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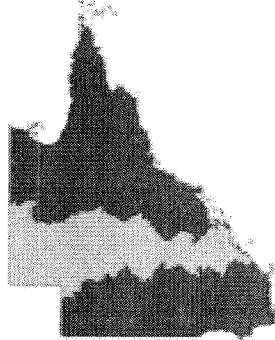
REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AUSTRALIA COMMITTEE CENTRAL QUEENSLAND

“Inquiry into a new regional development funding program

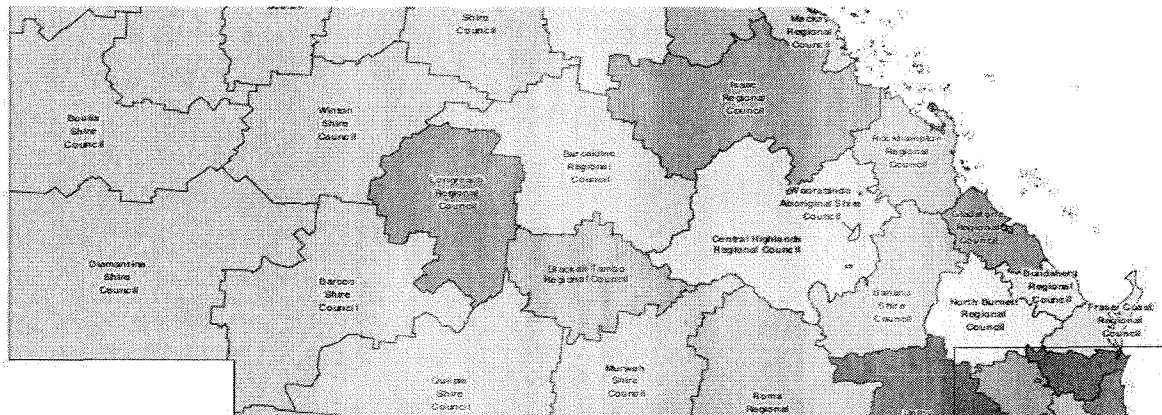
SUBMISSION

1. Regional Development Australia Committee Central Queensland

1.1 Regional Development Australia Committee Central Qld (RDACCQ) (formerly Central Queensland Area Consultative Committee) incorporates the region from the cities of Rockhampton and Gladstone in the east, to the Central Western Queensland, Northern Territory and South Australian borders (Birdsville). It is situated approximately between 22.5 degrees and 26 degrees in the vicinity of Tropic Capricorn 23.5 degrees south of the equator.



1.2 The RDACCQ region incorporates Rockhampton, Gladstone, Central Highlands, Barcaldine, Blackall-Tambo and Longreach Regional Councils, and Winton, Diamantina, Barcoo and Banana Shire Councils.



1.3 The RDACCQ region has a population of approximately 220,000 (reference ABS 3218.0 Regional Population Growth 2006-07). The main population centres of the entire RDACCQ region are located around Rockhampton, Gladstone, Emerald and Biloela.

1.4 Gross regional product for the entire region 2003-2005 is approximately \$18 billion. (Reference Queensland Government Office of State Development (OSD) 2005).



1.5 The RDACCQ region incorporates two distinct statistical and economic regions:

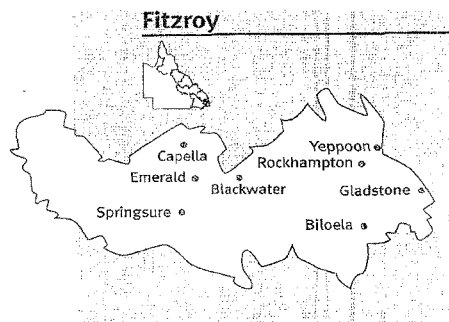
- The Fitzroy region;
- The Central West region.

1.6 Queensland Department of State Development 2007 document (See *Fitzroy and Central West – an Economic Powerhouse* www.dtrdi.qld.gov.au) describes the Fitzroy and Central West regions as being:

“well positioned to capitalise on its extensive resources, existing industries and significant infrastructure. The region’s competitive strengths lay the foundation for further investment and growth. To realise this growth, we will need to focus on the region’s most significant opportunities and target efforts on priority activities.

The Fitzroy and Central West region’s economy is currently driven by: strong global demand for energy and resources nationally significant agricultural, mining and resource industries, associated processing industries and a strong service sector changing demographics associated with the demands of high growth industries and the broader “sea & green change” trends and lifestyle choices.”

