



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**PROOF**

**Federation Chamber**

**CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS**

**Isaacs Electorate: Community Grants Program**

**SPEECH**

**Monday, 2 March 2015**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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## SPEECH

<p><b>Date</b> Monday, 2 March 2015  <b>Page</b> 118  <b>Questioner</b>  <b>Speaker</b> Dreyfus, Mark, MP</p>	<p><b>Source</b> House  <b>Proof</b> Yes  <b>Responder</b>  <b>Question No.</b></p>
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**Mr DREYFUS** (Isaacs—Deputy Manager of Opposition Business) (10:36): Early last month I held a meeting with community groups that have had their grant funding cut by the Abbott government. Each of these groups is either based in or services the great electorate of Isaacs. I was joined by my federal parliamentary colleagues Clare O'Neil, the member for Hotham, and Alan Griffin, the member for Bruce. I was also joined by Hong Lim, the state member for Clarinda, and Councillor Sean O'Reilly, the mayor of the City of Greater Dandenong. Approximately 40 people representing eight different community groups attended the meeting. These eight community groups, though they all offer different and unique services to the residents of my electorate, have one thing in common: they have all had their federal funding under the community grants program slashed by this government.

The Springvale Benevolent Society provide food vouchers and blankets to disadvantaged and at-risk families across the City of Greater Dandenong. They have lost their entire \$70,000 in annual federal funding and are likely to reduce their service by over 60 per cent. The Casey Cardinia Community Legal Service, which helps clients all across Melbourne's south-east, has lost nearly \$90,000 of annual federal funding—and that is on top of other cuts to legal aid funding. This \$90,000 is a funding cut under the community grants program. I was told at the meeting that most of the Casey Cardinia legal services work is in family law, particularly in assisting women who have fled domestic violence to get their financial affairs in order and start again. This service—that is, the financial advice service—is no longer offered. Dads in Distress Support Services, a national service that provides peer support to men experiencing family breakdown, have lost every cent of their federal funding. Dad's in Distress assist over 5,000 people each year and do not know how they will continue when their funding ends. It is a particular local concern in my electorate, because part of their service is based in Frankston.

There are no other service providers in my electorate that can simply take over the role of these defunded community groups. These cuts target the most vulnerable in our community and will see residents of my electorate fall between the cracks. These cuts will see people go hungry, they will see families hurt and they will see basic needs go unmet. In a country like ours, that a government would make that happen is appalling. On behalf of the community groups of Isaacs that have been abandoned by this government, on behalf of their tireless volunteers and on behalf of the clients that need their services, I call on the minister to reassess his priorities and restore grant funding to community groups that provide essential community services—to restore funding that in many cases has been coming under this community grants program now for several decades. It must be restored. (*Time expired*)