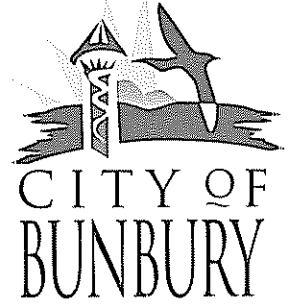


Our Ref: JE:
 Your Ref:
 Enquiries: ☎ (08) 97 92 7021
 E-Mail: rgriffiths@bunbury.wa.gov.au



10th July 2008

Committee Secretary
 Standing Committee on Infrastructure, Transport,
 Regional Development & Local Government
 PO Box 6021
 Parliament House
 CANBERRA ACT 2600

*From the Office
 of the Mayor*

Email: itrdlg.reps@aph.gov.au

Fax: (02) 6277 4424

Dear Sir/Madam

RE NEW REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT FUNDING PROGRAM

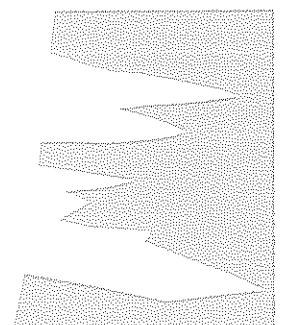
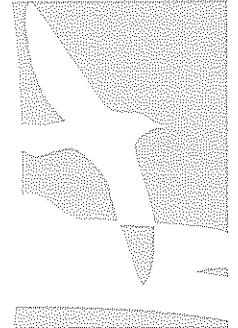
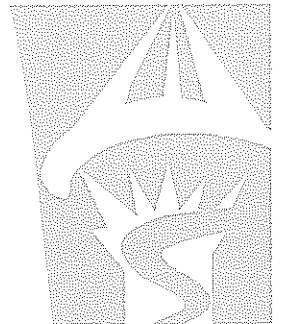
Please accept this letter as a submission from:-

1. The City of Bunbury
2. The Bunbury Wellington Economic Alliance
3. From me personally as:-
 - (i) The Mayor of Bunbury
 - (ii) A former Minister in the Dowding and Lawrence Governments for Local Government and the South West.
 - (iii) A member of the Executive of the Sea Change Taskforce
 - (iv) A Director of the Bunbury Port Authority
 - (v) A Director of the Bunbury Water Board
 - (vi) A member of the Committee of the Bunbury Wellington Economic Alliance
 - (vii) Someone who has always lived in the South West region and who is passionate about Regional Development.

With best wishes, I am

Yours sincerely

David Smith
 MAYOR OF THE CITY OF BUNBURY



A HASTILY PREPARED SUBMISSION

FROM DAVID SMITH

TO

THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON
INFRASTRUCTURE, TRANSPORT,
REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT &
LOCAL GOVERNMENT

WITH RESPECT TO THE

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT
FUNDING PROGRAM

Opening

Geography and Demographic Lesson

1. The South West of Western Australia has the best of Mediterranean climates and has been identified in a number of surveys as being climatically one of the best places in the world to live.
2. The coastal and near coastal area between Mandurah and Augusta is one of the hot spots for population growth in Australia. We are more or less about where the Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast of Queensland were 20 years ago, with the same potential for growth.
3. Bunbury is 176km south of Perth. Mandurah is 100km north of Bunbury and Augusta is 174km south.
4. Mandurah has a population of 74,000. Between the censuses (2002 – 2007) it had an average annual growth rate of 3.9%.
5. Bunbury long ago outgrew its Local Government Authority (LGA) boundaries, so most of the outer suburbs are in the Shires of Capel, Dardanup and Harvey.
6. The seamless urban area of Greater Bunbury had an intercensus growth rate of 3.4% per annum.
7. In the year to 30/06/2007 Mandurah grew by 3.5% (or 2,466 people) and Greater Bunbury by 3.69% (or 2,132 people).
8. Greater Bunbury and Mandurah ranked second and third to first placed Hervey Bay in Queensland in the year to 30/06/2007, in terms of percentage growth.
9. Apart from Newcastle (6,166), Wollongong (2,157), Sunshine Coast (6,302), Hervey Bay (2,498), Townsville (4,220), Cairns (4,292), Gold Coast (18,401) and Canberra – Queanbeyan (6,675) no regional city in Australia had higher growth in actual numbers, than Mandurah and Bunbury.
10. Some comparisons on growth – Geelong (1,742), Albury Wodonga (1,016), Ballarat (1,228), Bendigo (1,430), Bundaberg (1,401), Rockhampton (1,197) and Toowoomba (1,512).
11. Busselton (40km south of Bunbury) now has a population of 28,000 and is growing at about 860 per annum.
12. The Greater Bunbury urban area ranks as the 27th largest urban area in Australia, including the State and Territory capitals.
13. Bunbury is the only port between Fremantle / Kwinana and Albany on the south coast.

