



Senator Glenn Lazarus

Senator for Queensland

10 September 2015

Mr Grant Hehir
Auditor-General for Australia
Australian National Audit Office
GPO Box 707
Canberra ACT 2600
AUSTRALIA

Dear Auditor-General,

RE: National Stronger Regions Fund

I write to ask that you investigate the Abbott Government's decision-making process in relation to the disbursement of funds under the National Stronger Regions Fund.

The Department of Infrastructure's website outlines that the National Stronger Regions Fund Programme was implemented to provide funding of \$1 billion over five years from 2015 to fund priority infrastructure in *regional* communities. According to the Guidelines, the desired outcome of the programme is to:

1. Increase productivity in the regions;
2. Increase employment and more skilled workforces in the regions;
3. Increase capacity and improve capability of regions to deliver major projects, and to secure and manage investment funding;
4. Improve partnerships between local, state and territory governments, the private sector and community groups; and
5. Create more stable and viable communities, where people choose to live.

Deputy Prime Minister Warren Truss announced to the Parliament in May 2015 that round one of funding provided more than \$212 million to 51 successful bidders. Of the funding provided, the government committed \$57 million to infrastructure projects located in Melbourne, Adelaide, Perth, Brisbane and Darwin.

It is my view that the successful projects planned to take place in Australia's capital cities do not correctly or fairly form part of Australia's regional communities. That being the case, the awarding of funds to metropolitan projects has potentially detracted from eligible regional projects with the capability to stimulate growth in Australia's regional areas.

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Further, contributing to my concern that Australia's regional and rural areas have been disadvantaged by the disbursement of funding to metropolitan areas, it appears almost 60 percent of the successful projects are located in Coalition-held seats. Accordingly, I am concerned that successful projects may have been determined and/or partially determined by way of political bias and that unsuccessful projects have not been determined genuinely in light of the programme's desired outcomes. I refer to the **attached** list of successful round one projects and note my concern regarding the disproportionate allocation of funding between the states and territories, specifically:

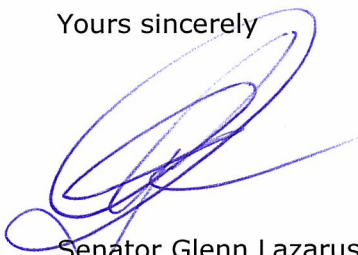
1. Victoria at 19;
2. New South Wales at 12;
3. Queensland at 7;
4. Western Australia at 5;
5. South Australia at 4;
6. Tasmania at 3; and
7. Northern Territory at 1.

In summation, I request that you undertake an investigation in relation to the awarding of funds issued pursuant to the National Stronger Regions Fund Programme by the Abbott Government with a view to specifically determining:

- 1. Whether the awarding of funds to projects in metropolitan areas correctly falls within the scope of the programme;**
- 2. The procedure implemented by, and the considerations by the Government in the awarding of, the successful projects, particularly those in the metropolitan areas and in Victoria;**
- 3. The merit of the projects proposed in regional areas;**
- 4. Whether funding provided by the Abbott Government under the programme appropriately and fairly represents the needs and challenges of all Australian states and territories; and**
- 5. Whether any political bias and/or influence contributed to the Abbott Government's decision-making process.**

I look forward to your response to my request. Should you have any concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me directly.

