

**Standing Committee on Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government.**

**Marketing**

I heard about the Regional Partnership Funding scheme in 2003 at a series of regional expos funded and administered by the Capital Region Area Consultative Committee (previously know as Capital region Employment Council).

The expos at fairly substantial costs, were held in the Capital Region centres of Crookwell, Goulburn, Yass, Braidwood and Queanbeyan. All expos had relative poor attendances eg. Goulburn has a population of 26,000 people and attendance was 39 people. The other issue from this was the relevance of local community attendees it gave me the impression that it was targeted at the wrong market.

In latter years the same market was still being targeted only at substantial increased costs, the Capital Region ACC now participating in other Expos with substantial costs on stands, massive sized banner walls and all advertising containing the Howard Government brand of the " This is a Federal Government Initiative" slogan and bearing the Australian Coat of Arms.

The programme was supposedly aimed at local community groups and non for profit organisations, from observation this changed over the years.

Most projects funded were of minor community projects such as a community hall etc. It certainly did not support infrastructure project such as roads or renewable power generation.

**Application Process**

I started talking to the Capital Region ACC in March of 2004 re an application for \$30,000 to assist SME's to form specialised groups so that they could compete with larger metropolitan businesses on the Headquarters Joint Operational Command building near Bungendore.

In May 2004, I was still discussing the 20 page application with the ACC and I was told to change it to a new \$25,000 maximum application which was to be introduced by July 2004, I was told that this would make the application more likely to be successful.

The application was accordingly revised and I presented it to the full committee at one of their regional monthly meetings, the time delay was extended yet again while I was waiting for the appropriate meeting time.

After further amendments aimed at satisfying committee members, the ACC finally submitted it to the Department of Transport and Regional Services (DOTARS) in late August. By mid September 2004 DOTARS informed that I would not receive a reply soon as the Government was in caretaker mode.

In January 2005, I received a decline letter from DOTARS, the letter included details on the appeal process. When I indicated my intention to access this process I was called into the Capital Region ACC office and a further abbreviated application was lodged with DOTARS, this application was approved in early March 2005.

The project "Building and Growing Regional Businesses Through Defence Projects" start date would by now have been too late to be effective due to the delays, fortunately Dept. of Defence revised its requirements causing identical delays to the Headquarters Joint Operational Command Building project.

## **The Contract arrangements with DOTARS**

The contractual arrangements with a number of contract variations proceeded very smoothly. The project was successfully completed in May 2007 with the local Federal politicians wanting the success story to be publicised through their electorate office. These arrangements were not followed through.

## **Comments**

The marketing of the Regional Partnership programme was one of the most costly aspects of the scheme, diverting valuable grant money in promoting it.

In my opinion the Area Consultative Committees have as a matter of record marketed to the wrong community groups.

Consultation on infrastructure projects with the Industry Capability Network and involving local community and businesses through the network would be more effective.

The composition of the Area Consultative Committees is not necessarily reflective of local communities.

My experience has been that the scheme is over administrated and this has been the cause of lengthy delays.

The lengthy delays and over administration has been the cause of potential fund recipients not bothering to lodge applications. My personal view is that I would be very reluctant to lodge another application under the previous cumbersome process.