

# SOUTH EAST LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION INC

SUBMISSION 203

Incorporated under the provisions of The Local Government Act

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*Business Hours - 9.00 am to 5.00 pm - Monday to Friday*

*President:* The Secretary  
*Mayor Steve Perryman* Standing Committee on Infrastructure, Transport  
Regional Development and Local Government  
*Executive Officer:* House of Representatives  
*Rob Forgan* Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

*Member Councils:* **RE: INQUIRY INTO A NEW REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT FUNDING PROGRAM.**

*City of:*  
*Mount Gambier* **Introduction**

*Districts of:* SELGA welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the inquiry into the new Regional Development  
*Grant* Funding Program.

*Kingston* SELGA represents its Constituent Councils on a range of regional bodies and government  
*Naracoorte Lucindale* auspiced committees, as well as actively participating with regional bodies, the State and  
*Robe* Australian Governments.

*Tatiara* The Constituent Councils are:

- Wattle Range*
- City of Mount Gambier
  - District Council of Grant
  - Kingston District Council
  - Naracoorte Lucindale Council
  - District Council of Robe
  - Tatiara District Council
  - Wattle Range Council

Regional Bodies and Government Auspiced Committees

- The Limestone Coast regional Development Board
- Limestone Coast Tourism
- Limestone Coast Area Consultative Committee
- South East Natural Management Board
- South East Resource Information Centre

SELGA is a regional subsidiary established under the provisions of the Local Government Act 1999 and is governed by a Board established under its Charter. The Board has the responsibility to manage the business and other affairs of SELGA ensuring that SELGA acts in accordance with the Local Government Act, the SELGA Charter and any relevant legislation.

### Summary of the main points

- SELGA welcomes the commitment of the Hon Anthony Albanese MP Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government to ensure closer ties between Regional Development Australia (RDA) and the Local Government sector.
- Local Government is the sphere of Government that is closest to the geographic area and its people. It has very good intelligence about community, private enterprise and government activity in its area. It has linkages with regional and community development organisations.
- SELGA is a regional body that facilitates activities of local government at a regional level related to social, environmental and community development with the objective of achieving improvements for the communities of its Constituent Councils and is ideally placed to provide a regional link with RDA and the 64,000 South Australians who reside in the Limestone Coast community.
- SELGA supports the establishment of Regional Development Australia.
- SELGA reinforces the recognised need for Australian Government funding that supports the development of community infrastructure. Community infrastructure in regional Australia like many of our communities is ageing. Community centres and facilities established over 50 years ago are not upgraded to the required standards due to lack of funds. This sustainability issue is acute in smaller councils that are usually located in rural or remote locations.
- SELGA is concerned about the reduced level of funding into our region when compared to the Regional Partnerships (RP) Program.
- RP was recognised as highly successful program by member Councils who recognised RP as the only program for regional communities seeking support for major initiatives and community infrastructure projects.
- SELGA shares the disappointment expressed by some member Councils with the decision to scrap RP grant applications that were well advanced and had gained the approval of the previous Government. These projects have been jeopardised and may have to wound back or scuttled.
- SELGA is concerned and disappointed with the delay of vital funding into regional Australia as detailed in the Government's timeframe.
- The Regional and Local Community Infrastructure Program is welcomed, but it is the view of SELGA and member Councils that the date of implementation is too far away and will impact on the development of Community infrastructure. The lack of continuity will add to the postponement of significant projects. It is anticipated that it could be well into 2010 before decisions are made and RDA funds are released.
- The Government implements an interim funded program in 2008/2009 to receive and process suitable projects until the Inquiry is fully completed.
- A number of Constituent members believe the former RP program should have been maintained by the Government to cover the period leading up to 1 July 2009.