14. Bunbury Port is 160km south of Fremantle and 176km south of Perth. It is the only port that could attract Perth cargos and does attract some bulk exports from north of Perth (mineral sands from Tiwest).
15. In tonnage terms the Bunbury Port ranks 11th in Australia – with mainly bulk exports and imports – especially alumina, mineral sands, spodumene and woodchips in the case of exports, and caustic soda and mineral sands in the case of imports.
16. Future export cargos will include gold - copper concentrate from Boddington and may include coal and urea from Collie (40km from Bunbury).
17. Bunbury still has an inland passenger rail service that takes 2.5 hours to Perth and all stops in between.
18. A fast train to Perth is being considered for introduction in 2018 which would take 1.5 hours via Mandurah.
19. All roads in the South West lead to Bunbury including:-
 - (i) Perth Bunbury Highway
 - (ii) South West Highway north (the inland highway to Perth)
 - (iii) Coalfields Highway to Collie and beyond
 - (iv) South West Highway south (to Bridgetown, Manjimup and Pemberton)
 - (v) Bussell Highway to Busselton, Margaret River and Augusta
20. The inland rail line to Perth doubles as a freight line. In fact its primary load is freight.
21. Only the Perth Bunbury Highway (and then only to Eelup Roundabout on the outskirts of Bunbury) and Perth Bunbury railway are on the Auslink program.
22. Most of the minerals exported come to the Port by road on the above highways.
23. Greater Bunbury's outer suburbs of Australind, Clifton Park, Kingston, Treendale, Leschenault, Galway Green and Binningup are in the Harvey Shire and are all rapid growth areas.
24. Eaton, Glen Huon and Millbridge are in the Dardanup Shire.
25. At present the only connecting roads to Bunbury CBD from the above suburbs is via the Perth Bunbury Highway and Estuary Drive. As the Port develops Estuary Drive will be closed so these 20,000 plus people can only use the Perth Bunbury Highway connection to get to the CBD.
26. Margaret River, Busselton, Dunsborough and Yallingup to our south are the number one weekender and tourist destinations in WA (Bunbury ranks third for tourism to Busselton and Margaret River amongst the regional towns).
27. All of the Perth Bunbury Highway traffic, and the traffic from the south, and all of the port traffic, presently converge on Eelup Roundabout, making it the number one black spot in WA and number three nationally.

