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**REGIONAL RORTS REVISITED AS ABBOTT OPENS PORK BARREL**

Tony Abbott has showered Coalition seats with more than 80 per cent of \$307 million in funding for community projects in a blatant return to the pork barrelling that plagued the Howard era.

Labor analysis of announcements made under Mr Abbott's new Community Development Grants program shows Mr Abbott has pumped \$257 million from the scheme into Coalition seats, including 230 projects in the nation's 15 most-marginal seats.

The Government has allocated only \$39 million from the fund to non-government seats.

Mr Abbott must explain this disparity, which looks like a throwback to the infamous Regional Rorts scandal of 2007, when an Auditor General's report found the government had handed out money for pet projects in defiance of departmental advice and acceptable standards of public administration.

Grants were given to a Queensland pub to run "Whacky Wednesdays" and "stunt bikini babes" and to support a railway project that had already gone broke.

It is becoming clear that Tony Abbott and the Coalition are back to their old tricks and have created the Community Development Grants (CDGs) to use as a slush fund.

The funding for the CDGs was taken from the previous Labor Government's Regional Development Australia Fund – a program that targeted community projects in rural and regional areas.

Critically, under Mr Abbott's new scheme, grants have been allocated to marginal Coalition-held city seats.

Community infrastructure that stacks up should be considered for government funding, but the key criteria for funding should not be the political affiliation of the local member.

Tony Abbott is telling the communities of Australia he will support them only if they return Coalition MPs.

This is an outrageous use of tax-payer dollars given there are communities all over Australia that would equally benefit from government investing in local projects.

This is hypocrisy at the highest level given the harsh and severe cuts the Abbott Government has made in its Budget to regional programs while at the same time re-allocating vital money from the Regional Australia Development Fund to prop up its election promises across marginal seats.

I hope this practice will not be replicated for the remaining \$30 million of the CDGs and for the Abbott Government's National Stronger Regions Fund.

How have these projects been assessed and have they developed a detailed business plan?

Has the Department had the opportunity to consider and analyse the benefits of each project?

Full details of the CDG scheme can be accessed at: <http://bit.ly/1rBI2FF>

### HIGHEST NUMBER OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT GRANTS PROJECTS ALLOCATED ACROSS MARGINAL SEATS

Electorate	Number of Projects	Margin prior to 2013	Funding
Corangamite	9	0.3	\$10.9 million
Deakin	4	0.6	\$970,000
Aston	11	0.7	\$4.6 million
Dunkley	9	1.0	\$3 million
Robertson	7	1.0	\$16.7 million
Lindsay	7	1.1	\$12.2 million
Brisbane	5	1.1	\$6.1 million
Latrobe	8	1.7	\$3.9 million
Solomon	4	1.8	\$125,900
Casey	13	1.9	\$6.8 million
Longman	5	1.9	\$2.8 million
Herbert	5	2.2	\$13.1 million
Petrie	3	2.5	\$820,000
Bennelong	6	3.1	\$11.2 million
Flynn	8	3.6	\$2.5 million
Capricornia	2	3.7	\$716,000
Page	5	4.2	\$795,000
Hindmarsh	6	6.1	\$7.7 million
Braddon	6	7.5	\$7.2 million

PARTY	FUNDING
LIBERAL PARTY	\$224,590,822
NATIONALS	\$33,141,543
ALP	\$30,456,246
OTHERS	\$18,876,721
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$307,065,322</b>