- SELGA believes that RDA funding should be directed towards key community, infrastructure and sound development projects that underpin rural and regional economies and help diversify industry sustaining regional and rural communities.
- Opportunity exists to build on the close working and funding relationship between SELGA and the Limestone Coast Regional Development Board and the working relationships between constituent Councils and the Limestone Coast Area Consultative Committee (ACC).
- Benefits to Limestone Coast communities will result from having one Board that will deliver regional development governance, funding, consultation and advocacy. An approach ensuring closer cooperation between Federal, State and Local Government in promoting and supporting regional development in the Limestone Coast.
- The above working relationships can enhance regional development and promote good governance by having one Board with members drawn from the Limestone Coast Regional Development Board and the Limestone Coast Area Consultative Committee.
- The general aims, goals and criteria of the former RP program were good and do not need to be changed greatly. However, there is an opportunity to have a critical look at the administration of the program and implement improvements.
- The introduction of separate funding pools or categories may overcome the “catch all” all nature of the former RP program. Categories for community and commercial projects could be introduced with appropriate guidelines. This definition could help communities and enterprises test their eligibility and encourage take up.
- Explore all opportunities to simplify the application process. The former program, in some cases after lodgement and recommendation by the local ACC could take several months to progress which often worked against critical timelines of key projects.
- Consideration given to utilising staff of RDA (ACC’s), State Regional Development Boards, and both State and Federal Government Departments in a more effective way.
- Project manager assistance at the local level is critical for advice on future RDA funding and the development of community submissions. This assistance is essential to successful program delivery and must be maintained.
- Duplication and confusion can be minimised and possibly avoided. Program delivery expense can be reduced with the commitment to establish a one stop shop. The Old Town Hall model in the Limestone Coast with its “one stop shop” is a good example of a working model that would be enhanced with the addition and co-location of RDA.
- The adoption of a Client Service Charter that acknowledges a commitment to communication and service delivery expectations.

### **Terms of Reference**

#### **Provide advice on future funding of regional programs in order to invest in genuine and accountable community infrastructure projects**

In South Australia, State legislation ensures that Local Government is transparent and fully accountable for its actions. Local Government is the sphere of government that is closest to the geographical area and its people. It has very good intelligence about community, private enterprise and government activity in its area.

If, in the future all infrastructure projects from the Federal Government included the local involvement and support from Local Government, this would improve project transparency and accountability.

Regional and Rural communities definitely need Commonwealth funding assistance as many items of infrastructure such as community centres, aged care facilities, health clinics and sport and recreation facilities were established in the 1950's or earlier. These ageing facilities are not being sufficiently upgraded because of lack of funds. The sustainability problem around Australia is typically more acute in smaller councils, which are mostly in remote and rural areas. SELGA is encouraged by the recognition of Government of the importance of government funding in enhancing the sustainability of Australia's regions.

RDA funding should be directed at projects that underpin rural and regional communities and economies and help diversify the industry base in regional areas. Projects could include community development, sport and recreation, infrastructure and sound development projects.

Consideration should be given to examining "Best Practice" examples of the former RP program. While acknowledging the variations that exist between projects and the regions they are located in there may be something to learn from the most effective and value for money projects that can be found in the history of RP projects and its predecessors.

The former Regional Food Processing Program offered by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) appeared for all intents and purposes to be an effective and practical regional and rural program, reasonably easy to access and of relevance to rural communities who recognised opportunities to grow their industry base and employ people. We are aware that the Government has announced a new Regional Food Innovation and Productivity Program (\$35m) and we look forward to the release of the program's aims and guidelines.

The "catch all" nature of the RP program did lead to some confusion in the community. For example, a project may have suited the Australian Tourism Development Fund as well as the RP program. Future program development should take this into account when developing guidelines.

SELGA acknowledges the difficulty in administering programs and the practice of having closing dates. In regional communities numerous projects are time related and often related to seasons and timing is critical. The practice of rolling intakes where applications can be accepted at any time with defined turnaround times would encourage the development of innovative submissions.