1.6.1 The Fitzroy region (See map below) encompasses the-Rockhampton, Gladstone and Central Highlands Regional Councils, and Banana Shire Council and the cities of Rockhampton, Gladstone and towns of Yeppoon, Biloela, Blackwater, Capella, Emerald, and Springsure. (See Maps Appendix 1)



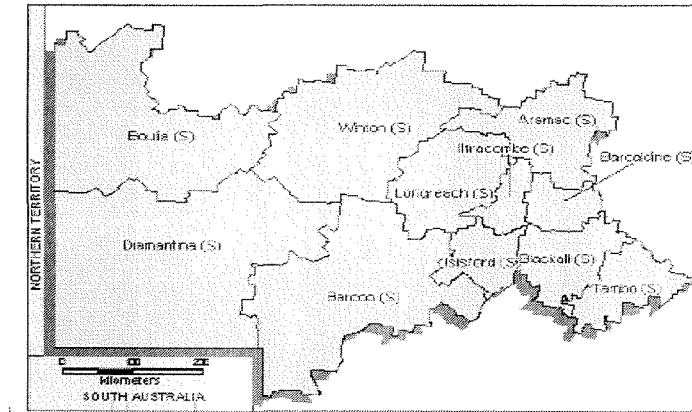
1.6.1.1 The region has an area of some 123,000 square kilometres and a population of approximately 204,500 or 5 per cent of Queensland’s total population. Its diversity includes beaches, rainforests, southern reaches of the Great Barrier Reef, a world class university at Rockhampton and the economic and industry hubs of Gladstone and Rockhampton.

1.6.1.2 The Fitzroy region is a leading economic area due to mining, agriculture, resource industries and related production, transport and storage industries, manufacturing, and tourism. The region:

- Accounts for seven per cent of Gross State Product and 1.2 per cent of Australia’s Gross National Product;
- Generates more than 10 per cent of Queensland’s economic activity;
- Employs over 10 per cent of Queensland’s workforce; and
- Home to 6 per cent of the State’s businesses. (Reference OSD 2005)



- 1.6.2 Central West region (See map below) incorporates Barcaldine, Blackall-Tambo and Longreach Regional Councils, and Winton, Diamantina, and Barcoo Shire Councils and includes the towns of Boulia, (Boulia Shire); Bedourie and Birdsville (Diamantina Shire); Windorah, Jundah and Stonehenge (Barcoo Shire); Winton (Winton Shire) Longreach, Isisford, Ilfracombe (Longreach Regional Council); Blackall and Tambo (Blackall Regional Council); Barcaldine, Jericho, Alpha, Aramac, Muttaborra (Barcaldine Regional Council).



, and Isisford Shires; Blackall Regional Council now includes (Note: Longreach Regional Council now includes former Longreach, Ilfracombe former Blackall and Tambo Shires; Barcaldine Regional Council now includes former Shires of Barcaldine, Aramac and Jericho –not shown on the map but was adjacent to Aramac and Barcaldine Shires)

- 1.6.2.1 Central West region is geographically and demographically diverse encompassing an area of some 396,500 square kilometres or about 75 per cent of the total area of the RDACCQ region. The estimated population is about 12,200 persons some 5.6% of the RDACCQ region. (OSR Regional Profile 2005 and ABS 1318.3 Q'ld Statistics May 2007)
- 1.6.2.2 The primary industry of the Central West is agricultural production valued at approximately \$365 million per year or 5% of the Queensland total. Livestock disposals and livestock product comprised some 99% of the total value of agricultural production in the Central West. (OSR Regional Profile)
- 1.6.2.3 Tourism is an economic driver in the Central West and visitors to the region between March 2007 and March 2008 numbered 494,000. (Tourism Queensland, Queensland Data Sheet Year ended March 2008) and to the entire Queensland outback region is estimated to contribute some \$400 million. (Outback Queensland Tourism Authority)
- 1.6.2.4 The Central West, like other parts of RDACCQ is experiencing change and development from the information and communication technology sector, new tourism ventures, organic industries and new business and industry ventures such as the proposed \$50 million geothermal power station 30 kilometres east of Longreach.
- 1.7 Common to both the Fitzroy and the Central West are shortfalls in community infrastructure and regional economic assets. In the Central West the drought has impacted and in the Fitzroy economic growth has shown that infrastructure such as airports, ports, roads, community housing, transport is not meeting demand and liveability infrastructure is either absent or under strain.



