



Sharon Grierson MP
Federal Member for Newcastle



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DOES MINISTER NELSON EVEN KNOW WHERE NEWCASTLE IS?

Speaking in Parliament today, Member for Newcastle Sharon Grierson said the identity crisis being imposed on the Hunter by the Howard Government was hurting the delivery of services to the region. Under this Government we are finding it hard to work out if we are regional, metropolitan, or just lost in space.

The Education Minister, as we know, believes the University of Newcastle is not located in a regional area, and uses this to deny it much needed Regional Loading funds.

The Treasurer is also confused, announcing the closure of Newcastle's "regional" Australian Securities and Investments Commission Service Centre on the same day as including Newcastle in the "Metropolitan Broadband Blackspots Program" in his Budget.

However, when the Minister for Communications gave a University-led consortium a well deserved grant in April put a broadband backbone smack through the centre of Newcastle, she funded the grant under a scheme to improve "broadband access and services in rural, regional and remote Australia."

Also in April, the Minister for Health was at the University of Newcastle's world class Department of Rural Health in Tamworth to open a new resource centre. The Department of Rural Health receives funding specifically reserved for improving regional health outcomes.

Newcastle has had access to the Regional Assistance Program, the Dairy Regional Assistance Program, the Regional Solutions Program and now the Regional Partnerships Scheme - all administered by the Deputy Prime Minister's Department of Regional Services.

For this Government, Newcastle's status and the services it receives aren't determined on the needs of our region. They are determined on what is most politically expedient, and which Minister has responsibility.

Minister Nelson, who is determined to take no responsibility for the University of Newcastle, needs a lesson in geography as well in Ministerial responsibility.

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