

## House of Representatives Inquiry Submission Wheatbelt Region

**Closing Date for Submission - Monday 14<sup>th</sup> July 2008**

*Please complete as many pages as required*

Name: Gary P Brennan
Position Role (if applicable): Interim Chief Executive Officer
Organisation (if applicable): Shire of Northam
Region: Wheatbelt Region
<b>Signature:</b>
<p>1. Please provide your thoughts on future funding of regional programs in order to invest in genuine and accountable community infrastructure projects.</p> <p>Resumption of federal regional funding programs should be a priority especially in Western Australia as the economy continues to grow strongly attracting more residents from interstate and international locations.</p> <p>The State government's capacity to provide additional funding to community infrastructure is limited to projects of State significance and specific sport and recreations projects through the State Department of Sport &amp; Recreation. There are other smaller funding sources such as Lottery west however these are of a small scale. The capacity of the federal government to fund community infrastructure projects is far greater than other sources.</p> <p>The former Regional Partnerships Program made a considerable funding contribution to many projects and without that funding the likelihood of those projects continuing and the subsequent community benefits derived may have been doubtful.</p> <p>The contribution of federal funding for community infrastructure projects is a legitimate and important contribution to the social and economic well being of the nation. With the establishment of clear funding guidelines including a template for a business plan or similar that demonstrates the need, the long term viability of each project, a governance structure for each project and the demonstrated benefit to a community and the immediate region, funding should be applied in a transparent and accountable manner that demonstrates good value for taxpayers money.</p>
<p>2. How should the Federal Government design regional programs in a way to minimise administrative costs and duplication for taxpayers.</p> <p>The governance structure must be very focussed on providing advice to parties seeking funding, ensuring the guidelines are completely satisfied, submitting a funding recommendation to RDA and ensuring each project accounts for the funding provided through to project completion.</p> <p>There is capacity to use existing governance structures without the need to establish regional bodies such as the former Area Consultative Committees to deal with these projects. For example Regional Local Government groupings already exist to determine WA State grants for road funding priorities for each region assisted by specialists from the State's Main Roads Department. The RDA model could include a state governance structure of 3 persons appointed on merit charged with determining funding applications to be forwarded for Ministerial approval aided by a template of guidelines that objectively demonstrate to the Minister and to Parliament if necessary why projects should be funded and why other projects should not. This body to be supported by a small team of specialists with regional officers that could work with</p>

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regional Local Government groups to determine RDA funding priorities for each region over a rolling 12 month to 24 month time frame. SUBMISSION 51

This is governance structure and process is important to ensure transparent processes have been used to determine funding allocations and address the concerns raised by the Auditor General in its 2007 -08 report on the RPP.

3. Examine the former government's practices and grants outlined in the Australian National Audit Office report on Regional Partnerships [http://www.anao.gov.au/director/publications/auditreports/2007-2008.cfm?item\\_id=40BC1C6C1560A6E8AAA43AAB96708E61](http://www.anao.gov.au/director/publications/auditreports/2007-2008.cfm?item_id=40BC1C6C1560A6E8AAA43AAB96708E61) with the aim of providing advice on future funding of regional programs.

The recommendations have been structured on improving the transparency and accountability of funding decisions involving taxpayer's funds. The recommendations are supported in the summary comments made in respect to items 1 & 2 above.

4. 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.

No comments are submitted with respect to this item

*WC*  
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4 JUL 2008

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STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
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