2. Regional Development Australia Committee Central Queensland Role

2.1 RDACCQ is an Australian Government funded entity working initially under the auspices of Department of Employment and Workplace Relations to about 1999 followed by the, Department of Transport and Regional Services and Local Government to 2008 and now Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government. It is one of 54 Australian-wide RDAs operating within designated regional boundaries.

2.2 RDACCQ:

2.2.1 provides residents of Central Queensland with information and advice on Australian Government regional programs and where appropriate assistance in accessing programs.

2.2.2 works with networks collaboratively on strategic planning to aid Australian Government regional decision making on regional socio - economic development and community infrastructure, service delivery priorities and social inclusion and other issues, that has the potential to enhance sustainability and liveability across the Central Queensland region.

2.3 RDACCQ is recognised as a key regional stakeholder having extensive local, sub-regional and regional networks for the purpose of strategic planning including innovative solutions to local issues, partnership building to increase community capacity and to achieve regional economic growth.

2.4 RDACCQ's structure includes 5 sub-regional advisory sub-committees that reflect sub-regions (See below) across the economically, geographically and demographically diverse RDACCQ region which interface with local networks enabling complete regional advice to and from the Australian Government on regional issues and programs.

2.4.1 Sub-regions are: Central Highlands (main centre Emerald – Central Highlands Regional Council); Central West (main centre Longreach); Callide-Dawson (main centre Biloela – Banana Shire Council); Gladstone (main centre Gladstone – Gladstone Regional Council) and Rockhampton (main centre Rockhampton – Rockhampton Regional Council)

2.5 In practical terms RDACCQ:

- champions the needs of and issues pertaining to Central Queensland to government;
- acts as a quasi one-stop-shop for information and advice but without the necessary physical and human infrastructure and physical support mechanisms; and
- builds networks and partnerships that contribute to strategic planning, increasing community capacity and regional economic growth.

2.5.1 Since establishment in 1995, RDACCQ (formerly CQACC) has evolved into a key stakeholder in the region's socio-economic development working through economic downswings resulting in social and employment dislocations such as the high interest rate period of the mid-nineties; the 2004 closure of CMG Meatworks and the loss of some 600 jobs coinciding with drought and the University of Central Queensland restructure and economic upswings flowing from the resources boom creating large demand for regional socio-economic assets and community infrastructure.



- 2.5.2 Following the introduction of the Regional Assistance Program (approximately 1998-99) RDACCQ has worked successfully with proponents and partners/networks across the entire region on some 130 regional economic development and community infrastructure projects to increase community capacity, underpin sustainability and enhance liveability.
- 2.5.3 Over a 9 year timeframe, projects with a total value of over \$100,000,000 of which about \$30,000,000 was funded from Commonwealth regional programs has been achieved to build community capacity and enhance employment and productivity and regional economic development. (See table below and Appendix 2)
- 2.5.3.1 This means that for every \$1 invested by the Australian Government in a regional project in Central Queensland another \$3 was secured from partnership funding from either the private sector or another level of government.
- 2.5.4 The table below shows the project distribution across CQRDA 5 sub-regions, Australian Government funding from all programs from approximately 1998-99 and the total value of the projects.



PROJECTS APPROVED UP TO DECEMBER 2007

Sub Region	Total Funded from Regional Programs (\$)	Total Projects	Total Project Costs (\$)
Central Highlands	6,643,090	21	25,642,360
Central West	16,559,424	58	46,680,488
Callide-Dawson	1,803,898	21	7,380,538
Gladstone	2,970,181	20	11,880,724
Rockhampton	4,362,194	18	17,448,776
TOTALS	32,338,787	138	109,032,401



3. Inquiry into a new regional development fund program –

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

3.1 In responding to the Standing Committee's request for submissions, RDACCQ re-examined the Auditor General's Audit Report No 14 Performance Audit 2007-08 pertaining to Regional Partnerships (ANAO Report) and its recommendations. Our response is highly influenced by that report.

3.2 RDACCQ (formerly CQACC) over 13 years of operation has achieved substantial experience in delivering Australian Government regional socio-economic development programs (See Appendix 2) flowing from activities such as:

- Rural Communities Program;
- Rural Transactions Centre Program;
- Regional Assistance;
- Dairy Regional Assistance Program;
- Regional Solutions Program;
- Regional Partnerships; and
- Sustainable Regions.

3.3 It is the view of RDACCQ that there are five elements important to regional programs:

- Policy;
- Program design;
- Delivery function;
- Approval Processes; and
- Project monitoring and support post contract period.

