




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR TOOHEY

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PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENT

Community Development Grants Programme

 **Mr RUSSO** (Toohey—ALP) (2.09 pm): The Commonwealth government's Community Development Grants Programme commenced in December 2013 and was slated to finish on 30 June 2020. However, in October 2019 a small notice appeared on the GrantConnect website, extending the program until 30 June 2026, which is still some six years and, most tellingly, another two federal election cycles away, but it is the grant guidelines that make for the most interesting reading. The website states—

The Australian Government selects projects to be invited to submit a Request for Information form.

There has been a staggering \$2.5 billion put into the CDG coffers since the CDG program began, with \$286 million flooding out in 2019 alone. It is important to remember that this is a program where only the coalition government's hand-picked projects are invited, approved and funded. Independent analysis, done by people with far greater forensic financial expertise and analysis capabilities than me, has shown that in 2019 the 68 Labor seats—which are 45 per cent of the total 151 federal seats—averaged \$836,000 in CDGs. That is around 20 per cent of the overall funding barrel. This is in comparison with coalition and, here in Queensland, LNP held seats.

In 2019, 44 Liberal seats received total amounts of \$2.086 million. The 23 LNP seats in Queensland received, on average, \$2.473 million each. The 10 National Party held seats across the rest of the nation scored an average of \$6.712 million each. It should be noted that, by comparison, some 22 Labor held seats have never received a cent under this program. It is not even cynical of me to say that those Labor seats that did score well from the piggybank were of particular interest to or focus of the coalition government.

This is a blatant misuse of taxpayers' money. How is this a fair and just process to have taxpayers' money targeted towards LNP or coalition seats at the expense of needy and deserving community organisations? Clearly this is just another way to manipulate voters. I am heartened to see that on Monday this week the Australian Senate agreed to a Senate order for the production of documents, ordering the federal Minister for Infrastructure, Regional Development and Cities to table documents relating to the CDG program. It will be interesting to see what that reveals.