



## **HILLS COMMUNITY TOY LIBRARY**

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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

12 July 2008

Dear Sir/Madam,

I make the following submission to your committee inquiring into a new regional development funding program on behalf of the Hills Community Toy Library for which I am Treasurer and Public Officer.

The Hills Community Toy Library (HCTL) is a totally volunteer, not-for-profit community organization providing toy library services to families with young children in the central part of the Adelaide Hills. The organization has been in existence for 29 years, has 120 member families and it services its members through the work of volunteers. Its annual budget is approximately \$6,000 made up of membership dues and fundraising. Over the years it has been successful in gaining grants and donations which it has used for more expensive items and initiatives, such as heating and insulation of the building we occupy, courtesy of the Adelaide Hills Council (AHC), partial childproof fencing, access ramp and computer and software.

We thought it would be useful to the committee to have a short description of our experience of the Regional Partnerships Scheme.

### **Our experience of Regional Partnerships.**

The HCTL has been in need of expansion for some considerable time. In 2006 the AHC, aware of this need, provided a plan for an additional room and budgeted \$50,000 toward this provided that the HCTL supplemented this with money from its own sources and/or from grants. One of our local Councillors suggested applying for a Regional Partnerships Grant and an approach was made to South Central Area Consultative Committee (SCACC). Brenton Sinclair of the SCACC came to the Toy Library to discuss and assess the eligibility

of the Toy Library for a grant. The Toy Library was so busy and crowded at the time this meeting had to be conducted in the toilet room. Brenton was impressed with the work of the Toy Library and its services and encouraged us to make an application, stressing that we had to find partnerships to support our application.

One difficulty we found with the process was that it takes quite a bit of time to find other funds as many other granting bodies require the grantee to have tax deductible status. Although the HCTL has applied for tax deductible status it has not been successful. It also made representations through our then local member, Alexander Downer, but with no success. Consequently, our sources of other funds were restricted.

The second problem with this process is that when these other grant applications are successful, frequently, the money must be spent within the financial year. But it takes time to gather together a number of small grants and/or donations. The Toy Library was successful in June 2007 in gaining a grant of \$26,000 from Benefit SA (S.A. State Government money), a donation of \$4,000 from the S.A. CWA and was able to contribute \$3,000 of its own funds. We were also able to attract in-kind support from several local service clubs. It was not until these partnerships had been gained that we could proceed with our Regional Partnerships Grant application which also required letters of support from a large number of local, state and federal people of standing. We obtained support from 17 individuals, some in each level of government as well as those involved with early childhood education and past and present members of the Toy Library. Collection of these letters of support also took a considerable amount of time.

The third problem associated with timing is that the application was for the building and fitting out of additional space including the building of a room. The latter involved extensive earth works and the construction of a high retaining wall and childproof fencing to the rest of the property. This required quotes from contractors for each of the many jobs.

Fourthly, once it seemed likely that we could apply for a Regional Partnerships Grant, but before the actual application could be made, the AHC had to assess these contractors and the quotes and so that our grant application could contain definitive amounts for each of the jobs. The application form required that each job and amount was hypothecated to one of the sources of funding. The AHC took almost twelve months over this task finding, in the meantime that most of the quotes had changed.

Fifthly, under the Regional Partnerships arrangement no money could be spent until the project was approved. This put us in a bind between the state government grant and the Council budgeted money.

During this time we constructed an application to Regional Partnerships using the quotes already obtained and had several meetings with Brenton Sinclair of the SCACC, who was exceedingly helpful and supportive of our application. He helped us refine the application document and an extensive supplementary document. Our application was essentially ready to go once we had the final figures from the AHC and the total amount being sought from Regional Partnerships was approximately \$20,000. Preparing the material to get to this stage had taken a large amount of time and effort for a small voluntary community organization.

Only after this enormous amount of time (almost two years from our first meeting with Brenton Sinclair of SCACC) and effort could our application be lodged. The Federal Election was called; Brenton informed us that all applications were frozen and no further applications were to be submitted until after the election. Later he told us that the program had been axed in the Federal Budget even though the form we were working to said that the application period finished in June 2008.

We firmly believe that a program similar, but hopefully less time consuming in its requirements, is established by the present government.

Sincerely  
Phyllis F. Coulter  
Treasurer/ Public Officer (HCTL)  
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