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The Committee Secretary
 Standing Committee on Primary Industries and Regional Services
 House of Representatives
 Parliament House
 Canberra ACT

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ENQUIRY INTO INFRASTRUCTURE AND THE
 DEVELOPMENT OF
 AUSTRALIA'S REGIONAL AREAS

- **Deficiencies in infrastructure which currently impede development in Australia's Regional areas.**

. Lack of an adequate transport system. Lack of support infrastructure, particularly power and communications. Lack of commitment of mining companies operating on a fly in fly out basis using a non-renewable resource but taking no steps to develop substitute industries. Not only are we lacking these resources but apart from the occasional committee considering the matter there appears to be no long-term plan. Nothing will happen until a strategy is put in place, which identifies a prioritised network development. This plan may encompass 50 years and probably should have been developed 50 years ago. I hope someone doesn't have to make that same statement 50 years from now. **Having developed a plan it then needs to be implemented.**

- **Factors that would enhance development in these areas including the provision of infrastructure such as energy, transport, telecommunications, water supplies and facilities that deliver educational, health and financial services**

It should include the development of our northern ports. We can place ourselves 5-10 days closer to most overseas markets by using ports such as Darwin and Karumba. Sea going (shallow draft) catamarans will bring these markets even closer. There are other benefits-inland ports at places such as eg Bourke and Mt. Isa. This type of infrastructure development will encourage the relocation of value adding industries to the commodities already being produced in these areas eg. wool, cotton, beef. These products” generally leave the region in a raw state. There is an opportunity to address the **sustainable** use of water. There are opportunities for horticultural crops with unlimited overseas markets. Mining companies should be obliged to develop alternate industries in the areas they are mining. In some cases these may have no relationship to their own operation. Eg. Horticulture.

- **The potential for development in regional areas**

There are unlimited opportunities if addressed. There are vast areas of land, much of it arable if water is provided. We need a **resettlement programme** to encourage a movement to (not so remote) if adequate infrastructure development takes place. We need to look at Israel and **implement the positive programmes.**

We need to provide incentives to industry.

Government must play a major role few, if any private organisations have the resources or the will to invest in a programme which will not show returns for some time. This is a programme for a bi-partisan approach by people who would like to be recognised in 50 years time for their achievements. Not just prior to the next election.

- **The extent to which infrastructure development would generate employment in regional Australia**

Will depend on how much imagination is used in developing the strategy. I would suggest that properly implemented that there could be as many people working west of the range as there are east of it within 50 years. Can't we have a vision at least that far forward? I cant, at my age, expect to live more than another 15 years, my vision extends well beyond 50 years, I question that we have the will to extend our vision as far as we need to. **I have a major problem with this term of reference it is identifying a limitation by trying to quantify employment instead of making the bold statement:**

“Need there be any limitations on the employment we can provide if we approach the challenge laterally?”

- **The role of the different levels of government and the private sector in providing infrastructure in regional areas.**

Co-operation for a start. Major infrastructure funding will need to come from the Federal Government. Long term Bond issues could be one way of financing the projects. They will be wealth creating and should not leave legacies for future generations. (Which is exactly what our short-term strategies do at present)

There is a need to provide tax and other incentives to both industry and to individuals this would need to be tied to the development of the local resources. Not just the relocation of businesses to take advantage of the benefit.

I see the state governments as providing, through their various departments, the appropriate “hands on” assistance

Local Government can to a large extent supervise and do the physical work required. There are opportunities to put in place mechanisms, which will provide significant medium term employment. Even if private companies are used there is a role for all levels of government in the administrative process and the development of employment opportunities.

Remove the stupid areas of the National Competition Policy (most of it)
The above covers the major infrastructure commitment.

In this case the private sector will follow once the opportunities are identified. They will provide the specific development of various industries.

- **Planning co-ordination and cooperation in the provision of infrastructure in regional areas**

This would need to be carried out by a properly structured development authority of the style of the Snowy Mountain Project.

- **The benefit to the national Economy of developing regional infrastructure.**

This reference term affected me in a similar way to the employment one-why does such a question need to be asked?

In a fully developed plan there will be an opportunity to identify specific advantages but in a brief submission such as his the question needs to be asked as to why the committee is addressing the issue if there are no perceived benefits.

It's a bit like building a house, we can turn the verandah into a sleepout (which seems to be this generations-and I include myself-attitude) but sooner or later we are going to need an extension of a more permanent nature. Our population has more than doubled in the past 40 years. If we don't start thinking about a permanent extension we are going to be in major trouble in another 40 years.

Summary:

This is a very brief appraisal of a very complex problem. I really believe that there needs to be an Authority put in place that has a mandate to develop a comprehensive plan over the next 5 years. This would cost considerable money but if properly implemented would provide a strategy to carry us forward for the next 50-100 years.

Sincerely

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