28. The State and Commonwealth are presently building an extension of the Kwinana Freeway from Perth to Mandurah, which is called the Mandurah bypass. Initially this will reduce travelling times to Bunbury by 20 minutes.
29. The Commonwealth and State are contributing in combination \$170 million for a new Port Access Road, and for a small part of the Bunbury bypass which is intended eventually to link South West Highway north to Bussell Highway, thereby allowing the tourist and weekender south bound traffic to avoid Eelup Roundabout.
30. The CBD of Bunbury and Busselton are both relatively low lying and have been flooded by tidal surge and inundation in the past. Global warming and sea level rises are real issues.
31. The whole of the South West and Great Southern is internationally recognised as one of the world's biological diversity hot spots, because of the plant diversity.
32. The South West of WA including Perth and Bunbury and Augusta – Margaret River is one of the worst affected areas in Australia for climate change. Our average rainfall over 10 years has close to halved and this is placing great stress on a number of plants and trees.
33. The economy of Greater Bunbury is recognised by the Reserve Bank of Australia as being amongst the strongest in regional Australia, although the Bank has difficulty identifying why.
34. It is because of economic diversity and attractiveness as a place to live, that is driving our growth in population.
35. All of our capital cities are struggling to provide amenity and comfort to their residents.
36. WA is the most capital centred in Australia with 78% of the State population living in metropolitan Perth.
37. Perth is a great place to live but it could easily become the Los Angeles or Shanghai of Australia. It already has one desalination plant, and a second (for Perth) will be built just north of Bunbury at Binningup.
38. Most of the electricity generation in WA still comes from the Coalfields at Collie (40km from Bunbury).
39. Perth is just about out of industrial land. We have three major industrial estates in Greater Bunbury namely Kemerton, Preston and Coolongatta at Collie, which are in their infamy.
40. All three of these have good buffer areas but the State has been seen to neglect connecting them to basic services – rail, road, water, gas and electricity.

41. The Bunbury Port, despite being a bulk port, has a guaranteed depth of only 11.6 metres and can only take panamax sized ships. Even for vehicle import ships it needs 11.8 metres, but preferably should become a 15-18 metre depth Port.
42. It has constraints because of the proximity of residential areas, and a river which needs to be diverted to allow the number of berths to reach its ultimate target.
43. The State and is proposing a new Port south of Fremantle at a cost of about \$3 billion, with no certainty of environmental approval, and creating even more pressure on the Perth highways and rail lines.
44. Bunbury could be dredged to 15 metres, and double the number of berths, including a dedicated coal berth, for about \$750 million, which would include the necessary rail connection.
45. However with the container growth in Perth, and the unbelievable growth of the northern iron ore ports including Ouhajee and Geraldton, the focus and the budget of the State is to the north.
46. If Bunbury is to be the alternative Port to Perth it needs a lot of work on our Port, our roads and rail links, including an early rail connection to Kemerton, and a standard gauge connection to the national rail network. It also needs to renew its rail links to its inland hinterlands at Narrogin and Wagin.

The Essence of the Submission

1. The idea that you can attract residents to inland towns by providing better infrastructure is not well founded. People are voting with their feet by moving to the coast all over Australia.
2. No one policy can be applied across Australia. Every region and city is different and has different needs and opportunities.
3. Meeting unmet demand in regional areas is where the State and Federal dollars should go with priority. It is by identifying and providing the solutions to unmet demand, that is most likely to encourage growth in the regions.
4. This has to include social as well as physical infrastructure, as most regional cities cannot cope with the growth in demand on their community and social services.
5. Differentiating between a wish list and unmet demand is a key task.
6. The best solution and strategic approach can easily be identified in South East Queensland, where all the parties, Federal, State and Local, share in the forward planning and the task of separating a wish list to meet that regions future social and economic infrastructure

7. This is not rocket science. If you have growth, even latent growth, and you plan together how to cope with it, and to further encourage it, by providing the social and physical infrastructure, and assist each other in the land use and logistics planning, you will get the best results, and provide strong and vibrant communities.
8. Come to Bunbury and see how a small amount of Commonwealth financial support to take the railways, fuel tanks, and sewerage treatment works out of our CBD, and how that rejuvenated Bunbury and how it made us the success story we are today and want to continue to be. This came from Better Cities program under Brian Howe and Bunbury is one of the best examples of the success of the Better Cities program.
9. Major metropolitan infrastructure projects that are largely retrofit do not always work or if they do they cost an arm and a leg.
10. In areas that are growing, if you can do the forward planning, and commit to the social and physical infrastructure early, you can get better value and encourage development.
11. The principal factors that make it so difficult to progress infrastructure developments in regional areas are:-
 - (i) The general view of State Treasuries that you need to be able to justify all infrastructure expenditure through a costs benefit analysis.
 - (ii) Oddly enough in the capital cities this is not always strictly applied by State Treasuries. This is because they accept as a given that the capital city will always continue to grow, and that the cultural and economic needs of new residents in the capitals, is much greater than any regional or country area. Infrastructure building in the Capitals is seen as part of the competition with other Capitals for new industries and residents.
 - (iii) In those states where the capital city have a 70% plus of the State population, all the political strength resides in the city and this adds to the capital centric attitude of the State Cabinet.
 - (iv) This is compounded by the fact that most of the senior public servants reside in the capital, and they meet and socialise with their city counterparts in other agencies on a regular basis, including the Treasury senior staff. This applies to division heads as well.
 - (v) What does not help the country and regional areas is that the 'manager of regional services' for many agencies is often a relatively low ranking member of the department who carries little weight with the decision maker, and little contact with the Power brokers.
 - (vi) In WA this is compounded by the fact that the department of regional development is attached to the Department of Local Government, rather than the department of State Development, Industry and Resources. It is poorly resourced and usually does not have influential ministers.