3.3. The **policy settings** are critical to any "future funding of regional programs in order to invest in genuine, accountable community infrastructure projects" and for establishing the framework to align the policy with funding and delivery.

3.3.1 Drawing on experience, the preference is for a single integrated socio economic regional development policy supported by a single funding program capable of meeting the genuine and sustainable regional socio economic development and community infrastructure requirements of regional Australia.

3.3.2 The policy statement must be clear and concise and not open to interpretation (example: as was the retrospectivity clause in RPP guidelines 2003 – 2005) or misinterpretation by the delivery function/mechanism.

3.3.3 Preferably, to ensure policy clarity, policy processes should be separate from the delivery and assessment mechanisms.

3.3.4 It is the view of RDACCQ that there should be interface between Infrastructure Australia and Regional Development Australia (RDA) which may be by representation of an Infrastructure



Board member on the appropriate National RDA committee or board for mutually productive regional economic development and community infrastructure delivery.

- 3.4 **The design** of the funding program should be capable of meeting requirements for both small projects for small communities such as in sports, recreation, arts, tourism, culture or service priorities and the large sustainable community infrastructure and regional economic development projects.
- 3.4.1 The application design should be similar for both small and large projects but the supporting data requirements should recognise and differentiate between the classes of projects.
- 3.4.2 The design should insist that a project proponent considering grant funds from a regional program for both small and large projects should recognise a collaborative funding approach as imperative with encouragement by relevant RDAC toward researching, seeking and exhausting all funding streams prior to anticipating regional program funding.
- 3.4.2.1 For the purpose of equity, communities which can demonstrate that partnership arrangements are not available (more remote and isolated communities) a *special consideration clause* will be required.
- 3.4.3 Calling upon experience the RDACCQ is of the view that the important elements of the regional funding program design must be: clear policy with deliverable priorities; concise application guidelines regarding rationale, methodology, project milestones/benchmarks and outcomes; efficient, transparent, accountable decision making processes and testing of proposed project's genuineness and integration with recognised regional strategic plans.
- 3.4.4 The regional funding program design should empower **local** RDAC structures and State Regional Office of the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government (State Department Regional Office) (located in Townsville) with specific program administrative responsibilities and agreed outcomes for transmission to the National RDA for recommendation to the Minister for approval.
- 3.5 RDACCQ is of the view that the **delivery mechanism** for the future funding program should be devolved as much as possible to the local RDA structures and State Department Regional Office - oversights by the National RDA Office.
- 3.5.1 Funding program delivery mechanisms (such as information, advice, application, processes and monitoring) may be the function of the local RDA in conjunction with the State Departmental Regional Office.
- 3.6 **Approval processes** should be in stages and be transparent and accountable at each level.
- 3.6.1 Initially the local RDAC secretariat should qualify under established and approved criteria (which should include strategic planning for the community/region), the proposed project for genuineness and concept soundness.
- 3.6.1.1 If the proposed project is a large infrastructure project it may require dialogue with State Departmental Regional Office to discuss possible transmission to the National RDA Office for its consideration and recommendation to Infrastructure Australia.