#### **Examine ways to minimize administrative costs and duplication for taxpayers**

Independent viability analysis of Local Government – for South Australian projects, this is a nonsense and complete waste of taxpayer money. Councils are financially secured by the State Government.

Project Manager Assistance at the local level is critical for advice on the potential of funding for proposed projects. Without this assistance, many community groups would be investing massive amounts of time and money on projects without the potential of ever receiving Federal funding.

Ensure consistency in planning by insisting that all projects submitted for Federal funding are in line with Local, State and Federal Government Strategic Plans.

Consider a more efficient way of utilising staff of Rural Development Australia, State Regional Development Boards and both State and Federal Government Departments. Staff from these organisations are often involved in a particular project that is seen by the community and could be an unnecessary duplication of time and cost to taxpayers".

Duplication and confusion can be minimised and possibly avoided. Program delivery expense can be reduced with the commitment to establish a one stop shop. The Old Town Hall model in the Limestone Coast regional centre of Mount Gambier with its “one stop shop” houses a Regional Development Board, SELGA, the regional Local Government Association, Australian Government Departments and Services (Ausindustry, Austrade and ATO), Limestone Coast Tourism, the SE Resource and Information Centre and State Government agencies, the Department of Trade and Economic Development, SA Works. This co-location is successful and creates efficiencies and better communication. This would be further enhanced with the addition and co-location of RDA and would encourage cooperation rather than competition between agencies.

Confusion at a regional level amongst the regional and rural community can be fuelled by the existence of State Government programs. The SA Government Regional Development Infrastructure Fund (RDIF) contributes to regional development. The Regional Development Board structure in SA is the access point and assists proponents develop their submissions. This on the ground experience could provide a foundation for coordinated development and assistance and in turn reduce confusion and the perception of duplication.

Successful RDIF applications must demonstrate their relevance to regional and State Strategic plans and financial viability.

**Examine the former government’s practices and grants outlined in the Australian National Audit Office report on Regional Partnerships with the aim of providing advice on future funding of regional programs; and**

**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.**

Explore all opportunities to simplify the future RDA application process. The former program, in some cases after lodgement and recommendation by the local ACC could take several months to progress which often worked against critical timelines of key projects. This processing time when added to the submission development impacted on the development of community and infrastructure based projects and led to loss of confidence and uncertainty.

The RP program guidelines seemed to be a “catch all” program for the regions. The development of future programs in our view needs to take into account relationships with other agencies that have responsibilities for tourism, communications, health etc. While we advocate flexibility, we encourage the development of program guidelines that are clear, user friendly and encourage access and uptake. The introduction of categories or separate funding pools for community/not for profit and commercial enterprises could encourage regional communities and business self assess their projects against the new program objectives and guidelines. Regional communities are often frustrated by not knowing where to go or by being referred onto other agencies.

In rural and regional communities, Local Government is usually the first port of call that people turn to. Councils and their communities would welcome the introduction of one agency that would reduce duplication, expense and confusion.

The one stop shop or the one regional entry point with the co-location of State and Regional Development Australia programs would provide a single platform for program and service delivery. This platform would be supported by a web technology.

From a regional and project proponents perspective, the RP program appeared to be hard to predict, even after preparing a comprehensive, competitive and detailed submission. Having the recommendation and support of the regional ACC, applications tendered were subject to

discretionary funding. Unsuccessful applicants were left wondering why their project was unsuccessful, while on the face of it, a similar project in the region or interstate was approved. In developing the new program, we believe that the guidelines, processes as well as reviews be thoroughly examined to build confidence in the new program. The assessment process could be enhanced with improved communication between RDA and the proponent.

A Client Service Charter acknowledging commitment to communication and service delivery expectations (esp. processing time) should improve program delivery.

Like many programs, particularly new programs, communities put forward projects that appear to meet the guidelines only to discover that "the goal posts have moved." Regional communities appreciate guidelines that are clear and consistent and do not alter significantly from one round to another.