- (vii) This is further compounded by a view that what a State Government does for one regional community, is has to do for others.
- (viii) The cost benefit analysis mentality leads to a chicken and egg scenario. If a major industry is contemplating coming to Kemerton because of the availability of land at relatively low cost, and the existence of a large buffer, they quickly identify that there are inadequate services and infrastructure at Kemerton, and the Bunbury Port does not have container capacity or is lacking in some other way.
- (ix) They are then asked to provide or make a substantial contribution to the infrastructure and services themselves, or the State says it can do it in a couple of years. They understandably take Kemerton off their list of possible sites when this happens.
- (x) In my view in regional areas as long as you identify that:-
 - a) It is a true growth area where people want to live
 - b) There are the natural resources to allow for growth
 - c) Metropolitan sites are hard or costly to fund, then you can provide the services and infrastructure ahead of an identified immediate outcome in appropriate regional areas, especially those with a Port.
- (xi) This is especially true of the existing port areas.

12.1 Whatever they do in Queensland does seem to work. It has more cities with populations over 80,000 than any other State. Almost all of these continue to be high growth areas, and most are on the coast.

12.2 This is in fact a little curious. Queensland has a tropical climate, and the heat, humidity and rainfall that goes with it, as well as cyclones, and stingers, and many of their new urban area beaches are muddy rather than sandy.

12.3 Coal and other resources play a part, but there is little fly-in fly-out in Queensland or if there is it is to the regional cities.

12.4 Clearly Queensland must be doing a better job of regional development than any other state, and I believe it is a combination of:-

- (i) The past political influence in that state of the National Party
- (ii) A policy that gives regional development a high priority.
- (iii) Most importantly that there is a genuine and successful partnership between Federal, State and Local Governments, that is directly involved in forward strategic planning, including identifying what social and physical infrastructure is required and when it is required.

13. In WA we do have the Regional Development Commissions, that are based in each of the regions.

14. The first of these was the South West Development Commission which was established in 1983. Because it was originally given a social and

economic development role, and the staff and capital budget, it was extremely successful, to the degree of creating a great deal of envy from other regional areas of WA.

15. This resulted in the other Commissions being established on a one size suits all basis.
16. Each of these had to be resourced and given capital budgets.
17. On the change from the Labor Government a decision was made to increase the size of the boards to include obligatory local government representatives and to downplay the role of the chair of the Board and what were originally his two co direction.
18. A decision was then made to take away the social infrastructure role, and to get them to focus on industry and trade development.
19. Their capital budgets were also reduced enabling them to do very little capital works.
20. What their role was vis a vis the State Development, Industry and Resources Department, was left in limbo and in my view they ceased to be at the forefront of regional development, even for the South West regions.
21. This was compounded by the resources boom, where the priority quite naturally became the infrastructure to keep pace with that development.
22. The country regions deserve better than to have boom and bust cycles. Of course you have to respond to the boom, but you also need to continue to identify the natural growth in all the regions and plan to support them.
23. The Ports

Australia relatively has few Ports even though we are an export economy.

A relatively modest Federal Port support program, could substantially lift the capacity of the Ports, especially the regional Ports.