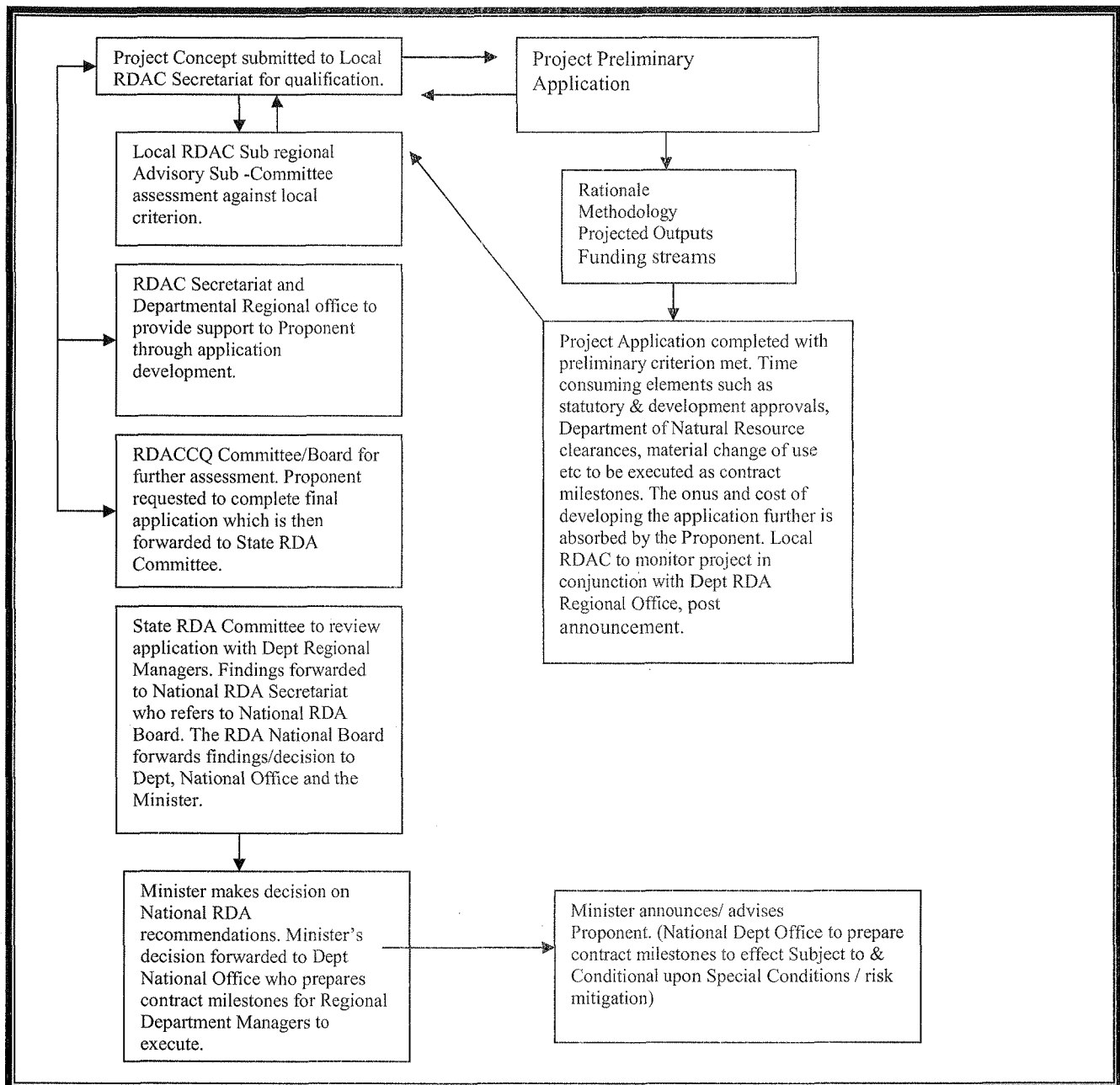


- 3.6.2 The Local RDA secretariat should submit the proposed project preliminary application to the Regional Advisory Sub-Committee with responsibility for the area in which the proposed project is suggested for project concept and soundness assessment and *determination* under established and approved criteria in the local priority list and strategic plan.
- 3.6.2.1 If endorsed the Proponent should be advised by the local RDAC Secretariat to proceed and prepare a draft application complete with rationale, methodology, projected outputs and proposed funding streams for preliminary due diligence by the local RDAC Secretariat.
- 3.6.2.2 The Regional Advisory Sub-Committee should have the charter to make a *local determination* on a proposed project (Appeal Policy attached).
- 3.6.2.3 The findings including the draft application submission should be presented to the Local RDAC Committee/Board (representative of the whole region) for further consideration/endorsement and priority rating under an agreed and approved criteria (which should include preliminary due diligence) and if endorsed the Proponent advised to prepare a final application with appropriate documentation and agreed funding streams, benchmarks/milestones for due diligence purposes the Regional RDA Advisory Committee for its consideration.
- 3.6.4.1 The RDA State Advisory Committee may comprise National RDA representative/s; Department Regional Managers and Chairs of State RDACs.
- 3.6.4.2 The RDA State Advisory Committee may meet at times determined by the Departmental Regional Division to discuss and examine proposed projects according to established and approved criteria.
- 3.6.5 Final approved project applications and attachments and all recommendations should be referred to the Departmental Regional Office for transmission to the National RDA Office.
- 3.6.5.1 National RDA Office should assess the application and supporting documentation for program policy/priorities compliance and if approved refer the final application/documents and all subsequent recommendations to the National RDA Board for consideration and the appropriate recommendation to the Minister and advice to Proponent.
- 3.6.5.2 RDACCQ supports the Minister's approval/rejection of the project and the appropriate advice to the Proponent as the policy and the funding program is the responsibility and at the discretion of Government.
- 3.7 It has been the practice under previous regional program design, for local RDACs (formerly ACC) not to be engaged in the project's oversight in terms of shared monitoring of milestones/benchmarks and assisting with managing outcomes after the contract for funding is drawn.