Yours sincerely



Senator Glenn Lazarus
Independent Senator for Queensland

Project Ref	Applicant Organisation	Project Name	Project Description	Project Location	State	Commonwealth Funding Approved	Total Project Cost
NSRF000011	Greater Bendigo City Council	Upgrade of Bendigo Airport	The project will construct a new runway to suit aircraft capable of carrying up to 70 passengers, as well as upgrading lighting, taxiways and associated infrastructure at the Bendigo Airport.	Bendigo	VIC	\$5,000,000	\$14,700,000
NSRF000048	Hume City Council	Construction of Craigieburn Water Park	The project involves the construction of a Water Park in Craigieburn, including a 50 metre flexible water space, slides and water play, gym, warm water pool, steam and spa within the Craigieburn Regional Aquatic and Leisure Centre. The project also includes construction of a synthetic athletics track and new pavilion and other recreational facilities within the Open Space and Events Area.	Craigieburn	VIC	\$9,091,825	\$32,500,000
NSRF000082	Devonport City Council	Construction of Stage 1 Living City Project at Devonport	The Living City project will construct a new retail, business/service and waterfront precinct focused on highlighting the Regions tourism, arts, food and services. Stage 1 includes a convention centre and multi-use community building, a food/beverage hub and market square and a two storey car park.	Devonport	TAS	\$9,999,000	\$54,720,000
NSRF000062	Brimbank City Council	Construction of the Western Business and Education Hub in Sunshine	The project with construct a Business and Education Hub providing meeting rooms, teleconference facilities, seminar spaces and a 350 seat auditorium and conference space.	Sunshine	VIC	\$2,500,000	\$6,000,000
NSRF000164	Help Enterprises	Construction of a new Logistics Centre in Acacia Ridge	The construction of the HELP Supply Chain Services Logistics Centre at Acacia Ridge will provide 95 jobs, the majority for people with a disability.	Acacia Ridge	QLD	\$2,475,000	\$4,950,000
NSRF000189	Wellington Shire Council	Redevelopment of the Port of Sale Civic Centre	The project is the redevelopment of the Port of Sale Civic Centre into a cultural hub, incorporating a regional art gallery, public library and visitor information centre.	Sale	VIC	\$4,500,000	\$12,500,000
NSRF000194	Mitchell Shire Council	Seymour Flood Mitigation Project	The Seymour Flood Mitigation Project comprises a 4.3 kilometre levee bank with associated drainage infrastructure to protect the town of Seymour from up to a 1-in-100 year flood from the Goulburn River.	Seymour	VIC	\$2,850,000	\$7,300,000
NSRF000214	Northern Grampians Shire Council	Construction of an Underground Physics Laboratory in Stawell	The project is a ten-year vision for the creation of a world class underground physics laboratory and associated outreach facilities. Stage One includes construction of the Stawell Underground Physics Laboratory (SUPL). Once stage one is operational, opportunities will be harnessed to extend the size and scope of the SUPL and build outreach facilities to host edu-tourism opportunities and educational services.	Stawell	VIC	\$1,750,000	\$3,500,000
NSRF000216	Alpine Shire	Construction of an Alpine Events Centre in Bright	This project will construct an Alpine Events Centre that will deliver a scalable and innovative outdoor events precinct for Bright and the wider region. It will include iconic mountain bike trails, a state-of-the-art events hub, major event facilities and scalable infrastructure to deliver major national and international events.	Bright	VIC	\$1,870,000	\$3,740,000
NSRF000295	Parkes Shire Council	Construction of Wastewater Treatment Plant and a Recycled Water Scheme in Parkes	The project will construct a Recycled Water Scheme for Parkes to provide reliable and robust recycled water for the long term future.	Parkes	NSW	\$8,725,000	\$17,450,000
NSRF000310	Baptcare Ltd	Norlane Community Centre	The project will redevelop a disused school site into the Norlane Community Project. The project will incorporate affordable housing units, a new aged care facility, including consulting suites for Allied Health and General Practitioner services, a cafe and a gym. The project will also include a community hub and landscaped outdoor meeting and play areas to facilitate and encourage community interaction.	Norlane	VIC	\$7,250,000	\$40,512,000
NSRF000344	Coorong District Council	Construction of access and service connections for the SA Motorsport Park	The project is the construction of essential access and service connections to prepare a site for the establishment of SA Motorsport Park at Taillem Bend and includes roadworks, internal access roads and internal services, site reticulation including water and gas supply, power supply, communications connections, storm water and site detention dams and wastewater services.	Taillem Bend	SA	\$7,500,000	\$27,480,000
NSRF000351	Town of Gawler	Development of the Central Business District Hub in Gawler	The project will redevelop the Gawler Town Hall and adjacent Gawler Institute to become a central hub. The hub will include a Regional Digital Business Hub, the Regional Gawler Heritage Collection Gallery, a multi-purpose function venue, an Aboriginal Café, a Regional Smart Library and a storehouse for employment and training opportunities for the Work for the Dole program.	Gawler	SA	\$5,600,000	\$12,600,000
NSRF000385	Charters Towers Regional Council	Upgrade to water infrastructure for Charter Towers	The project will upgrade the water infrastructure to provide greater access and a more dependable supply including inter-connection pipeline, refurbishment works on two reservoirs, installation of chlorine boosters and upgrades to the Water Treatment Plant.	Charters Towers	QLD	\$8,690,500	\$17,381,000
NSRF000149	Yarra Ranges Shire Council	Construction of a Multi-Purpose Health Hub for Belgrave	Construction of a Multi-Purpose Health Hub in Belgrave, Victoria. The facility will provide a one stop health hub for the local and surrounding communities. Services will include community health, emergency relief, early years, youth services and aged care service.	Belgrave	VIC	\$3,835,000	\$8,670,000
NSRF000219	City of Albany	Construction of the Albany Visitors Centre	The project will deliver an iconic building that will house a new tourist information hub and showcase for regional produce, involving the co-location of the Albany Visitors Centre and Public Library.	Albany	WA	\$997,500	\$1,995,000
NSRF000238	Horsham Rural City Council	The Grampians Peaks Trail Project	The project will construct a 144km, multi-day walking trail across the length of the Grampians National Park. The project will showcase the beauty and majesty of the Park's natural and cultural landscapes, the Grampians Peak Trail will be one of the great iconic walks of Australia with an estimated visitation of 23,000 people per annum by 2020.	Dunkeld	VIC	\$10,000,000	\$27,000,000
NSRF000254	Abbotsford Convent Foundation	Restoration of the Sacred Heart Building and Abbotsford Convent in Abbotsford	The project will restore the Sacred Heart building at the Abbotsford Convent.	Abbotsford	VIC	\$2,681,625	\$5,363,250