By and large the regional Ports have only capital works that can be funded internally unless a new resource industry is being considered. Ports are real economic drivers and their infrastructure needs a Federal role.

24. Rail

WA in particular has very little rail freight. In the main it depends on bulk on roads. The only standard gauge runs east west from Perth to Kalgoorlie and there is no standard gauge connections from the Ports of Bunbury, Albany, and Geraldton.

There ought to be a plan to link each of these centres by standard gauge to the east / west line

In combination this would cost less than the Alice Springs Darwin line, and the right place to start would be the Bunbury Port because:-

- (i) The existing narrow gauge is relatively insufficient for the existing bulks.
- (ii) It is at capacity and will need duplication soon.
- (iii) The road freight, despite the number of highways, is at near capacity.

25. Roads

The extension of the Kwinana Freeway to Mandurah, and the Mandurah bypass, will benefit Bunbury greatly.

The commitment to the Port Access Road and the first stage of the Bunbury bypass is also very welcome.

However the full connection from Perth Bunbury Highway to Bussell Highway – the effective completion of the Bunbury bypass, would do more for Bunbury and all areas south, than any other infrastructure project.

However South West Highway north and south, and Bussell Highway, and the Coalfields Highway also need more urgent work.

26. The Bunbury Port

- (1) The only reason why trial coal exports from Collie are going through Kwinana is the inadequacy of the rail link to Bunbury, and the absence of a berth that could be dedicated to coal. Berth 14 is the identified coal berth, and this could give an extra possible berth for Alcoa.
- (2) Spending \$30 million on a work around solution as proposed as a preliminary step, is to be compared to about \$120 million for a dedicated new berth. If the coal exports collapse for some unforeseen reason it could be used for other cargos.
- (3) About \$750 million could provide all the Bunbury Port's needs for the next 20 years, and make it a real alternative to Fremantle, including for Perth exporters and importers.

27. Social Infrastructure

The Regional Partnerships Program failed primarily because of the way it was used for political pork barrelling building. That should not obscure that it also had many positive benefits for regional Australia.

However the sea change cities because of the demands from radical population growth they need special attention, and I believe it calls for a special 'future' type fund that supports the provision of the social infrastructure, that the relevant local governments, especially those who play a regional role within their own regions, cannot afford on their own.

Certainly a growth area regional social and physical infrastructure scheme program should be a legislated factor for financial assistance grant

assistance grants. However it needs much more than this, and I recommend the submission by the Sea Change Taskforce.

28. Local Government Amalgamations

WA is the only state that has not involved itself in involuntary Local Government amalgamations. It is essential for the future of Local Government, and the commonwealth needs to play a role in ensuring it happens in WA.

29. Finally

I attach a copy of a story in our local paper which reflects the problems of attracting and retaining new residents. I also attach a copy of our Chief Executive Officer's submission. I also support the Sea Change Taskforce Report.

Dated the 11th day of July 2008.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "James Smith".

HEALTH SYSTEM IN CRISIS



Barry and Bev Mitchell moved to Bunbury to retire but have considered moving back to Perth because of the lack of emergency facilities in the city

Couple question move to area after close call

DOCTORS were only minutes away from contacting the Royal Flying Doctors Service when Bev Mitchell, 62, stopped breathing after having routine surgery earlier this year.

Mrs Mitchell and her husband, Barry, 67, shifted to Bunbury from Perth to retire but now question the move which nearly cost one of them their life.

Everything appeared to be going smoothly when Mrs Mitchell went in for an operation at Bunbury Regional Hospital to have her ovaries removed.

It was after the operation that the anaesthetist had problems trying to bring me round," Mrs Mitchell said.

"Apparently my resuscitation just plummeted.

I wasn't breathing on my own and they were on the verge of calling the Royal Flying Doctor Service."

The Eaton couple say doctors performed numerous tests while Mrs Mitchell was still under anaesthetic to determine the cause of her breathing complication.

Mr Mitchell said the hospital ended up doing heart and lung tests on his wife to the value of \$4000 only to find they could not determine why she stopped breathing.

