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MEDIA RELEASE

STRONGER REGIONAL FUNDING NOT REGIONAL CUTS AND RORTS

The Stronger Regions Fund is cold comfort to regional Australia that has seen nothing but cuts and neglect since the Abbott Government took office.

The first act of Infrastructure and Regional Development Minister, Warren Truss in government was to gut \$250 million out of critical regional projects. As a result these projects were either not funded or indefinitely delayed.

This is on top of the more than \$900 million that has been ripped out of local government through the Abbott budget cuts to vital financial assistance grants.

If Warren Truss thinks regional Australia will praise him for a fund that doesn't come close to covering the even larger cuts he has already made, he's obviously lost touch with the bush.

By the time any money actually starts flowing from the Stronger Regions Fund, it will be almost two years with not a cent hitting the ground in regional Australia thanks to the Abbott Government.

Equally concerning is that the Abbott Government will use this fund to secure marginal seats like they did when last in Government.

We already know the Abbott Government has used its Community Development Grants Programme as a slush fund to target marginal regional seats now held by the Liberal and National parties.

More than 80 per cent of those funds went to seats held by the Abbott Government

Funding under the Stronger Regions Fund must be allocated based on the projects that deliver the most benefit to regional communities, not on the political party of the local member.

Minister Truss must assure regional communities that the Stronger Regions Fund will not become another regional rorts program.

Regional Australia needs a Government that is committed to working in partnership with them to deliver projects that stack up, not cuts and rorts.

WEDNESDAY, 1 OCTOBER 2014