On behalf of SELGA I thank the Standing Committee for this opportunity to provide input into the Inquiry into a new regional development funding program.

If the Committee has any queries relating to this submission, please refer them to me.

Yours sincerely



Rob Forgan  
Executive Officer  
SELGA

9 July 2008

### **Attachments**

SELGA members have provided input into this submission. Copies of correspondence received are attached while comments from other Councils have been included in this submission.

- City of Mount Gambier
- Tatiara District Council
- Wattle Range Council
- Kingston District Council
- Consolidated comments from LG staff

Reference: 215/2/2 LD  
Enquiries to: Mr Greg Muller

8 July 2008

Executive Officer  
South East Local Government Association  
PO Box 1445  
MOUNT GAMBIER SA 5290

Dear Rob

**RE: CESSATION OF REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS PROGRAM BY  
FEDERAL GOVERNMENT**

You will be aware of the Federal Government's decision to cease the highly successful and very important Regional Partnerships Program, which was a vital (and in some respects the only funding program for regional Australia) opportunity for regional communities to seek support for major local initiatives and community infrastructure projects.

You will also be aware that the closure of the Regional Partnerships Program has had a significant impact on all regions with submitted applications seeking a Federal contribution no longer being considered for funding. The new financial year 2009/10 will see the introduction of a new fund – the Regional and Local Community Infrastructure Program but in our view this is just too far away.

Independent MP, Tony Windsor has been appointed to assist the House of Representatives Standing Committee with its inquiry to ensure that regional communities and stakeholders are widely consulted for the development of this new Program.

The House of Representative Standing Committee on Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government is now conducting its inquiry; the terms of reference are listed below:

- Provide advice on future funding of regional programs in order to invest in genuine and accountable community infrastructure projects;
- Examine ways to minimize administrative costs and duplication for taxpayers;
- Examine the former government's practices and grants outlined in the Australian National Audit Office Report on Regional Partnerships, with the aim of providing advice on future funding of regional programs;
- and
- 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.



For the information and discussion by the Association, the following is this Council's submission to the House of Representatives Inquiry;

#### "Overview

Council respects the right of the new Federal Government to review and adjust Federal Programs to suit it's objectives and aspirations.

Council feels however that regional Australia has been substantially and unilaterally "cheated" by the cessation of the one major regional funding opportunity that it had available to it i.e. the Regional Partnerships Program and the disappointment is compounded by its replacement not being available until the 2009/10 Budget and until this new Program is implemented and the required review processes action, it could be well into the 2009/10 financial year i.e. early in the year 2010 before decisions are made and funds start to be released.

This Council has three major capital investments projects that would have met the former Regional Partnerships Program criteria and most certainly its replacement Program i.e. the Regional and Local Community Infrastructure Program.

We are now faced with the distinct possibility that none will now proceed or if we wait the next 18-24 months for the results of the new Program to filter through, then the rise in building costs will outstrip any material benefit from the new Program – the financial risks are too high.

**The Federal Government should have maintained the former Regional Partnerships Program to cover this void period, until it was able to develop and introduce its own requirements from 2009/2010.**

Having regard to the Terms of Reference of the Standing Committee we have made the following comments:

**Reference – Provide advice on future funding of regional programs in order to invest in genuine and accountable community infrastructure projects.**

In South Australia, State legislation ensures that Local Government is transparent and fully accountable for its actions. Local Government is the sphere of government that is closest to the geographical area and its people. It has very good intelligence about community, private enterprise and government activity in its area.

If, in the future all infrastructure projects from the Federal Government included the local involvement and support from Local Government, this would improve project transparency and accountability.

