

House of Representatives Inquiry Submission Wheatbelt Region

Closing Date for Submission - Monday 14th July 2008

Please complete as many pages as required

Name: Melissa Green
Position Role (if applicable): Principal
Organisation (if applicable): Wyalkatchem District High School (WDHS)
Region: Wheatbelt Region
Signature:
<p>1. Please provide your thoughts on future funding of regional programs in order to invest in genuine and accountable community infrastructure projects.</p> <p>WDHS and The Shire of Wyalkatchem have formed a partnership to market secondary education as an industry through which community sustainability and growth can be achieved. This project has the potential to arrest the ongoing rural decline in this region. The first project in this strategy is the development of an aviation college which has the intention of attracting 100 Year 1 and 12 students to the school and community. With great assistance and invaluable guidance from the Wheatbelt ACC we are currently in the process of developing a project brief and business plan to secure federal funding (that would have been regional partnerships) to build a boarding facility to accommodate the additional students. The list of benefits to the community is immense as it will inject 30 new families to the community and form partnerships with other services in town that will assist in securing their sustainability, therefore, attractiveness for people to stay in Wyalkatchem. Wyalkatchem desperately needs federal funding of the same intention as Regional Partnerships funding to ensure this project goes ahead. Supporting a project such as this could mean the difference between Wyalkatchem declining and growing.</p>
<p>2. How should the Federal Government design regional programs in a way to minimise administrative costs and duplication for taxpayers.</p> <p>I think it would be advisable to have a one-stop shop for all federal government programs to assist groups to link to relevant funding sources and guide them in meeting eligibility requirements. The RDA network (<i>Wheatbelt Region</i>) seems to be in a good position to do this.</p> <p>Further to this, it would be useful to provide the RDA network with additional roles. For example; the Wheatbelt ACC has provided enormous assistance to us by taking initiative in designing a user-friendly template and have provided mentoring on 'how to' complete the funding application. I believe they also hold community workshops for the purposes of community brainstorming, project planning, strategic development, consultation process and grant writing with intention to support capacity building and regional development throughout the region.</p> <p>Our Wyalkatchem partnership certainly feels better positioned to ensure any federal funding is used for the sole benefit of the community and in the best way possible. The mentoring from WACC will certainly result in greater value for money, improved and viable regional/community outcomes including better quality and sustainability in our project</p> <p>We have also been utilising the grassroots based RDA networks for greater feedback and research requirements ("locals talking to locals") to assist us in ensuring this project has optimal benefit and</p>

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outcomes.

We have certainly found it useful to have the RDA networks engaging (as the ACC's) as a direct and major link on the ground in disseminating and collection of all information on behalf of all tiers of government and their agencies. We would like to see this arrangement continue.

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.

The Regional Partnerships application process is certainly complex and requires an enormous amount of work. We would certainly like to see this process simplified, possibly through having the WACC more involved in the development of the project to ensure optimal benefit to the local and wider community.

The WACC are in the best position to gauge the value for money the Federal Government would receive through its funding as this organisation has a deep understanding of the local context and dynamics of the area.

We certainly would like to continue having their guidance in developing our project brief for funding purposes and would welcome and increased involvement that would encompass linking our project to other value adding partnerships or projects.

We are very happy with the intentions of the Regional Partnerships funding and believe federal funding should be distributed for the same intentions.

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.

I am unable to comment on this specifically, however, I will reiterate the need for the RDA network (previously ACC) to have more input into any new funding program to ensure that valuable projects for the region get the attention they deserve. The local RDA understands local needs and need to be used more to advise Canberra rather than have decisions made by people in Canberra who have no understating of the local need and context.

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