The anaesthetist said there was some blockage of some description between my heart and my airways and it just miraculously happened that I just

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started to breathe," Mrs Mitchell said.

Mrs Mitchell was advised if her life was in jeopardy again, she would have to go to a hospital with better emergency facilities.

That sort of made my hair stand up because I always thought Bunbury was the largest hospital outside the metropolitan area," Mr Mitchell said.

It's a bit uneasy to think that we came here for a better way of life," Mrs Mitchell said.

Do I have to sell up again and go and live back in Perth to be closer to a hospital that's able to come to our needs?"

To get a fully operational intensive care unit costs about \$8 million... that's a lot of money for you or I but when you look at the State Budget that's chicken feed," Mr Mitchell said.

It's just ludicrous that lives could be put in danger for such a small sum of money in the whole scheme of things."

I can only speak highly of the treatment I was given at the hospital, it's just the fact that they didn't have the ICU," Mrs Mitchell said.

Promised radiation unit nowhere in sight

Reports by JORDYN RADOS

THE State Government's 2005 election pledge to open a radiation oncology unit in Bunbury looks no closer to fruition resulting in hundreds more cancer patients being forced to go to Perth for treatment.

The number of South West patients requiring radiation therapy is growing, yet the 2008/09 State Budget only contained \$800,000 for the \$8.5 million project.

Bunbury MLA John Castrilli said the commitment was a clear indication the State Government had no intention of fulfilling its promise in this term of government.

A Health Department spokesperson said the State Government was working with the Federal Government to se-

cure funding for a radiation oncology service in Bunbury, which would allow patients with more common cancers to receive their treatment closer to home in the South West.

Patients with more complex needs requiring a combination of surgery, chemotherapy and radiotherapy would need to have the coordinated care offered by a larger hospital in Perth," the spokesperson said.

Bunbury breast and general surgeon Dr Neill Kling said the region recorded more than 600 cancer cases each year, with incidence increasing by 5 per cent every year.

Dr Kling said about 50 per cent of all adult cancer patients needed radiotherapy.

Country and remote patients were less likely to choose, attend or com-

plete radiotherapy because they had to travel to Perth.

Mr Castrilli said he had quickly run out of confidence the State Government would come good on its election promise and provide the "greatly-needed" treatment facility.

"That is a kick in the teeth for Bunbury patients who rightly expect that by living in this thriving regional centre they would have access to this fundamental health service," Mr Castrilli said.

In May, WA Country Health Service South West regional director Ian Smith said the project for radiotherapy services in Bunbury was in its final stages, but made no indication when the facility would become operational.

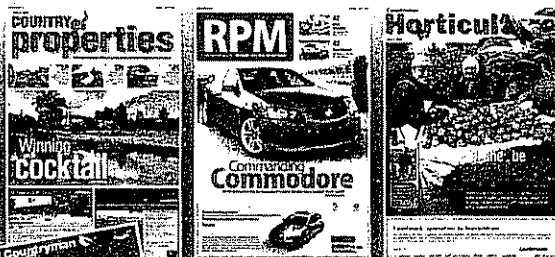
Health Minister Jim McGinty was not available for comment this week.



Wilhelmina Drew (Willy) was shocked to learn Bunbury has no radiation oncology unit and frustrated she has to make regular trips to Perth to access treatment.

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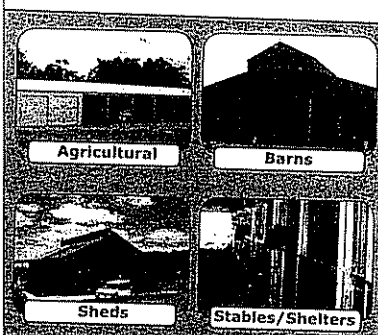
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Hours of travel to get treatment

BUNBURY woman Willy Drew will spend about 135 hours on the road travelling to Perth to undergo lifesaving treatment for cancer.

Ms Drew, 61, was diagnosed with breast cancer in February. She has undergone three operations on her left breast and is hopeful the malignant growth has been removed.