**Reference – Examine ways to minimise administrative costs and duplication for taxpayers**

1. Independent viability analysis of Local Government – for South Australian projects, this is a nonsense and complete waste of taxpayer money. Councils are financially secured by the State Government.
2. Project Manager assistance at the local level is critical for advice on the potential of funding for proposed projects. Without this assistance, many community groups would be investing massive amounts of time and money on projects without the potential of ever receiving Federal funding.
3. Ensure consistency in planning by insisting that all projects submitted for Federal funding are in line with Local, State and Federal Government Strategic Plans.
4. Consider a more efficient way of utilising staff of Rural Development Australia, State Regional Development Boards and both State and Federal Government Departments. Often staff from all of these organisations are involved in a particular project that seems to be a severe duplication of time and cost to taxpayers”.

This Council requests that the Association consider the above and the effects of the cancellation of the Regional Partnerships Program within your own areas and consider your own representations to the Federal Government for the Federal Government to implement as a matter of urgency, an interim funded Program to receive and process in 2008/09 suitable projects, until the Inquiry is fully completed.

Yours faithfully



**Greg MULLER**  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

8 July 2008  
LD

16<sup>th</sup> June 2008

File No 7/41/5

Ms B Linden  
Project Manager  
Limestone Coast Area Consultative Committee  
P.O. Box 2590  
290 Commercial Street West  
Mount Gambier S.A. 5290

Dear Barbara,

**Re: Regional and Local Community Infrastructure Program**

Council was extremely disappointed to hear that the Commonwealth Government had scrapped the Regional Partnerships Program. Council had submitted grant applications for two major projects in the Bordertown Civic Centre Upgrade and the Keith Sport and Recreation Centre, and there were also other applications submitted for funds from community groups and businesses from within our area.

Council has spent considerable funds in engaging consultants to assist with the application process, as well as time and effort from Council staff and from community members. These projects, especially the Keith one, were well through the process and we had successfully answered a vast number of complicated questions from departmental officers in Canberra on various aspects of the project. There was definitely no sign of political interference in our projects. In fact we had to stop committee members from going to the press expressing concern about the long delays in making a decision and about the third degree we were getting in case their comments adversely effected our applications.

In response to the call for feedback on what the new Regional and Local Community Infrastructure Program should look like, Council at its June meeting carried the following motion:

*that Council respond to the Limestone Coast Area Consultative Committee and forward a representation to the House of Representative Standing committee on the new program to replace Regional Partnerships highlighting that:*

- 1. Regional and Rural Communities definitely need Commonwealth funding assistance as many items of infrastructure such as community centres, aged care facilities, health clinics and sport and recreation facilities were established in the 1950s (or earlier)*

*and are not being sufficiently upgraded because of a lack of funds. The sustainability problem around Australia is typically more acute in smaller councils, which are mostly in rural or remote areas.*

- 2. The general aims, goals and criteria for the old Regional Partnership Program were good and do not need to be changed greatly. The main problems related to the administration of the program and how decisions were made. Applications submitted to the new program should be decided purely on the merits of the application with no political interference.*

If you have any queries about our comments please contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Robert Harkness  
Chief Executive Officer

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AUSTRALIA - OPPORTUNITIES FOR REGIONAL GOVERNANCE COLLABORATION BETWEEN FEDERAL STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS IN THE LIMESTONE COAST.

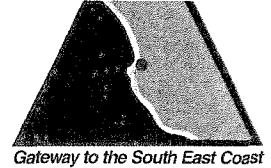
The commitment of the Hon Anthony Albanese MP Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government to ensure close ties between Regional Development Australia and the Local Government sector provides a unique opportunity for SELGA to promote a review of regional development governance structures in the Limestone Coast.

There already exists a close working and funding relationship between SELGA and the Limestone Coast Regional Development Board and good working relationships between constituent Councils and the Limestone Coast Area Consultative Committee. I believe it is in the best interest of regional development in the Limestone Coast to further cement these working relationships by promoting governance of regional development pursuant to one Board consisting of members drawn from the Limestone Coast Regional Development Board and the Limestone Coast Area Consultative Committee.

