

House of Representatives Inquiry Submission Wheatbelt Region

Closing Date for Submission - Monday 14th July 2008

Please complete as many pages as required

Name: Rebecca Kelly per Tom Kelly (President)	
Position Role (if applicable):	
Organisation (if applicable): Gillingarra Sport & Recreation Club (Inc.)	
Region: Wheatbelt Region	
	Mobile:

1. Please provide your thoughts on future funding of regional programs in order to invest in genuine and accountable community infrastructure projects.

The Wheatbelt Area Consultative Committee is a unique organisation that provides a unique service which is an integral foundation for all communities within the Wheatbelt area. Without the support of this local organisation as it is structured and functions currently, communities will suffer to maintain their current services & facilities and education levels with regards to grant funding and forming regional partnerships - in any capacity. WACC is still covering a large area disseminating important information that many communities would be unable to access otherwise. WACC is an invaluable link, that without, the Wheatbelt would become even more isolated and knowledge, education and community spirit would deteriorate in rural communities. This results in communities being no longer sustainable or dying completely.

This organisation provides an important local contact that provides a central source of education for all communities – grant applications like anything are the best method of gaining funding, and the acquittal process is a method of accountability that has been used successfully for years. The current process allows guidance for communities to make decisions on their needs, the high level of community involvement is what makes this program successful, and the outcomes so valuable. It addresses the needs of those community members that keep rural Australia alive and breathing, without this ground level involvement the program would be useless and once again community sustainability would be at risk.

I see no problems with the current program – however, if there was a clear, publicly explained (use of media would be nice for all of those left in the dark about their projects) directive from the government that specified the issues with the current system perhaps it would be easier for community groups to address these point by point with relation to how the program 'really' works out in rural areas.

2. How should the Federal Government design regional programs in a way to minimise administrative costs and duplication for taxpayers.

To have a program providing the education and support that the WACC have, and the results that they have achieved with regards to assisting in rejuvenating dying communities, and progressing thriving communities, the current method IS the 'cost effective' method.

1. The role of WACC is 'hard yakka' and it has to be comprehended that they are not dealing with large populations of professionals who are paid to be active in communities or involved in projects, and have unlimited, modern resources at their fingertips but rather hundreds of volunteers that mostly work full time in other occupations, are isolated, have limited resources and facilities and receive wages that are no comparison to their counterparts in the city. As such I could suggest that in every community you employ a full time person to carry out the role of WACC, however this IS NOT cost effective.

2. By limiting the access that people have to a similar service to WACC, you are contributing to the

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deterioration of education in rural Australia with regards to the 'help your community' that exists today. Once gone there would be no replacing what has been lost. No amount of expenditure trying to educate the widespread population and re-establish such a support network would encourage firstly an aging population and secondly inspire a new younger generation that has no previous community examples to aspire to.

The Federal government already expect rural Australia to carry out unlimited unpaid work to ensure country people, and those city people visiting the country have access to services that our city counterparts take for granted and in fact are employed full time, at elaborate wages to provide. Examples include volunteer bush fire brigade, volunteer ambulance officers, Sporting associations etc. The federal government could not possibly cut any more administrative costs in this area, and I am sure that you will agree that duplication is certainly not an issue – and this had been made clear by the extremely negative public response to the Regional Partnership program being dissolved. It is also clear that Regional Partnerships is unique and the only program of it's kind.

I think it is clear from the information that I have pasted in this form (from the below link) that duplication is certainly not an issue, and as a rural community we do not appreciate being serious victims (please see attached letter and regional partnerships application) of a blame game between governments whose sole purpose in ceasing and re-designing programs is to make the previous government look bad.

Between 1 July 2003 and 30 June 2006, funding was considered by Ministers⁶ in relation to 1 413 projects.⁷ The largest component of these funding decisions related to 1 370 individual projects that were either approved for full or partial funding (981 or 72 per cent) or not approved for funding (389 or 28 per cent).⁸ In addition, there were **two instances** where a decision was made to contribute Programme funds to a project or projects administered through another department. There had also been funding decisions taken in respect to 34 projects relating to commitments made during the 2004 election campaign that the Government subsequently allocated for administration through the Regional Partnerships Programme.⁹

3. The cost of completely dissolving WACC and then re-inventing the wheel again to reform a so called 'similar' program is duplication and this IS NOT cost effective.

3. Examine the former government's practices and grants outlined in the Australian National Audit Office report on Regional Partnerships http://www.anao.gov.au/director/publications/auditreports/2007-2008.cfm?item_id=40BC1C6C1560A6E8AAA43AAB96708E61 with the aim of providing advice on future funding of regional programs.

If administrative issues have been identified as a problem the solution is to address the issues when they are occurring. If there was genuine concern for the program I feel that this would have been addressed at the time of the issues occurring – not at election time.

There is nothing wrong with the process from the perspective of a rural community that has made an application – apart from the fact that an election meant that we did not get to experience the entire process. As with all forms of assessment – most occurs in written application form however, there are often conversations that follow to clarify points in the application. Were these conversations, emails etc audited aswell? Did the acquittals provide any further transparency to some of the projects funded? Were they audited as part of the 'administrative' process.

Perhaps in future WACC could also provide the service of assisting with acquittals to provide those in rural areas with more of an idea of what is expected – as I feel administrative support is required all round both prior, during and after grant applications have been made and approved.

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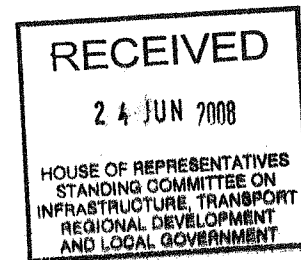
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4. Examine the former government's practices and grants in the Regional Partnerships Program after the audit period of 2003-2006 with the aim of providing advice on future funding of regional programs.

If problems were identified in 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006 and it was such a problem – why wasn't it addressed then. I think in future if the government feels that there are issues with a particular process whether it be administrative or not – election time 4 years later is no time to address these and make small communities victim of a blame game.

Please make a comparison between the issues that you have as a result of the audit and compare them to the issues that we now have as a community as result of recent government decisions. I expect that my attached letter to Anthony Albanese and our application be included as part of this feedback form.

Thanks you for this opportunity. Can you please email me at rkelly@moora.wa.gov.au to acknowledge that you have received our feedback, which has been completed by myself - a volunteer for the Gillingarra Sport & Recreation Club (Inc) WA, who works full time for another organisation and who represents a community that has been extremely negatively impacted as a result of government decision making, with regards to the Regional Partnerships Program.



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