



SUBMISSION TO THE INQUIRY INTO A NEW REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT FUNDING PROGRAM

**East Grampians Health Service - Ararat Hospital Gardens
Girdlestone St (PO Box 155) Ararat 3377**

14th July 2008

BACKGROUND

East Grampians Health Service (EGHS) in collaboration with the Community, Federal, State, Local Government's, Businesses and Organizations worked together in a unique partnership to develop '*Environmental, Sustainable & Educational*' garden areas at the then new Ararat Hospital in 2005.

The gardens were developed over a 6 month period Jan- June with an official function on Wednesday, July 7th 2005 to mark the completion of the project and launch of an educational brochure.

The five garden areas are now established and are welcoming and environmentally friendly with safe access for patients, staff, visitors and the community. Over 2500 plants and shrubs incorporating a majority of indigenous plants which were propagated locally, including endangered local grasses of which only a fraction remain were planted out by community volunteers, including school students.

Plantings have favoured species that have a lower water requirement and recycled materials were installed in the irrigation system and connected to a rain sensor.

A garden and water management plan have been developed and EGHS Staff and Ararat Landcare Group (voluntary) maintain all garden areas with the Ararat Landcare Group also assisting with replanting any areas as required.

The project cost \$100,000 of which the Federal Government- Regional Partnerships (supported by Greater Green Triangle ACC) contributed \$44,000.

PARTNERSHIPS- Eleven partners were directly involved through funding, donation, and 'in kind' support. All have taken an ongoing active interest in this project .

REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS OR NEW REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

EGHS believe that a new regional partnerships program should continue to assist regional and rural communities to develop and follow through projects such as our Ararat Hospital Gardens Project. Also whatever program guidelines are implemented needs to be broad and holistic enough to allow organisations/businesses to be proactive, inclusive of community involvement, and will assist in enhancing and growing community ownership.

The program should include funding scope for both small and large community based projects.

Also Federal funding helps to leverage state, local government and philanthropic funding, and assists turning a small community project into a substantial project with significant economic and social benefits.

Cooperation between local, state and federal – should work cooperatively to ensure the best outcomes from the program. Also processes need to be simple to avoid confusing the applicant and to ensure as seamless an approach as possible.

EGHS found the Regional Partnership application and assessment process slow, cumbersome and convoluted. There seemed to be many too steps up the ladder to the Ministers approval.

A possible process could be initially a 1 to 2 page document worked up with RDV staff assistance that is considered by a panel/group and if acceptable then asked to provide further information or a full application.

The assessment and the application can then be considered by appropriate senior body and a recommendation is made to the Minister responsible.

If the project does not meet the program criteria it is best to advise applicant in the early stages of the project development, then the applicant is not put through a time consuming and unnecessary application process.

New Regional Development Program

Hopefully the new program is helpful to regional and rural organisations/businesses and communities to find their way through the maze of government departments and programs that are available.

They should aim to be the public 'face' of the Federal Government to regional and rural areas, and NOT inclusive of Metropolitan areas which should be a separate program all together, and there is more scope for them to be included in other programs.

Federal regional and rural representatives should become the 'local face' for the new program, be well versed in assisting community members to access the program/programs across government. Also these representatives need to work closely with communities as communities are an excellent source of local knowledge and information.

They can also provide feedback on local issues and the new programs that might be needed in rural and regional areas. This role should not be under estimated.

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