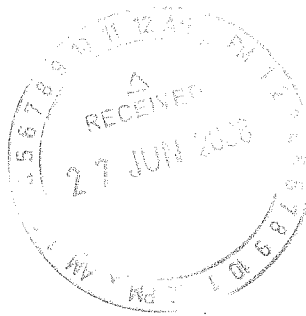
I believe the communities in the Limestone Coast region will benefit from regional development governance, funding, consultation and advocacy by one board. This approach will ensure there is close cooperation between Federal, State and Local Government in promoting and supporting regional development in the Limestone Coast Region.

I urge SELGA to embrace this initiative and promote it to the Limestone Coast Regional Development Board, the Limestone Coast Area Consultative Committee and Minister Albanese.

Mayor Mark Braes  
Wattle Range Council  
1<sup>st</sup> July 2008.



Ref 290/2008  
File 1/D/12 & 6/A/23



26 June 2008

Mr Rob Forgan  
Executive Officer  
South East Local Government Association  
PO Box 1445  
MOUNT GAMBIER SA 5290

SOUTH AUSTRALIA'S  
TIDIEST TOWN 2006

Dear Rob

**Re: Regional Development Australia**

At Council's meeting of 20 June 2008 it discussed the Limestone Coast Regional Development Board New Resource Agreement and proposed new arrangements under Regional Development Australia. Council in the main supports the Limestone Coast Regional Development Board New Resource Agreement and supports generally the strategy for Regional Development Australia.

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**Regional Development Australia**

Council has supported the establishment of Regional Development Australia. Council, however, expressed concern with the reduced level of funding, in comparison with the Regional Partnerships Program (as it understands the current proposal) and the timeframe for its implementation.

Council believes the new fund should be directed towards key community, sport and recreational, infrastructure projects, sound development projects and other initiatives that underpin rural and regional economies and help diversity industry base in these areas.

Yours faithfully

Martin McCarthy  
**Chief Executive Officer**

**POSTAL ADDRESS**  
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Kingston SE  
South Australia 5275

www.kingstondc.sa.gov.au

## INQUIRY INTO A NEW REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT FUNDING PROGRAM

- Encouraging seeing local government recognised and associated with infrastructure, transport and regional development.
  - Pleasing to see that Broadband part of vital infrastructure in regional status has achieved high status on its own and not lumped in with all infrastructure but a recognised part of the response to broadband, communications and the digital economy/divide issue.
  - Encouraging seeing that Federal government funding plays a key role in enhancing the sustainability of Australia's regions.
1. *The way to invest funding into genuine regional development and community infrastructure.*

Clear guide lines required on what is:

- Community Infrastructure
  - Where does Regional Australia start? Who is excluded? What cities are excluded?
  - Who has responsibility for the promotion and administration of future programs, capital city based (no) regionally or centrally?
  - Regional Development Board in SA has experience in program delivery, viz Regional Development Infrastructure Fund, as well as promoting the former RP program to regional organisations. This ties in with Regional Plans, State Strategic Plans and gives focus on identified, genuine and sustainable projects. Alignment with the strategic plans or regional organizations such as SELGA, LCRDB and the Regionalisation of the SASP aids accountability.
2. *Minimising Administrative costs and duplication for tax payers.*

- The South East Region is served by seven Councils, ratepayers in each LGA understand the role of their Council, but have a limited understanding of the role of other agencies, inc, ACC's/RDA's and RDB's or their equivalent.
- With the communities identifying with local government, currently practice is for LG to refer to their regional development arm (Limestone Coast RDB) in the South East. This is the Agency that the community would normally turn to. ACC's around Australia have a mottled history in terms of achievements. We are fortunate to have one of the higher performers in our region. However the fact that we have two agencies in one well defined region confuses clients, tax payers and confounds our regional communities who see that we have two players involved in Regional Development.