- 3.7.1 Essentially, monitoring benchmarks, transmission of funds and managing of outcomes is the responsibility of the funding agency.
- 3.7.2 RDACCQ is of the view that the local RDAC in conjunction with the State Departmental Regional Office should have a role in monitoring benchmarks and assisting with managing of outcomes to ensure compliance with the contract.
- 3.7.2.1 Due to the RDAC's "localness", it is well placed to "check on" and determine if projects are "on track" and if not instigate the appropriate action. The local RDAC should report on the status of approved projects in its region to the State Departmental Regional Office.
- 3.8 RDACCQ is of the view, based on experience and coupled with re-examination of the ANAO Report, a regional funding program underpinned by clear policy, identified priorities, established and approved funding program criteria and delivered through local structures and mechanisms (local RDAC and State Departmental Regional Office and responsible to National RDA Office) has the necessary checks and balances (transparency and accountability) to meet the regional socio economic development outcomes that are genuine and economically sound.
- 3.9 It is RDACCQ's considered view that local RDAs in harness with the State Departmental Regional Office should be empowered with responsibility to deliver projects to the National RDA for assessment against program policy and priorities and have a role in the monitoring of funding benchmarks/milestones post contract with responsibility of reporting to the State Departmental Regional Office on the status of approved projects in its region.
- 3.10 Below is a suggested flow chart:





4. *Examine ways to minimise administrative costs and duplication for taxpayers*

4.1 RDACCQ is of the view that efficiencies should be an essential component of the design of the funding program of which **localism** should be an element for example: program administration processes such as concomitant computer software between program responsible units/divisions; assessments; local knowledge particularly for due diligence purposes; travel monitoring.

4.1.2 It is our experience that efficiencies may be achieved by minimising layers of bureaucratic procedures which are not in the accountability and transparency ambit by localising appropriate administrative and monitoring responsibilities



- 4.1.3 Efficiencies derive from **localism** (Local RDA in conjunction with Regional RDA division of the Department) for example: program administrative processes - such as concomitant computer software between program responsible divisions; assessment processes; *local knowledge particularly* for due diligence purposes; and travel.
- 4.1.4 It is our experience that efficiencies may be achieved by minimising layers of bureaucratic procedures which are not in the accountability and transparency ambit localising appropriate administrative and monitoring / managing outcomes responsibilities.
- 4.1.5 State local RDA Committee/Board and Executive Officer may meet at intervals with the Department Regional Officers to discuss the efficiencies of the program and consider recommendations to the National RDA Board.

5. *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 audit period of 2003 – 2006 with the aim of providing advice on future funding of regional programs.

- 5.1 RDACCQ has the strong view that the ANAO Report with its analysis of administrative and operational and decision making processes is a valuable document for the purpose of improving performance standards across all procedures and corporate governance.
- 5.2 The ANAO Report examined 12 projects of which 6 were the responsibility of the former CQACC. In response CQACC Chair provided the following response (Regional Partnerships program, ANAO Report 2007, Volume 2 pp 73, 74):



I would like to commence by outlining that each individual ACC organisation is an entity (Incorporated Association) within their Own-Right. Internal structures and subsequent practice across the ACC Network varies. The CQACC as I hope you would be aware operate (via a staff level of 4 personnel) in a geographical territory similar to the geographic scope of Victoria. Up until just recently it included jurisdiction in 24 Local Government Authorities all at which at some stage in the program's life span have participated in the RP Program. This is "no excuse" for what could be described as administrative deficiency however the point being made is that at the time we (CQACC) executed our roles in good faith and to the best of our ability at the time.

The extracts (6 projects within the CQACC area were included in the published ANAO project case studies) brought to mention projects dating from July 2003 – December 2004. Since the commencement of the Regional Partnership's Program in June 2003 and June 2004, the CQACC encountered significant staffing turn over (2 Executive officers / 1 Interim Management Consultant) with the Executive Management position being filled in June 2004.

The initial six-month term of the executive person included the development of practices and procedures to address noted deficiencies experienced prior to that commencement in June 2004. I note that administrative procedures were present prior to and for a short term at the commencement of the executive Management position June 2004.

I am confident to say that such deficiencies have been minimised within the CQACC framework and such development confirmation may be sought from recognition of the current CQACC practices and the department (DoTARS) who work closely with the CQACC in a capacity building mode.

