North left short of infrastructure cash

Kieran Rooney

Over the next financial year the Turnbull Government will pay five times more specifically on infrastructure in western Sydney than it will on developing Northern Australia.

A budget breakdown of Commonwealth infrastructure payments to states for 2016-17 has revealed $534 million will be spent on Sydney’s western suburbs.

In the same time frame infrastructure for developing Northern Australia, for which there are two government ministers, will receive $100 million to be spread along the country’s top-end.

Of this most will go to the North, with $62.7 million in cashflow allocated to Queensland while Western Australia will receive $34.2 million and the Northern Territory just $3.2 million.

Before the Budget, Deputy Prime Minister Barnaby Joyce said there were big announcements for those living outside capital cities.

“The Budget and the upcoming election campaign will paint a clear picture of the future we want for regional Australia and act as a road map for how we will go about creating it.”

“The Fair Go for Regional Australia campaign is a very welcome addition to our cause, and I look forward to working with you on building a more prosperous future for regional Australia.”

But new projects and additional funding outside capital cities were largely left out of the Budget, with the best hope for new infrastructure to come during the election.

The Coalition has set aside $1.5 billion in unannounced projects to be announced as the campaign unfolds, with much of it expected to be used in pork-barrelling regional seats.

Minister for Regional Development Fiona Nash (pictured) said the broad budget policies would boost regional areas, with more funding announcements to come.

“All Government programs are expected to deliver results, but a key factor which will deliver better outcomes in regional Australia is creating more jobs,” she said.

“This budget delivers tax cuts to small and medium businesses which are the lifeblood of regional Australia, as well as tax write-offs for equipment up to $20,000 which will help grow businesses and more jobs.”

“The Coalition will announce more policies to create jobs in regional areas as the election campaign rolls on.”

Solomon rivals in

Hayley Sorensen and NeDa vanovac

Held by a razor-thin margin, the fight for the bellwether seat of Solomon is shaping up to be a tightly run race.

The electorate covers Darwin and Palmerston and was held by David Tollner for the Country Liberals for two terms to 2007, then taken for a term by Labor’s Damien Hale before losing it to the Country Liberals’ Natasha Griggs, who took the seat when the parliament was hung in 2010.

With the two major parties the only real contenders for the seat — the Greens picked up just 8 per cent in Solomon in 2013 — the fight will come down to Mrs Griggs and her Labor challenger Luke Gosling.

Mrs Griggs said securing federal funding for the Palmerston Hospital project — the subject of a cost blowout, with the NT Government seeking more money from the Commonwealth for its completion — and the Tiger Brennan Drive duplication were two of her biggest achievements during the past term.

She stuck to the Coalition’s “jobs and growth” mantra when asked to nominate the election’s biggest issues and didn’t answer questions about whether she felt vulnerable to voter backlash against the Territory CLP.

“The Turnbull Government will continue the good work it has already done transforming the NT economy, creating jobs and developing an economy for the 21st century,” she said.

“My record of delivery over the past three years, the Government’s commitment to implementing billions of dollars for Defence and Northern Australia are the issues that matter for residents of Darwin and Palmerston.”

Mrs Griggs defended the Federal Budget which contained minimal new spending for the Territory.

“The Federal Budget was an economic plan for the future with jobs and growth as the centrepiece and was never about winners and losers with hand-outs from electorate to electorate,” she said.

A chaotic few years of con-