



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**PROOF**

**PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**

**National Stronger Regions Fund and Victoria**

**SPEECH**

**Monday, 27 February 2017**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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## SPEECH

<b>Date</b> Monday, 27 February 2017	<b>Source</b> House
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<b>Questioner</b>	<b>Responder</b>
<b>Speaker</b> O'Brien, Ted, MP	<b>Question No.</b>

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**Mr TED O'BRIEN** (Fairfax) (11:36): I found the last honourable member's address to this House bordering on funny, because we had the member for Bendigo complaining about a program that has delivered for Bendigo. That does not make a lot of sense. The chief complaint we heard from members opposite reflected in that last speech was an awful thing has happened, a crime almost. Do you know what it was? It was the change of a name of a program. That was the only criticism that the member could lay on this government. It was such a shallow rebuttal and complaint of a program that has clearly delivered for her own electorate of Bendigo.

The second and last complaint after a change of name was how challenging it is for governments to compare projects of a different size and different nature. Again, this goes to the shallowness, ineptitude and incompetence of the members opposite because anybody who spent so much as one or two days in business knows that is exactly what you need to do. It takes a degree of competence and this government has competence in spades. That is why we took to the 2013 election the commitment for the National Stronger Regions Fund, a program that ultimately aims to drive economic development, boost productivity and stimulate innovation by encouraging investment at the local community level.

The coalition understands, unlike the people opposite, that the economy is not an end unto itself. It is in fact the means by which you can enable local communities to take control of their own destiny. It is the means by which vital infrastructure and services are provided to Australian citizens. And it is that understanding of the power of economic development that underpins the National Stronger Regions Fund. The scope of the benefits have been very clear; it has all been about economic advantage long beyond the construction phase. This program has focused very much on the regions. I have a few statistics. Total investment has been \$632 million over three rounds: round 1, \$212 million; round 2, \$293 million; round 3, \$126 million.

I know this motion deals with Victoria specifically, and I have to say Victoria has done so well. Indeed the former member, the Labor Party member, mentioned the tennis centre—\$2 million—thank you very much to the coalition government. There was almost 3½ million dollars for destination Queenscliff in Victoria. With no disrespect for the members for Victoria, even on this side, there is one place more important and that, of course, is the state of Queensland. I am delighted, as the member for Fairfax, to see a very important project become the recipient of the National Stronger Regions Fund in my patch of the world for the Nambour Heritage Tramway.

The town of Nambour lies in the hinterland of the Sunshine Coast and it remains the capital of the hinterland in that important and vital region of Australia. But about a dozen years ago, just over a decade ago, we had the Moreton sugar mill close and the town has gone through a serious challenge, with almost \$70 million ripped out of its economy. The idea of this tramway is to use former cane train tracks as part of a broader reactivation plan for the town of Nambour. We have a local community Nambour alliance working so tightly and strongly, with a very good local councillor, to put together a reactivation plan for Nambour as a town. This is where the National Stronger Regions Fund comes in and will deliver half a million dollars to help that tramway get off the ground. It will be half a million dollars to help boost and reactivate the vital and important town of Nambour. I congratulate the coalition government.