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NSRF000262	Mareeba Shire Council	Upgrade of Wastewater Treatment Plant in Mareeba	The project will upgrade the wastewater treatment plant in Mareeba to increase its capacity and to meet environmental regulatory standards.	Mareeba	QLD	\$6,000,000	\$15,052,760
NSRF000298	CareWest Incorporated	Redevelopment of CareWest Community Connection Centre in Orange.	Creation of a multipurpose community centre incorporating co-located health and social services for disadvantaged individuals in the region.	Orange	NSW	\$747,000	\$1,495,000
NSRF000442	Dubbo City Council	Upgrade of Cattle Sale Facilities at the Dubbo Regional Livestock Markets	The project will upgrade and expand the cattle sale facilities at the Dubbo Regional Livestock Markets.	Dubbo	NSW	\$3,290,875	\$6,581,750
NSRF000017	Karmal Community Children's Centre Inc	Construction of an Integrated Children's Centre at Korumburra	The project will construct an integrated children's centre to provide childcare, kindergarten and after school care services.	Korumburra	VIC	\$1,600,000	\$5,345,000
NSRF000104	Midcoast County Council	Nabiac Inland Dune Aquifer Supply System Project	The project will complete the Nabiac Inland Dune Aquifer Supply System including upgrade of the Nabiac Water Treatment Plant, the Darawank Reservoir pump station and electrical and telecommunications services linking the components to the existing Manning District Water Supply Scheme.	Nabiac	NSW	\$9,600,000	\$19,200,000
NSRF000148	City of Greater Dandenong	Development of Tatterson Park Sport and Community Hub in Keysborough	A multi-purpose sporting hub will be developed at Tatterson Park to comprise existing infrastructure plus a new Sporting and Community Pavilion and synthetic playing pitch to cater for the growing needs of the south east region of Victoria.	Keysborough	VIC	\$4,865,150	\$9,730,300
NSRF000283	Wingecarribee Shire Council	Moss Vale Enterprise Corridor	The project will upgrade and realign Berrima Road (MR 372), the only B-double, High Mass Limit approved road linking Moss Vale with the Hume Highway. The project will eliminate the existing rail level crossing and replace it with a rail overbridge, and replace the existing T-junction intersection at Berrima Road and Taylor Avenue with a B-triple capacity roundabout. The project addresses transport and logistical access, capacity, productivity and safety issues represented by the current level rail crossing and T-junction intersection.	Berrima	NSW	\$4,602,596	\$9,205,193
NSRF000410	Dorset Council	Construction of the North-East Rail Trail from Launceston to Scottsdale	The project will construct a 70km multi-use trail along the disused rail corridor from Launceston to Scottsdale.	Lilydale	TAS	\$1,470,000	\$2,942,000
NSRF000190	Shire of Mt Marshall	Redevelopment of the Multipurpose Complex in Bencubbin	Development of the Bencubbin Multipurpose Complex to create a multifunctional sporting and community space in the Wheatbelt region that will support regional sporting events, workshops, functions and commercial activities.	Bencubbin	WA	\$990,000	\$2,760,000
NSRF000430	Maroondah City Council	Construct a Centre for Regional Knowledge and Innovation at Ringwood	The project involves the construction of a new library, learning and cultural centre in the new Ringwood Town Square precinct.	Ringwood	VIC	\$3,000,000	\$7,700,000
NSRF000003	Casey City Council	Construction of a Regional Arts Centre at Narre Warren	The project will construct a Regional Arts Centre, including a theatre, studio space, function centre and regional art gallery.	Narre Warren	VIC	\$10,000,000	\$55,000,000
