Infrastructure grants slashed

POLITICAL REPORTER
Corey Sinclair

MORE than $200,000 in funding has been lost from Central Australia after Prime Minister Tony Abbott slashed grants for community infrastructure.

Deputy Prime Minister Warren Truss confirmed that the Coalition will back out on funding allocated through round five of the Regional Development Australia Fund grants, which were designed to fund community facilities such as swimming pools, sporting fields and child care centres.

Alice Springs Town Council, Barkly Shire Council and Central Desert Shire Council were among the councils that lost funding.

Local Government Association of the Northern Territory (LGANT) president Damien Ryan said the announcement was difficult for everyone.

“When someone makes a grant like that, it’s welcome in every community but this one is a disappointment for everyone,” he said.

Barkly Shire Acting CEO Rodney Donne was disappointed at the loss of funding for Elliott.

“At the moment we only have one oval in the whole Shire area that is suitable for playing football of high standard and that is the one in Tennant Creek,” he said.

“We don’t really have good ovals in any of our communities which means all the football games are played in Tennant.

“We’d really like to get other ovals in the shire so the games can be spread around a bit more.”

Elliott sporting teams and supporters regularly travel 255km round trips to Tennant Creek for sporting events.

Mr Ryan, who is also the Mayor of Alice Springs, called the decision a disappointment for the town.

Projects to miss out

Completion of the project would improve safety and security along the Todd River walkway bordering Ararat Oval, a centrally located facility used throughout the year for a wide range of sporting events, concerts and festivals. - $74,500.

Barkly Shire Council: Elliott Sporting Oval. The project would provide a sporting oval for Elliott that will allow the town to enjoy regional football fixtures, allow local teams to train and support other sporting and recreation programs. - $84,416.

Central Desert Shire Council: Nyirripi and Laramba Park and playground area. Upgrade of infrastructure and installation of playground equipment, park signage, tables and chairs, water bubblers, bins, landscaping at community parks in Laramba and Nyirripi. - $89,480.

“As the mayor, I’m very disappointed,” he said.

“It’s disappointing that the funding was cancelled because our community will miss out on those solar lights.”

“We were reliant on that money. The Deputy Prime Minister said he won’t go ahead with the funding so we’ll have to try and find another grant line to fund that idea.”

Shadow Minister for Infrastructure and Transport Anthony Albanese said the program was designed to improve community facilities in regional areas and stimulate local economies, thereby supporting existing employment and creating new jobs.

“Mr Abbott and Mr Truss have been in office for only a few weeks but they are already destroying jobs and short-changing our communities,” Mr Albanese said.

“This is despite their pre-election promises of ‘no surprises’ and ‘no cuts’ that would destroy jobs.”

Jessica Brown

THE sky is the limit for by-election candidate Colin Purphy who will climb a Himalayan peak to raise funds for Tennant Creek Primary School.

Mr Purphy, who has conquered a life-long battle with chronic epilepsy, obesity and depression, will climb Island Peak near Mt Everest next month with friends Debby Boran and Laura Wright to obtain the funds needed to secure much needed shade sails.

After climbing Mt Kilimanjaro last year to raise funds for the Alice Springs Hospital, Mr Purphy said this year’s challenge to reach Island Peak at 6086m is definitely achievable.

“A few years ago, all this was impossible and now I can do it so I’m going to do it,” he said.

“We’ve made a deal with the primary school that we will find them some sponsorship to cover the cost of the sails and whoever comes in as sponsors will get their advert (hung) on Mt Everest at three different points.

“It’s a school in the middle of the desert and there’s no shade for the kids.

“We’ve received a few quotes and it’s ranging between $15,000 and $30,000 but we’ve got a few people who are coming in who think that they can do that.

“If there are any businesses who think that they could do that then the school is more than willing to negotiate with them – we’ve got two sails over two playgrounds.

“We’ve also got private sponsorship for the people who are actually sponsoring the trek.

“We’re funding our own trips and then people who sponsor the climb side, that will lower our expenses and in return they will get an advert on the mountain.”

Mr Purphy said he is fit and healthy and still has all the gear he used on his last trip so is ready to go but Ms Boran and Ms Wright still have some training to do as they decided they would accompany him only four weeks ago.

“I have been training for a few years now,” Mr Purphy said.

“I was training for Mt Kilimanjaro and I kept it going when I came back.

Mr Purphy said it is difficult to train for altitude sickness in Alice Springs because the land is relatively flat but he regularly runs up and down Mt Gillen to improve his fitness.

Mr Purphy, Ms Boran and Ms Wright will start the climb on December 5 and will be back in Alice Springs for the new year.

Colin Purphy will climb a Himalayan peak to raise funds for Tennant Creek Primary School.

Picture: JUSTIN BRIERTY

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