

13th June 2008

File No 7/41/5

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

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: Regional and Local Community Infrastructure Program

Council was extremely disappointed to hear that the Commonwealth Government had scrapped the Regional Partnerships Program. Council had submitted grant applications for two major projects in the Bordertown Civic Centre Upgrade and the Keith Sport and Recreation Centre, and there were also other applications submitted for funds from community groups and businesses from within our area.

Council has spent considerable funds in engaging consultants to assist with the application process, as well as time and effort from Council staff and from community members. These projects, especially the Keith one, were well through the process and we had successfully answered a vast number of complicated questions from departmental officers in Canberra on various aspects of the project. There was definitely no sign of political interference in our projects. In fact we had to stop committee members from going to the press expressing concern about the long delays in making a decision and about the third degree we were getting in case their comments adversely effected our applications.

In response to the call for feedback on what the new Regional and Local Community Infrastructure Program should look like, Council at its June meeting carried the following motion:

that Council respond to the Limestone Coast Area Consultative Committee and forward a representation to the House of Representative Standing committee on the new program to replace Regional Partnerships highlighting that:

- 1. Regional and Rural Communities definitely need Commonwealth funding assistance as many items of infrastructure such as community centres, aged care facilities, health clinics and sport*

and recreation facilities were established in the 1950s (or earlier) and are not being sufficiently upgraded because of a lack of funds. The sustainability problem around Australia is typically more acute in smaller councils, which are mostly in rural or remote areas.

- 2. The general aims, goals and criteria for the old Regional Partnership Program were good and do not need to be changed greatly. The main problems related to the administration of the program and how decisions were made. Applications submitted to the new program should be decided purely on the merits of the application with no political interference.*

If you have any queries about our comments please contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Robert Harkness
Chief Executive Officer