At the end of next month, she will be finished her chemotherapy treatment which she has been undergoing every three weeks for an 18-week period.

In September, she starts radiation therapy five days a week for six weeks.

She is outraged because not only will she be spending more than four hours on the road every day, she cannot receive treatment closer to home where she has the support of family and friends.

You've got to travel up there and back every day which is going to take two to three hours and the treatment only takes three or four minutes," Ms Drew said.

Ms Drew said the cost of travel was not her main concern because she was financially capable, but she was concerned about people less fortunate.

How can they afford all this?" she said.

Ms Drew said she spent three decades in Bunbury and established two businesses, yet she feels disappointed she cannot access radiation treatment.

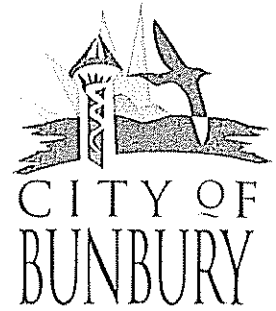
I've spent 30 years of my life down here and paid my taxes and had two businesses," she said. "Now because I need treatment and I can't get it here I need to travel to Perth. It just doesn't make sense.

The money that we've made — paid in our taxes — why don't we have radiation down here?"

She said a radiation oncology unit would make life easier for South West people battling cancer.

There's nothing worse than when you're feeling off

Our Ref: SM:1964-22
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 E-Mail: ceo@bunbury.wa.gov.au



23rd June 2008

COPY

Ms Janet Holmes
 The Secretary of the Committee
 Inquiry into a New Regional Development Funding Program
 By Email: itrdlg.reps@aph.gov.au

Dear Ms Holmes

The City of Bunbury is pleased to have the opportunity to have input into future funding programs for regional economic and community development. The first two terms of reference have been focussed on as these are the most relevant to our organisation.

While the theory behind reviewing the delivery of regional funding programs is supported, a major concern with regards to this process is the virtual two year hiatus in regional development project funding due to the cessation of the 2007/08 Regional Partnerships and Sustainable Regions programs following the Federal election and the lack of any Regional Development Australia program funding for the 2008/09 year. This gap puts at risk projects, especially of an economic development nature, that have a limited window of opportunity.

Some of the points below are written independently of each other and therefore cover different eventualities. As an example, options are provided for embedding Regional Development Australia programmes within other organisations rather than continuing with the stand alone regional ACC model that currently exists, while comments on improving RDA (former ACC) offices are also included in the event that the decision is made to continue down that path.

1. Provide advice on future funding of regional programs in order to invest in genuine and accountable community infrastructure projects.

- Simplification of the application process can be achieved by a series of categories. Five categories appear appropriate:
 1. Infrastructure under \$50,000
 2. Infrastructure over \$50,000
 3. Non-infrastructure projects and programmes under \$50,000
 4. Non-infrastructure projects and programmes over \$50,000
 5. Point-in-Time opportunities (occasionally opportunities arise, especially with a regional economic development focus, where a very short lead time exists in order to take advantage of the opportunity. A mechanism is required to allow grant applications to be immediately submitted and

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assessed with short turn around times in these instances – without reducing the rigour of assessment process).

The first four categories could be assessed on a round basis with the fifth being available only for genuine opportunities that became available unexpectedly and would be lost if the application was delayed until the next funding round. Under this model it would not be necessary to set up separate funding pools, although availability of the Point-in-Time funding would need to be considered.

- All projects should identify how they clearly fit into a genuine and appropriate Strategic Plan or similar. This would eliminate add hoc projects and improve the overall regional outcomes delivered through funded projects. Purely relying on the current ACC (future RDA?) strategic plan is not always relevant at a local or micro level, therefore more of a focus on local or sub-regional plans make sense.
- The previous Regional Partnerships online application form may have made the capture of information for reporting processes much simpler for the Federal Government, however it made the process much lengthier for the average applicant due to slow download speeds in many regional areas and limited online knowledge within a number of community organisations.

