrade which we recently opened at Queenstown airport to the value of \$700,000. They are just some of the projects that make up the special projects to the value of nearly \$50 million in my electorate. There is the other commitment by this government from the election of \$180 million to the

Mersey Community Hospital over three years. That gives an indication of the commitment of this government to growing jobs, growing the economy, to construction and to community infrastructure development in Braddon.

I know I share those commitments with many in this House, particularly on this side of the chamber. I hope to speak in more detail on a number of those activities as time goes on. I just wanted to highlight some of those because it gets lost in the day-to-day combat of what goes on in this place and, certainly, what goes on in the media.

If you believe some of the media, we do not do anything. Yet time and time again members come into this House to share how this government is helping to keep this nation working, to keep our communities working and to keep our schools growing and improving, yet little of this is dealt with in the media except stories which highlight any potential weaknesses. We do not claim to be the be-all and end-all in providing answers to a lot of our challenges, but what I can say is that we will not die wondering. I was really happy to enunciate some of the many activities going on in my electorate. I have not had one person tell me that they did not want any of the Building the Education Revolution constructions nor any of the community infrastructure programs which are at record levels in my electorate. So I am very pleased about that.

In the time remaining I would like to thank the Minister for Sport, Minister Ellis, for an excellent program which exists in many of our electorates—that is, the Active After-school Communities program. I have an excellent program in my electorate. Something like 12 government and two independent schools are involved. There are three out-of-school-hours care services, with 541 participants, averaging 28 participants per session per site and nearly 2.05 sessions per site. These are spread from Sheffield to Stanley to Strahan. There are something like 79 programs ranging from AFL to aquatics, badminton, basketball, circus skills, cricket, dance, golf, hockey, lawn bowls, multi-skilling, netball, orienteering, soccer, softball, surf lifesaving, tennis, touch football and volleyball, just to name some of the many activities. I would like to share the basis of the program because I regard it as one of the most excellent programs that this government is participating in and supporting. The Active After-school Communities program targets children—it is very important we note this—who are not traditionally active or involved in mainstream sport. That is at the heart of it.

The Australian Sports Commission initiative aims to inspire a love of physical activity which creates a pathway to local sporting clubs, a preparation ground, if you like, to get people who are generally inactive to be active and hopefully to send them on their way to a local sporting club. The free program is running at capacity with up to 150,000 children nationally taking part in each term in over 3,200 schools at out-of-school-hours care services. It reaches all corners of and populations in Australia and is a genuine national program.

In an environment where the prevalence of overweight and obesity in Australian children is increasing alarmingly, unfortunately, and is higher among lower socioeconomic groups, Indigenous people and some ethnic populations, the Active After-school Communities program has proven to be an efficient and effective vehicle to increase physical activity levels of primary schoolchildren. It has three direct focuses. It engages inactive children in sport. I have been really pleased to attend six to seven sites where the kids are involved in these activities and it is all go, go, go, which is terrific. It delivers a quality program which inspires children and their families and coaches to continue their involvement in sport outside the program. Each contributes to the growth of local sports clubs through facilitating the transition of children, their families and coaches to the local club environment. That is at the heart of the Active After-school Communities Program.

The Australian Sports Commission works collaboratively with sporting organisations at national, state and local levels to assist with the delivery of the Active After-school Communities Program. Over 44,600 local people, many of them sport affiliated, have been trained free of charge by the Active After-school Communities Program to become community coaches and deliver activities. For the government's investment of around \$350 per year per child, each child receives up to 80 free sports sessions, up to 80 free healthy afternoon snacks, a qualified coach, access to sports equipment and a supervisor. That sum also includes the supporting national framework that provides quality training, ongoing support, free resources for schools and continuing research and evaluation, all of which are facilitated by locally based regional coordinators. These regional coordinators really are the glue between the schools, the children and the sport. I cannot speak more highly of my regional coordinator, David Munns, and the program that he so enthusiastically and professionally oversees.

The Active After-school Communities Program is a unique example of a successful national initiative that is delivered locally by a federal agency, with established strategic partnerships with state and local government and non-government organisations to support implementation at the community level. This approach and this

structure has proven to maximise impact and minimise duplication, enabling the delivery of a high-quality program which addresses the government's priority areas. I understand there continues to be significant levels of unmet demand for the program, with more than 500 schools and out of school hours care services waiting to participate in the program. The program currently only reaches 25 per cent of primary schools nationwide, and approximately 50 per cent of childcare benefit approved out of school hours care services.

The government's current funding commitment for the Active After-schools Communities Program ceases in December 2010 and I am very happy to lobby my minister and others to see that this program continues into the next funding round. I know that there are colleagues on this side of the House that have this program going on in their electorates and regions and are very supportive of it. I know the minister is also very proud of it, but I just want to put on the record the importance of this program, particularly in my electorate, where unfortunately we still have too many kids that are essentially inactive.

It is interesting looking at some of the evaluation and research that has been done on the efficacy and efficiency of the program. The role of the regional coordinator is a highly valued role and is seen as important to the delivery of the program in the schools, and the out of school hours care services and overall satisfaction with the performance is at its highest level ever. So I congratulate all of those coordinators. I believe there is evidence that the Active After-school Communities Program is decreasing sedentary behaviour after school. Nearly half of the parents of children registered in the program through a school say their child would be engaged in sedentary behaviour if they were not participating in the program. Children who would have been physically active if they were not attending the after school program would mainly have been physically active in an unstructured way.

Importantly, the program is not a replacement program for after-school sport or other organised sport, so it is not negating and it is not duplicating. I think some people have lost sight of that. Ninety-one per cent of children participating in the program through a school reported they would not otherwise be participating in after-school sport or other organised physical activity. Of significant importance is the impact the program has had on a growing community capacity in stimulating local community involvement in sport and structured physical activity. Over half of the schools evaluated agreed that the program leads to increased links between the schools and supporting clubs or other sporting organisations in the community.

Almost two-thirds of schools believe that the program leads to more people skilled to deliver sport or other structured physical activity programs to children in the local community. Something like 78 per cent of schools overwhelmingly agreed that the program has increased their organisation's ability to provide sport or other structured physical activity to primary-age schoolchildren. Almost two-thirds of school representatives believe that the program leads to greater local community awareness of sporting clubs and other structured physical activity and organisations. Another interesting statistic is that over half of the school representatives—some 56 per cent—believe the program leads to more opportunities for children and families to join local sporting clubs and other structured physical activity. About half also agree that the program leads to more children joining local clubs.

In conclusion, I want to congratulate the minister for overseeing this excellent program, the Australian Sports Commission initiative for taking on this program and all those who deliver the Active After-school Communities program so very well, particularly David Munns and the Tasmanian organisation. (*Time expired*)