



## MEDIA RELEASE

# \$500,000 boost to New England through National Stronger Regions Fund

13 May 2015

FEDERAL Member for New England, Barnaby Joyce said the Commonwealth Government has announced \$500,000 in funding that had the potential to turn-around the lives of up to 700 young, disadvantaged and homeless people in Armidale and the New England with the release of the Federal Budget on Tuesday night.

The funding will go towards the upgrade of a youth accommodation and support centre at Armidale and Glen Innes run by the Pathfinders organisation under the \$1 billion National Stronger Regions Fund. The project will receive funding up to a maximum of 50 per cent of the total project cost.

“We are continuing to deliver for our seat,” Mr Joyce said.

“Last week we opened up Freeman House in Armidale and the Nationals are delivering on the Armidale airport. This is more investment into the City of Armidale that works in conjunction with the Bolivia Hill re-alignment, Tenterfield Bypass, Abbington Bridge in the Uralla Shire, Ashford Medical Centre, the Legume and Woodenbong Road.

“At a State level the Nationals have delivered on \$60 and \$30 million Armidale and Inverell hospitals, while the Commonwealth is funding the upgrade of Chaffey Dam and Roads to Recovery will deliver about \$44m on the next few years. This is to name but a few of the projects underway in the New England Electorate.

“The National Stronger Regions Fund will deliver \$1 billion over five years to enhance economic growth and sustain regions into the future.

Pathfinders Chief Executive Officer Alan Brennan said the organisation was “absolutely delighted by this very generous support shown by the Federal Government”.

“This funding has the capacity to really change lives in up to 700 disadvantaged, and in some cases homeless young people in the Armidale and the New England,” he said.

Mr Brennan said the money would be used to renovate a “very large building on Tilbuster Station

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Hon **Barnaby Joyce** MP

FEDERAL MEMBER FOR NEW ENGLAND

with asbestos and other problems”.

He said the funds would also be used to renovate “a large scale building which would provide accommodation and support for young people in Glen Innes”.

Mr Brennan said young disadvantaged and homeless people within the Pathfinders organisation learned life skills as well improved self-esteem and who “wanted to give back after having their own lives turned around”.

“Just recently young people from Pathfinders took pumpkins they cultivated and harvested at Tilbuster Station to inner city refuges in Sydney and Newcastle,” he said.

He said a team of young people had travelled the mission in King Street, Newtown with pumpkins they’d grown and made their produce into 200 kilograms of pumpkin soup. Produce also grown at Tilbuster Station was distributed free-of-charge to the Meals on Wheels volunteers in Armidale.

“These young people will become self-reliant and participating citizens of Australia and this will help to reduce the economic and social costs that occur through homeless and disadvantaged young people,” Mr Brennan said.

“I’d also like to thank our Federal Member, Barnaby Joyce for his ongoing support and advocacy for the Pathfinders’ organisation,” he said.

Mr Joyce said the Government has been exceptionally pleased with the amount of interest in the Fund, with 405 applications received in Round One, seeking funding of over \$1.2 billion.

After a competitive merit-based selection process, Government funding has been approved for 51 local projects around the nation.

“We are committed to strengthening regions across Australia by investing in projects to build or upgrade vital infrastructure,” Mr Joyce said.

“The investments announced today focus on strengthening communities in New England, by improving economic growth, boosting productivity and creating employment opportunities.”

More information about the National Stronger Regions Fund is available online on [www.infrastructure.gov.au/nsrf](http://www.infrastructure.gov.au/nsrf)

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