



14 July 2008

**The Secretary,
Standing Committee on Infrastructure, Transport,
Regional Development and Local Government
House of Representatives
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600
Itrdlg.reps@aph.gov.au**

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: INQUIRY INTO A NEW REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT FUNDING PROGRAM.

The Orana Area Consultative Committee (ACC) Board wishes to thank the Standing Committee for the opportunity to submit a response into the inquiry into a new regional development funding program. At our Board meeting held on 27 June, there was unanimous support for a Federal Government funding program to support regional communities in Australia.

The Orana region covers approximately 25% of the geographic area of NSW with a population of 125,000. The region has been in the grips of a persistent and debilitating drought for the last 6 years which has had significant and long lasting effects on our communities. In addition, many of these small remote communities in the Orana Region have a high proportion of indigenous people which brings additional issues of income support dependency and other social issues.

Without Federal Government intervention by way of the Regional Partnerships Program since July 2003, our communities would not have been able to access over \$5.6m for 42 much needed youth development, community and medical infrastructure projects. The Federal Government injection of \$5.6m has leveraged partnerships of approximately \$14 million from Local and State Governments as well as the hard earned community contributions which, given the severe climatic and economic hardship our communities have endured in that time, this is an outstanding achievement.

The Orana ACC Board believes the guidelines and objectives of the Regional Partnership Program were sound with the only repeated complaint from proponents being the long time lag of the assessment and approval process which significantly impacts on the ability of the applicant to plan and implement their proposed initiative. Their project management,

including financial management, development application approval processes, obtaining and determining quotes and finally bringing the project to reality are constrained by this in determinant period of uncertainty. Often the most difficult part of project funding process is the encouragement of the proponent to actually lodge an application in the first instance. It was therefore the onerous task of ACC Board and staff to manage the expectations within the community. I have received numerous comments from proponents and community members that without the commitment and determination of the ACC, their and other worthy projects would not have been successful.

Our experience has been that the range of values of different funding grants has been an outstanding benefit within the program. Some small communities receive enormous benefit from receiving very small grants, and are most appreciative of these. In other situations, a single major grant, for instance for a major infrastructure, is the essential ingredient as a catalyst to create a sustainable change.

I would like to acknowledge my Orana ACC Board who are highly respected representatives from the communities within the region. They are acutely aware of the needs of the community and can see the local solutions for their local issues. This on the ground intelligence should be embraced by the Federal Government, not only in the assessment of regional and community projects, but also for a range of issues pertaining to Regions in Australia.

The Board wishes to highlight that the Federal Government should encourage and assist regional communities of Australia and any significant change to this policy, may stifle communities from devising and achieving long term sustainability and prosperity.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Peter English', written over a horizontal line.

Peter English
Executive Officer
on behalf of
GEOFF WISE
Chair
Orana ACC