



Speech by

Hon. Andrew Fraser

MEMBER FOR MOUNT COOT-THA

Hansard Thursday, 9 August 2007

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Local Government Funding

Hon. AP FRASER (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Minister for Local Government, Planning and Sport) (10.10 am): The Beattie government is committed to allocating significant funds to our councils to ensure that they are equipped to provide their communities with the infrastructure and services that they require. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said for the Commonwealth.

I have previously challenged the member for Warrego to speak with his colleagues in the federal government and match the Beattie government's commitment to council funding, in particular to infrastructure programs for the Torres Strait and mainland Indigenous communities. Apparently, that dialogue has so far failed to materialise in results.

This government has committed \$56 million to the Torres Strait major infrastructure program. By contrast, the federal government has come to the table with a comparatively inadequate \$12 million. This government's \$56 million commitment was made with the expectation that the Commonwealth would match the funding on a dollar-for-dollar basis. Clearly that has not happened and the people of the Torres Strait have been short changed to the tune of \$44 million.

Similarly, the Queensland government has \$100 million on the table for the mainland Indigenous program for environmental health infrastructure. That is a substantial funding commitment and we would also expect the Howard government to honour its commitment to match it on a dollar-for-dollar basis. But what has it come up with? A total of \$30 million—short changing Indigenous communities on the mainland by \$70 million.

When it comes to the crunch, the federal budget for local government has failed Queensland and failed local government. It is important to remind the House that the Australian Local Government Association's formal request for a \$250 million infrastructure fund was denied outright by the federal government in its last budget. The Prime Minister and the federal local government minister, Jim Lloyd, had a chance to lift local government out of the doldrums but the federal government ignored them.

Funds going to local government from the federal government again declined this year to represent only 0.75 per cent of the total tax revenue. In stark contrast, in Queensland we have allocated a record budget of \$788.1 million in funding to assist local government for this financial year.

The federal government has no intention of acting in a responsible or serious way in providing our councils with even adequate levels of funding. If it were serious, and not just obsessed with its rapidly dwindling re-election prospects, the Commonwealth would be actively providing funding that the communities require and deserve, not just funding political trickery.