NSRF000026	Goulburn Mulwaree Council	Construction of a Wastewater Treatment Plant in Goulburn	The project is Stage 1 construction of a new state of the art, 33,000 equivalent persons wastewater treatment plant including a pump station and rising main to distribute reuse water for irrigation and industry, irrigation infrastructure for reuse water at the racecourse and sporting fields, a discharge point to Wollondilly River and overhead standpipes for access to reuse water.	Goulburn	NSW	\$10,000,000	\$40,000,000
NSRF000106	Mount Isa City Council	Upgrade of Stage 2A Sewer Augmentation at Mount Isa	The project will upgrade the Waste Water Reclamation Plant to improve the quality of the treated effluent to meet the current licence conditions as well as 'Class A' standard required for human health protection.	Mount Isa	QLD	\$2,515,000	\$5,030,000
NSRF000171	Wodonga City Council	Upgrade Wodonga City Heart Infrastructure Project	The City Heart Infrastructure Project delivers key public infrastructure for the Wodonga Central Business Area Revitalisation Project, with the construction of public open spaces at Richardson Park and the Promenade, and key connections through the reconstruction of High and South Streets and extension of Havelock Street.	Wodonga	VIC	\$10,000,000	\$20,764,660
NSRF000244	Shire of Serpentine Jarrahdale	Construction and fit-out of commercial kitchen in Byford	Construction and fit-out of a commercial kitchen at the Byford Country Club.	Byford	WA	\$245,000	\$683,100
NSRF000278	Pathfinders Ltd	Upgrade of Youth Accommodation and Support Centre at Armidale and Glen Innes	The project will upgrade two buildings, one in Armidale and one in Glen Innes, into youth accommodation and support facilities.	Armidale	NSW	\$500,000	\$1,058,500
NSRF000394	Cardinia Shire Council	Construction of a Community Hub at Emerald	The project will upgrade and extend the existing two-storey Mechanics Hall to include a new commercial kitchen, space and facilities for University of the Third Age (U3A) and the Men's Shed, new foyer/entry, art display space and local tourism information on the ground floor. The first floor will provide space for 3MDR Community Radio and a versatile meeting space.	Emerald	VIC	\$1,500,000	\$5,697,259
NSRF000422	Gosford City Council	Infrastructure upgrade of the Somersby Industrial Park	Infrastructure upgrade of the Somersby Industrial Park, including construction of new road works, stormwater, sewer and water mains infrastructure.	Somersby	NSW	\$10,000,000	\$28,726,200
NSRF000061	City of Darwin	Construction of Stage 1 of the Parap Leisure and Sports Centre	The Parap Leisure and Sports Centre will provide a modern, integrated aquatic and sporting facility. Stage 1 will include the construction of a 50 metre FINA standard pool and a 25 metre multipurpose pool.	Parap	NT	\$4,483,000	\$8,966,000
NSRF000117	Shire of Moyne	Port Fairy Waterfront Development Project	The project will redevelop the waterfront to provide a vibrant new asset featuring a dedicated space to showcase and sell local and regional produce, a waterfront restaurant, an al fresco area with fresh local seafood and produce outlet.	Port Fairy	VIC	\$1,425,000	\$2,850,000
NSRF000154	Corowa Shire Council	Upgrade of the Mulwala Industrial Estate Development	The Mulwala Industrial Estate Development project will upgrade existing infrastructure and extend an industrial estate to enable new business expansion and diversification whilst rectifying major drainage issues.	Mulwala	NSW	\$655,676	\$2,033,740

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NSRF000163	Yass Valley Council	Construction of a Water Pipeline in Murrumbateman	The project will construct a 17.5 kilometre, 250mm diameter water supply pipeline from Yass to Murrumbateman. The pipeline will provide Murrumbateman with a safe, secure drinking water supply and allow the growth of residential and commercial development.	Murrumbateman	NSW	\$6,100,000	\$12,200,000
NSRF000186	Naracoorte Lucindale Council	Construction of a Lucindale Road Roundabout in Naracoorte	The proposal will create a B-Double heavy vehicle compliant roundabout on Lucindale Road in a strategic location that services a minimum of four adjoining sites, each of which presents multiple subdivision and development opportunities.	Naracoorte	SA	\$635,000	\$1,270,000
NSRF000196	Tasmanian Association of Police and Citizen Youth Clubs	Redevelopment of the Launceston PCYC Youth Facility in Newstead	Redevelopment of the Launceston Police and Citizens Youth Club Child Care space into a youth-specific, multi-purpose area enabling the development of new programs to assist highly 'at risk' youth. The building is to be named the Youth Operations Centre (YOC) and will be the organisational and service hub for youth.	Newstead	TAS	\$69,956	\$139,913
NSRF000209	Nambucca Shire Council	Construction of Sewerage Infrastructure in South Nambucca	The South Nambucca Sewerage Infrastructure Construction Project will provide for the installation of a sewage disposal system which will create opportunities for residential and commercial development along the Nambucca River, as well as enable the continued operation of two tourism accommodation sites.	Nambucca	NSW	\$241,340	\$482,680
NSRF000239	City of Belmont	Belmont Business Park Transport Infrastructure	The project will upgrade transport infrastructure in and around the Belmont Business Park. The project will help resolve traffic problems, allow for more sustainable public transport and create a more aesthetically pleasing and functional main thoroughfare.	Belmont	WA	\$6,032,485	\$12,064,970
NSRF000285	Burke Shire Council	Construction of a Pontoon Wharf in Burketown	This project will construct a 24 metre long pontoon accessed from the Albert River bank via a marine-grade aluminium gangway.	Burketown	QLD	\$160,000	\$480,000
NSRF000296	City of Playford	Playford Central Business District Infrastructure	Construction of 12 mixed-use allotments within the Playford Central Business District, all of which will be suitable for commercial, retail or residential development. The project will also upgrade the streetscape and function of Playford Boulevard to improve pedestrian and traffic flows and to provide an attractive space for community activities.	Elizabeth	SA	\$2,752,500	\$5,505,000
NSRF000304	Gympie Regional Council	Construction of the Gympie Aquatic Centre	The new aquatic centre will include a 50 metre outdoor regional competition pool, 25 metre heated indoor program pool, 250 square metre zero depth leisure pool, dual water slides, car park, pool management office space, first aid room/kiosk/cafe and associated amenities.	Gympie	QLD	\$5,000,000	\$20,000,000
NSRF000385	The Flagstaff Group	Expansion of Commercial Laundry	This project is the expansion of a commercial laundry servicing growth in the aged care industry while providing additional employment and training opportunities for people with disabilities.	Unanderra	NSW	\$857,575	\$1,715,150
NSRF000450	Indigo Shire Council	Upgrade of Recreational Reserve Facilities at Wahgunyah	The project will upgrade facilities at the Wahgunyah Recreation Reserve including upgrading and expansion of the football and netball home and away clubrooms, treasurer and trainer rooms, septic, toilet and shower facilities, new community meeting rooms, a multi-purpose community function centre, car park and entry road.	Wahgunyah	VIC	\$200,000	\$770,000
NSRF000487	Shire of Northam	Construction of an Aboriginal and Environmental Interpretation Centre in Northam	Construction of an Aboriginal and Environmental Interpretation Centre in Northam including an interactive, educational space to recognise the rich Aboriginal and Environmental presence in the area.	Northam	WA	\$2,100,000	\$4,200,000
NSRF000034	Ronald McDonald House South East Queensland Inc	Construction of Ronald McDonald House in South Brisbane	Construction of a new Ronald McDonald House in South Brisbane with 112 accommodation rooms, communal spaces including a kitchen, laundry, dining area, lounge and games room. The facility will also include outdoor recreation and play areas and on site parking.	South Brisbane	QLD	\$5,300,000	\$34,000,000
						\$212,253,603	\$642,010,425