




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR KEPPEL

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MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

World Town Planning Day

 **Ms LAUGA** (Keppel—ALP) (2.42 pm): Today, 8 November, is World Town Planning Day. I offer a happy World Town Planning Day to all urban and regional planners right across Queensland, Australia and, indeed, the world.

Planning is a dynamic field that is all about improving quality of life and creating vibrant communities in which people love to live, work and play. Good planning creates more accessible, equitable, efficient and beautiful communities. It provides adequate housing and services. It gives future generations realistic and fair opportunities. It helps communities, governments and the private sector envision how their community can grow and develop.

I acknowledge the President of the Planning Institute of Australia Queensland, Shannon Batch, an old uni colleague, and also the General Manager of PIA Queensland, Matt Collins. I look forward to celebrating at the PIA annual awards for excellence with them this coming Friday.

Today, a secret report about the former coalition government's sports rorts scandal has been released. It has absolutely slammed the decision-making process behind the grants scheme and its 'lack of transparency'.

The investigation by former secretary of the prime minister and cabinet department Phil Gaetjens also found there were significant shortcomings when coalition senator Bridget McKenzie awarded a community sporting grant to a gun club she was a member of. Documents released under freedom of information reveal that there was a serious lack of transparency for applicants regarding how grant money would be allocated. The complete investigation has now been released only now after the FOI commissioner ordered the Prime Minister's department to make it public.

The investigation was launched after a damning Auditor-General's report found former sports minister McKenzie's office overlooked sporting grant applications of merit in favour of those in marginal LNP electorates. 'This lack of transparency coupled with the significant divergences between projects recommended by Sport Australia and those approved by the minister has given rise to concerns about the decision making,' the report states. 'Those submitting grant funding applications had, in my view, a right to more fully understand the basis on which the funding decisions were being made,' Gaejtns reported.

Unlike those opposite and the federal LNP, Labor is transparent about infrastructure projects and we deliver. Last week I met with a local builder who has been completely financially crippled as a result of a grant of \$5.8 million through the Morrison government's Regional Jobs and Investments Packages Fund for the Hidden Valley Harvest project at Yeppoon. This is a project which was funded by taxpayers' money but which has never been completed and has sent local builders into financial ruin. This funding program was reviewed by the Australian National Audit Office in 2019 and it found that the LNP's eligibility and merit assessment processes 'were not to an appropriate standard'.

The audit report went further and stated, 'The Ministerial Panel most often cited incorrect scoring by assessors as the reason for not agreeing with departmental funding recommendations. Those applications were not re-scored.' The audit further found appropriate checks and controls were not in place for eligibility and merit assessments. 'An assurance review contracted by Infrastructure identified that applicant claims were being taken at face value without appropriate scrutiny,' the audit report said.

How on earth can \$5.8 million land in the bank account of grant recipients without appropriate scrutiny and, when it goes belly up, why did the LNP not investigate? Maybe because former minister Andrew Robb was a director? Maybe because former minister John McVeigh did not want to investigate his mates?

Under this federal Labor and state Labor government, there is none of this pork-barrelling like the LNP is renowned for—like the \$300 million Building Better Regions Fund, where nearly 90 per cent of the funding was spent in coalition and marginal seats. This is just one in a long line of rorts from the Morrison-Joyce government—sports rorts, car park rorts, Safer Communities rorts and the Building Better Regions rorts.

The numbers do not lie. Barnaby Joyce, Scott Morrison, Michelle Landry, Matt Canavan and the LNP clearly prioritised their own seats over worthy projects in other parts of the country. We know that former LNP ministers made decisions based on playing favourites, based on reasons that were not fully explained to those applying for grants, nor did they keep proper records of decisions. The only thing Scott Morrison, Barnaby Joyce, Michelle Landry and Matt Canavan cared about when they were in government was diverting funds for their own electoral purposes—like the \$660 million of taxpayer funds which was spent on 47 car park projects or like the \$5.8 million Hidden Valley Harvest project in Yeppoon that never happened but the taxpayer money has disappeared.

Unlike the LNP, we do not have colour-coded spreadsheets with marginal LNP electorates prioritised for funding. The LNP could never be trusted with taxpayer money. They used it like Monopoly money, spending on projects that would only benefit them in their own electorates. There was no transparency and there was no accountability. Local people in Central Queensland have been hurt by the LNP's rorts and all of us in this place should be very concerned about holding the former Morrison government to account.

(Time expired)