

Our Ref: G28

14 July 2008

LGANT
 Local
 Government
 Association
 of the
 Northern
 Territory

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

Dear Sir,

SUBMISSION TO INQUIRY INTO REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT FUNDING PROGRAMS

This letter constitutes the submission from the Local Government Association of the Northern Territory (the Association) to the above inquiry and is confined to matters relating to the funding of regional programs and the minimization of administrative costs and duplication in the Northern Territory. The submission is not concerned with issues that relate to regional development and that are covered under other funding programs such as those to do with roads, public housing and telecommunications infrastructure.

The Association has concerns that funding for regional development could become too diverse and it would like to see more tailored programs evolve especially in regard to infrastructure. It regards infrastructure as a priority in the Northern Territory particularly in towns with restricted accessibility to goods and services and opportunities for social interaction. Infrastructure projects such as:

- stormwater drainage
- sporting and recreational facilities
- cultural centres and libraries
- airport and barge land infrastructure
- housing for key personnel

are some of the most needed infrastructure in the Northern Territory. It is this kind of infrastructure that is in such short supply and is impeding economic growth. There is ample evidence of the importance of infrastructure to regional economies and the backlog that exists in regional Australia as demonstrated by the following reports:

- House of Representatives Standing Committee on Economics, Finance and Public Administration, 2003, *Rates and Taxes: A Fair Share for Responsible Local Government*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra
- Local Government and Shires Associations of NSW, 2006, *Are Councils Sustainable? Final Report: Findings and Recommendations*, Independent Inquiry into the Financial Sustainability of NSW Local Government
- Business Council of Australia, 2005, *Infrastructure – Action Plan for Future Prosperity*.
- National Economics, 2005, *State of the Regions 2004-05*, Australian Local Government Association, Canberra.

The Association also supports measures designed to:

- Increase Indigenous participation in economic activities in regions, and
- undertake valuable research and development

all of which should also be considered for regional development funding.

The Association considers that the bulk of regional development programs should be funded directly from the Australian Government to Local Government on the same basis that the Roads to Recovery roads program is administered to avoid duplication and reduce administrative costs.

The Association looks forward to an opportunity to discuss this submission in further detail in the future.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'T Tapsell', written in a cursive style.

Tony Tapsell
Chief Executive Officer