In conclusion and without dissecting each extract I would like to make a statement (formal notice) of the intention of the CQACC to table with the department (DoTARS), legitimate operation budget shortfalls (vicarious responsibility) with the ACC network and including the CQACC responsible for maintaining the level of Corporate Governance deemed necessary in executing fundamentally sound public administration.

Since the establishment of the ACC Network some 12 years ago the organisation has grown significantly in the delivery of Australian Government programs, with amalgamation of regional programs (Regional Assistance/RAP, Dairy RAP; Regional Solutions; Strategic Opportunities Notional Allocation /SONA –Regional partnerships Programs. In terms of measurable delivery (RPP) the organisational increase in *total* project capacity has increased significantly from approximately \$400K per annum to in this case some \$20 million per annum. Operational funds allocated to the ACC Network and the CQACC in light of the increased responsibility and deliverable outputs has not increased appropriately to ensure the sound public administration the program deserves.

I fully appreciate that it may appear in the cases noted (extracts) that decision making processes were varied and not necessarily in-line with acceptable practices however as noted the CQACC has since worked closely with the department in developing practices and procedures that address the areas responsible for the previous deficiencies identified by the ANAO.

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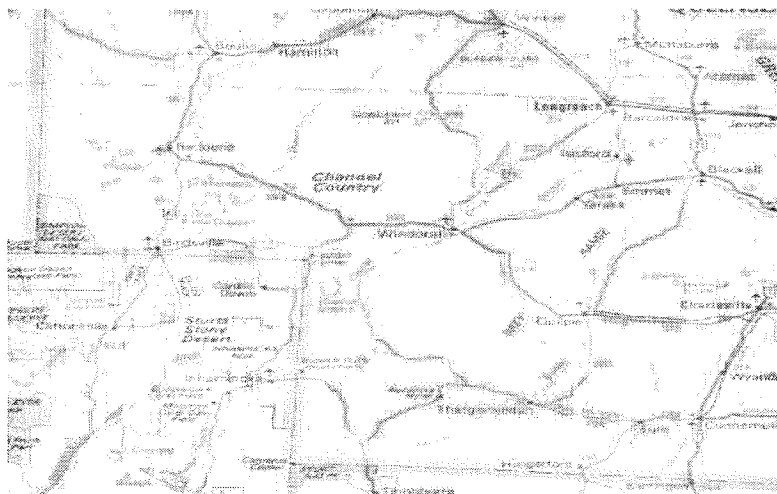


Appendix 1

Central Queensland



Central Western Queensland



Appendix 2

Projects 1998-99 – 2007



Presentation to
Gladstone Engineering

Appendix 3

**Local Press Report - ANAO Report
Morning Bulletin 11 November 2007**



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Appendix 4

**Local Press Report –Regional Funding
Morning Bulletin 8 May 2008**



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Appendix 5

Appeal Policy





June 24, 2008

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

Dear Committee Secretary

Re: Central Qld Area Consultative Committee Inquiry Response – New Regional Development Funding Program.

I refer to the invitation by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government to participate in providing advice by way of a written submission on a future Regional Funding Program.

The Central Qld Area Consultative Committee (CQACC) totally agrees with the Federal Government's view that funding devoted to economic development and community infrastructure plays a key role in enhancing the sustainability and liveability of Australia's regions and refers to the enormous contribution regional funding programs such as Regional Assistance Program (RAP), Dairy RAP, Regional Solutions, Sustainable Regions and most recently Regional Partnerships Program (RPP) have provided regional Australia.

The CQACC also refers to the Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) Report on the RPP which quite legitimately revealed processing deficits which clearly were as a direct result of years of regional program evolution. The CQACC by no means offers such a statement as an excuse for what could very well be described as administrative shortfalls/deficiencies however when such an evolutionary process occurs at the rate it has, without rigorous monitoring and relevant adjustment mechanisms, a stunted level of Best Practice evolved. The CQACC also believes that the ANAO is a specialist in its particular field however in the case of grant funds the ANAO Report fails to consider that, in the scheme of things, not all grant applications will be successful. The ACC Network commenced operation in the mid-nineties with as noted previously, the regional funding program known as RAP. Over the next 10-12 years the capacity and scale of delivery in terms of regional funding (with the inclusion of the so-named programs) grew significantly along with the intended delivery outputs. Overall tax-payers money invested as an input contributed to the sustainability and liveability of many needy regional communities. The CQACC regards the ANAO Report as an opportunity to highlight the input/output deliverables of the RPP thereby gaining the appropriate attention of the department and subsequent level of administrative funding and support required to operate at an International recognised level of Best Practice.



