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District Council of Peterborough

SUBMISSION 231

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

16th July 2008

To Whom It May Concern

Re:- Inquiry into a New Regional Development Funding Program

The District Council of Peterborough is a small rural council in South Australia. The town currently has a population of 2,000, however, in its hey-day, the population was 5,000.

Peterborough once boasted the largest railway workshops outside of Adelaide and the three (3) rail gauges met here. Unfortunately, in the 1970's and 80's the railways withdrew from the town which, of course, had a devastating affect on the community.

Council has recently been the beneficiary of Regional Partnerships funding. This funding has provided seed funding for Council to attract in excess of \$1,000,000.00 to develop the heritage listed Roundhouse and triple gauge turntable into a world class inter-active heritage rail museum. This project, which is approximately 50% complete, has breathed new life into the community and when completed, will play a major role in the improved economic activity in the community.

Regional Partnerships was considered by Council to be an extremely good programme, obviously because without it, Council would not have been able to achieve what it has. While the guidelines, application and administrative process were quite detailed, we feel the programme required practical outcomes and in our case, a realistic solution to assist the sustainability of Peterborough.

Small rural/regional communities are doing it hard and the current drought is complicating the growth of communities, basic infrastructure in our community is old and Council has great difficulty prioritizing upgrades/major maintenance of this infrastructure, simply because we don't have enough resources.

-2-

Local Government receives Financial Assistance Growth (F.A.G.S), which is calculated by formulae and untied. The Roads to Recovery Programme is another formulae based grant, but the funds are to be spent on local roads. The criteria are very flexible.

While Council accepted the Regional Partnerships Programme and the detailed administration involved, it did take an enormous amount of time and to a degree, was subjective. Maintenance of infrastructure is a major problem so, perhaps if a funding programme which used some type of formula, similar to the Grants Commission and F.A.G.S. to access disadvantaged communities and distribute funds to regional local governments for infrastructure upgrades/maintenance (not roads), would reduce administrative costs and give confidence/security to rural communities.

Sustainable, vibrant regional and rural communities not only help those individual communities, they also help Australia.

Yours faithfully,



TD Barnes
Chief Executive Officer