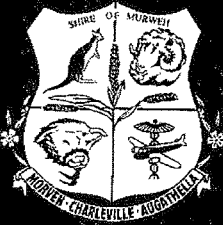


**MURWEH SHIRE COUNCIL**

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25 June 2008

YOUR REF:

IN REPLY CONTACT **Chris Blanch**

RESPONDS TO:

OUR REF:

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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**

Dear Committee Members

**Subject: Inquiry into a New Regional Development Funding Program**

For over 20 years I have been employed in local government in rural Queensland and New South Wales. During that time I have experienced and participated in various federal government funding programmes including the regional partnerships programme.

I would like to suggest that your committee look at a radical change in the administration and delivery of these programmes across Australia based upon the successful roads to recovery scheme. Roads to recovery delivered \$1.2 billion over four years to all local authorities in Australia based on agreed national principles that are used to calculate the roads component of the annual financial assistance grants, compiled by each States grant commissions.

Local government is the obvious candidate to deliver regional development. Local government is accessible to the communities it services. It is resourced to maintain and operate new infrastructure in its area or oversee operations. It is likely that Local Government has contributed and assisted with projects and scrutiny by residents ensures value for money and outcomes on delivery.

In regional areas facilities such as halls, libraries, swimming pools, sportsgrounds, cultural centres etc are invariably owned and operated by Councils. There are community expectations that can be difficult to meet across a wide range of services that can cross over to areas of state and federal responsibilities such as health (medical centres) and education (sporting facilities/broadband access). I acknowledge that these same

challenges have to be met by large metropolitan Councils especially those with high population growth.

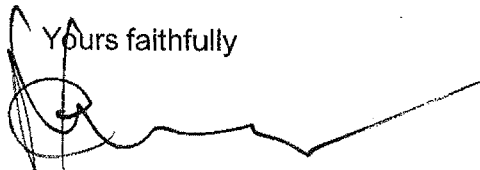
Delivery of a regional development funding program, if modeled on the roads to recovery programme could be modified and delivered to all local authorities in Australia including metropolitan. This would rid the incumbent government of accusations of pork barreling or favouritism which has occurred in the past.

Funding would be provided to every electorate in Australia. Allocations on a pro rata basis could be made to each local authority based on the modeling used by the grants commissions for financial assistance grants. This modeling takes into account demographics, geography, population, disadvantages, climate and many other indicators.

Based over four years with strict reporting and outcome requirements this project could deliver many benefits to infrastructure across Australia at a local level. Larger, more ambitious projects such as rail and ports would still be kept in the control of the States or Commonwealth.

Thank you for the opportunity to have my say.

Yours faithfully



Mr Chris Blanch PSM MLGMA  
Chief Executive Officer