In an effort to contribute to the call for submissions on a future regional funding program the CQACC will thereby briefly address the criteria nominated.

1. Invest in genuine and accountable community infrastructure projects. The CQACC supports the view that communities are as unique as the individuals that make them up, therefore when we speak of genuine and accountable community infrastructure projects the intended regional program criteria should take into account that a 'one-size-fits-all' does not necessarily consider the uniqueness of the regional landscape. MACRO social and political factors apply with the legitimacy of projects being endorsed by local Members of Parliament via a rigorous, transparent and equitable process. The legitimacy of projects therefore should be vividly apparent via this transparent application process and not the decision of an out-of-touch departmental assessment panel in Canberra. The application process should be rigorous enough to build the confidence of the Minister to commit in principal with 'Subject To and Conditional Upon' conditions administered in the risk mitigation/due diligence process managed by the department responsible for the regional funding program.
2. Examine ways to minimise administrative costs and duplication for tax-payers. The CQACC in the first instance refers to the above (Item 1) where lengthy cost imposing delays in administration and contract management are passed directly across to the Proponent. Previously associated administrative costs in the sometimes lengthy application development were absorbed by the duplication of the department and the ACC Network whereas in the suggested methodology the costs associated in the application development process are absorbed by the Proponent and not the tax-payer. Assessment and contract management resources are only engaged once contractual conditions are developed and comply accordingly. The suggested methodology also addresses the outlandish processing timeframes of the past. Timeframes in this regard will be determined by the action or inaction of the Proponent. Amalgamation rationalisation methodologies adopted by the Qld Government in 2008 should be investigated in boundary re-alignment of the current Network.
3. The former Government's practices and grants as outlined in the ANAO Report. As stated previously, the CQACC welcomed the ANAO Report as it provided an assessment instrument that made clear and decisive adjustment recommendations. The previous Government's intention in supporting a regional grants program (RPP) should be commended however with the evolution of the program from RAP status to RPP and the subsequent increase in tax-payer investment so too should there have been an evolutionary process toward the notable growth in delivery mechanisms. The level of increased deliverables in the regional grants program status adjustment were clearly visible and should have stimulated relevant governance adjustments managed through the departmental contract process with the ACC network.
4. Former Government's practices and grants after the audit period 2003-2006. The CQACC view the post ANAO period as a knee-jerk reaction in attempting to remedy the dishevelled administrative deficits identified. Band-aid solutions to obvious elements of the inadequate practice of the former Government which clearly were responsible for that which is recognised as the ANAO recommendations. The CQACC congratulate the current Government in the prescribed action/directive from the Parliamentary Secretary of the department whereby taking into consideration the views of a diverse range of regional community stakeholders in developing a future regional grants funding program.



The CQACC believes that by providing the Standing Committee with the following 'Region at a Glance' will assist in legitimising that which is contained within the responses nominated.

The Central Qld region has an estimated population of 220,000 people with an extended geographical area of approximately 470,000 square kilometres (1/3 of the State of Queensland). Local government statistics indicate that some 71 percent of the region's population is based in coastal areas, 20 percent in the highlands and the remaining 9 percent in the Central Western part of the region. Industries and opportunities could be grouped to include mining, light to medium industry, light metals, cattle, agriculture, fishing and tourism.

Central Qld is a cocktail mix of many factors both positive and negative which range from an unprecedented explosion of the resource sector to an unstable and compromised agriculture, fishing and now tourism sectors. The disparities relevant to that of distinguishable opportunities and threats of the urban coastal fringes and highlands compared to that of the Central West are quite significant and highlight the uniqueness of individual regional communities. In this case such reference refers to the legitimacy of community infrastructure project proposals and who more qualified to ratify such legitimacy as that of the elected local Members of Parliament who work tirelessly in understanding the diverse range of needs of constituents and their communities. When combined with a rigorous transparent application process via the proposed Regional Development Australia Committee structure such practices would be deemed output focused and value for money to the Australian tax-payer.

The CQACC is set to commence its regional community engagement strategy aimed at providing advice to the Australian Government on the role of RDA Committees and how they will interact (Charter) with initiatives aimed at enhancing the sustainability and liveability of Australian regions.

The CQACC looks forward to the consolidation report of the House of Representative Standing Committee in this regard and is happy to cooperate further should the need occur.

Yours sincerely

Kym Mobbs
Chairman CQACC