The concept of a one stop shop in a Region like the Limestone Coast has been a proven success with business advisory services, export (Tradestart) assistance, AusIndustry, Training, Regional Migration Services all offered from one point, all under the same roof.

This successful platform could be greater if we had the RP-RDA programs and also the Region's ACC co-located.

This would assist clients accessing programs, reduce confusion and double handling and cut down the administrative overheads. Co-location would deliver improved levels of cooperation, rather than competition and the loss of

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effort by each agency striving for recognition and branding in a relatively well connected region.

### 3. *Former Governments Practices and Grants*

- Previous RP Program seemed to be a 'catch all' program from Community Hall upgrade to multi million bids.
- Crossover with over programs such as ATDP could and did lead to confusion.
- ATDP was a tourism specific program with two categories but to an outside eye, RP provided the community with a fall back option for tourism industry proponents. At an estimate, our educated guess would be that RP approvals were made up of 30% tourism projects.
- The Regional Food Processing Program previously offered by Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry Australia or DAFF. This appeared to fit in with Australian Region's desire to value add at home and employ locals. Consideration given to reinstating this program or revisiting the success of this short life program.
- The Process? The delays in preparing, submitting competitive programs were often out of synchronisation with proponents in rural sectors that had enterprises affected by seasonal factors e.g. agriculture, horticulture. While retrospectively was understood, previous programs were too rigid to allow for this resulting in low take up or proponents saying we can't be bothered as we can't sit on our hands and wait for our project to fit in a Government funding cycle and even if we did there is no guarantee that we would be successful with application.
- New criteria can take out some of the subjective analysis and politics of the previous funding programs. Communities are in need of funding for many projects now to benefit their respective areas.

Previous assessment process seemed too unpredictable, on the surface, a number of projects could be endorsed as worthy of high priority, yet in this electorate or regional area it was possible that a number of projects would be highly recommended, but only one may have been successful. This situation can leave the client perplexed and the local promoters and voluntary committees who reviewed and graded the projects disappointed with what may be an inadequate response to the proponent.

Suggest a local rating system based on input from Lead Regional agencies that have a regional perspective. This approach works well and has been successfully tested at SELGA with the recommendations for significant funding for roads and waste management grants applying across sub-regions (individual Councils/Shires). In this instance, an external party assessed and moderated the submissions at an arm's length and put forward recommendations for a representative committee to consider.

The approach where some major regional projects may be shelved for smaller less effective projects of lesser benefit in areas who may be under represented in RP allocations. While performed out of goodwill and equity, it needs to be questioned whether the aim of keeping as many communities as possible happy is best use of the Regional Development dollar and in the best interest of the region.

The loss of contact and control, lack of feedback was a source of ongoing frustration for proponents and agencies who after lodging the RP application



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had no indication of the likelihood of success or when the application was given the nod of approval or otherwise. Proponents had to put their projects on hold and this affected their project timelines.

A Client Service Charter could improve this deficiency and a shorter turnaround time may enhance this aspect of program delivery.

- In the past there were perceived differences in the assessment of submissions from State to State. A project rejected in one state or region may have been approved interstate, based on the access to lists of approved projects around Australia. This begs the question whether there was grading or review of projects conducted centrally to reduce anomalies.

## SUMMARY

- ❖ New program must have regional input.
- ❖ Local Government is well connected to do it. It has in South Australia a Regional Development arm (RDB Network) that is concerned about hard and soft infrastructure and the sustainability and liveability of our Region. This cannot be done as well externally.
- ❖ Duplication can be avoided, expenses can be reduced but a regional one stop shop, as the South East model has demonstrated works and it can be better. The addition or co-location of RDA or the move to one Board can improve the current situation.
- ❖ The message can be clearer and the program easier to access by one coordinated Regional Development Agency seen as 'the' place to go within the region.
- ❖ Communities appreciate consultation, but they do not appreciate double and triple consultation, covering the same ground by multiple agencies at a regional, local, state and federal level.