

COUNTRY LOCAL GOVERNMENT FUND

416. Mr M.P. MURRAY to the Minister for Regional Development:

My question is to the minister who giveth with one hand and taketh with the other hand, the Minister for Regional Development. I refer to the decimation of the country local government fund in this year's budget, the funding for which will drop from about \$100 million a year to only \$9 million in 2016–17.

- (1) How will regional councils now be able to build or update their neglected infrastructure with the majority of this fund wrenched away?
- (2) How does the minister explain that 89 per cent of the country local government fund grants went to National Party electorates in the six months before the last election?

Mr B.J. GRYLLS replied:

- (1)–(2) The reason that all the funding went to the National electorates is that the National Party won them all. That is essentially why all the funding goes to those electorates.

I am happy to talk about the country local government fund. Since 2008–09, \$320 million has been invested in the country local government fund, under which 1 500 individual local government projects and over 100 strategic regional group projects were supported. This funding allowed local shires to catch up with projects needed to improve their amenities and infrastructure in regional towns and helped to revitalise regional communities. The country local government fund will receive \$34.5 million in this year's budget and \$29 million for regional groupings and local governments.

Mr D.A. Templeman interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Mandurah.

Mr B.J. GRYLLS: These funds will be available through the course of this financial year and the following financial year. The decision of the Liberal–National government was to bring that fund to a close. It has \$320 million in funds and it has funded 1 500 projects.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members!

Mr B.J. GRYLLS: It has funded 1 500 projects and it has completely revitalised almost every single town in regional Western Australia, and it is a project I am proud of.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, members!

Mr B.J. GRYLLS: Mr Speaker, the mock indignation of those opposite is absolutely spectacular.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order! Minister, please sit down. I call the member for Mandurah to order for the first time. Will the minister please get on with his answer?

Mr B.J. GRYLLS: The Leader of the Opposition is on the record in *Hansard* of 21 September 2010, which states —

All I say to members opposite is that all opportunity costs. Every dollar the government spends on a pound —

That was referring to a dog pound in Northam —

cannot be spent on health and every dollar that the government spends on a new bar for the Moora Recreation Centre —

Mr P.B. Watson: Sixteen per cent.

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for Albany to order for the first time.

Mr B.J. GRYLLS: The Leader of the Opposition stated —

Every dollar that the government spends on a pound cannot be spent on health and every dollar that the government spends on a new bar for the Moora Recreation Centre cannot be spent on providing additional doctors.

That is what the member for Rockingham said when he was Deputy Leader of the Opposition. The Liberal–National government in this budget has decided to redirect that money into health and additional doctors. The then Deputy Leader of the Opposition said in the same debate —

This government is spending precious royalties for regions money into electorates and into the country local government fund when country hospitals are crying out for resources.

The Liberal–National government in this budget has decided to allocate that money to country hospitals.

The shadow Treasurer, off the back of the mock indignation from the member for Collie–Preston, on 7 June 2009 said —

... \$166 million allocated for a Roe Highway extension would not be in the Budget under Labor and a \$400 million allocation to the Country Local Government Fund would also not be there.

Members opposite campaigned to scrap the fund and now stand up complaining that the funds have been redirected to the areas that are a priority of the Liberal–National government. Members opposite have no credibility; they are an embarrassment to regional WA. The Liberal–National government stands on its record.

Mr D.A. Templeman interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Mandurah, I call you to order for the second time. Can you wind up please, minister? Have you finished?

Mr B.J. GRYLLS: Yes.