2. Examine ways to minimize administrative costs and duplication for taxpayers.

- A one-size-fits-all service delivery model across the breadth of Australia is not particularly efficient or equitable with regards to regional funding programs. In fact the one-size-fits-all model is not necessarily even appropriate across individual states (for example, what works in the Southern corner of Western Australia is unlikely to also work in remote areas of the North of Western Australia). It would therefore be sensible to have several delivery models and tailor the most appropriate to the specific needs of each individual area (whether they all come under the banner of Regional Development Australia or otherwise).

This includes the structure and staffing of RDA offices. From comments made during and after the last Federal election, it would appear that the intention is to convert the existing ACC structure to RDA. An option is to plan the optimum structure and then use existing ACC entities only where they best meet the required structure.

- Options for consideration include RDA operating more akin to other regionally focussed programmes that have operated successfully within our region such as:
 - AusIndustry, with regional staff employed directly by the relevant Federal department and tasked with identifying appropriate projects and assisting proponents to complete grant applications. In instances where government programmes are to be delivered through RDA these regional offices would allow the Federal government to maintain a more effective control of programme delivery

- Tradestart and the previous Broadband Broker Program, where the officers are embedded within existing local organisations with synergies in their focus. The Tradestart officer is located within the South West Development Commission (SWDC), which gives access to both the infrastructure of the SWDC, rather than having to completely set up a new office, as well as the knowledge of the SWDC officers regarding businesses throughout the region. The outcome of this is a very successful Tradestart programme in the South West of WA
- Similarly, when the Broadband Broker Program was operating, the broker was located within Connect South West (CSW), a state government funded not-for-profit organisation charged with increasing the knowledge and access to technology of businesses and individuals in the South West. The broker was able to access CSW's infrastructure and equipment as well as leverage off existing knowledge and linkages already built up in the region by CSW. This resulted in the South West of WA Broker being one of the most successful brokers in Australia.

The key to the success of both the Tradestart and Broadband Broker programmes has been the appropriate synergies between the host entities and the programmes. It is likely that there are just as many negative experiences from this type of approach as positive, however this is probably heavily dependent on host organisations being chosen for what they bring to the programme, which once again underlines the need for a flexible approach to the delivery of RDA, rather than a one-size-fits-all approach.

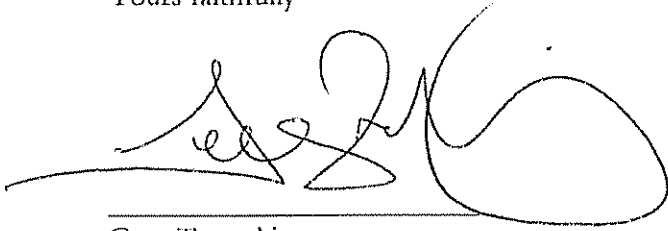
The only significant negative change to the existing structure would be the removal of the local community board currently managing the ACC, another mechanism for community feedback however should not be difficult to create. However, divorcing the community feedback process from overarching management of the local delivery arm does give the opportunity for more independent and honest feedback on the successes and difficulties being encountered with the delivery model at a local level.

It is important to note that this recommendation isn't a criticism of the efforts of current staff or board members of ACC's. The efforts of both staff and board members are very much appreciated. The idea is based around maintaining the involvement of the same people, but in a manner that hopefully integrates better with Federal systems.

- Regional Development Australia Offices should only undertake projects and programmes themselves if another better placed organisation doesn't exist in their region. An example of this is business assistance programs. In areas in Western Australia serviced by a Small Business Centre the region would be better serviced by RDA funding these organisations to deliver programs on their behalf as it could be done much more efficiently given these organisations are already equipped with the necessary expertise etc. for this purpose.

- Not having each RDA office set up as a separate incorporated body would reduce the operational costs as back office functions such as payroll etc. could be centrally administered.
- A simpler process for applications (especially the smaller ones) would reduce administrative costs, especially if the program was undertaken in a series of rounds. The simplified application process for small applications was addressed within Regional Partnerships late last year and a continuation of this would be well received.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Greg Trevaskis', written over a horizontal line.

Greg Trevaskis
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER