



Speech by

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**MEMBER FOR MUNDINGBURRA**

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### **COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT FUNDING**

**Ms NELSON-CARR** (Mundingburra—ALP) (10.15 a.m.): Prime Minister John Howard's boast that today's economy is the strongest it has been since the Menzies era has not only drawn mixed responses but it begs the question: why is it that areas of social and economic need are still neglected? Commonwealth dollars for disability, education, health, justice and the environment are even harder to access, and the lives of many Australians remain incomprehensible when compared with the ever increasing wealth of a few.

The abrogation of Commonwealth responsibility is a growing trend. The States are left to juggle their social costs with economic development. The Federal Government must be made more accountable in terms of State assistance in areas of need and not be let off the hook so easily. Fights over where responsibility lies should be a thing of the past with the bipartisan approach adopted to achieve the best outcomes for Australians. But it does not end there. In proving need, the regions face further hardships over the inevitable lack of commitment from the Commonwealth.

Social costs are enormous. I will give a regional example. A Townsville project requiring funding from the Federal Government is the Ross River Douglas Arterial project, a project that has never been a State Government election promise but which the State has had listed as a priority on the roads program for the past two years. Who would ever have dreamed that the projected population figures could have blown out the way they have? Townsville is on the threshold of industrial boom, and with this realisation comes the necessity for the Douglas Arterial project to go ahead.

The Commonwealth talks about State's core responsibilities, but this project requires Federal funding of \$41m. Why? It is part of the National Highway. Our Government is committed to this project, but the respective responsibilities of the State and Federal Governments need to be open and transparent. The State Government has allocated funding for the planning and design work. No project can begin without this. \$4m has been allocated over the next two years for this planning and design on what is a Federal Government responsibility. Core responsibility and a strong economy depend on honesty and accountability. I support the need for a bridge over the upper Ross River and I call on the Federal Government to commit to this project sooner rather than later.

Time expired.

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