



The Secretary
Standing Committee on Infrastructure, Transport,
Regional Development and Local Government
House of Representatives
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600
14 July 2008

Dear Mr Crawford

RE: Inquiry Into a New Regional Development Funding Program

I am writing in response to your letter of 10 June addressed to Cr Rob Elliott, President of the Macarthur Regional Organisation of Councils (MACROC) seeking submissions to the House of Representatives Inquiry into a New Regional Development Funding Program.

MACROC welcomes the opportunity to make comment on the issue of regional development funding and on the way in which Regional Organisations of Councils may be able assist in the process.

As you will be aware MACROC is one of a number of regional organisations that exist across New South Wales and together with WSROC encompasses the Local Government Areas that make up Greater Western Sydney.

Western Sydney is now the third largest regional economy in Australia generating approximately \$80 billion in economic output each year. The population, around 1.8 million people, is expected to increase by another 600,000 over the next 25 years. As Greater Western Sydney evolves and grows, Local, State and Federal Government need to work in partnership with business and the community to support projects that will be essential in creating a prosperous Region in which residents can live, raise families work and enjoy leisure time.

The NSW Government blueprint for Sydney's growth "The Metropolitan Strategy or the City of Cities: A Plan for Sydney's Future", identifies a major development role for Western Sydney. The Growth Centre in the South West represents an important source of land to accommodate Sydney's growing population and employment requirements. The area is planned to be one of the major growth areas of Sydney.

This growth in Western Sydney will have a major impact on the infrastructure needs of the communities that live and work in the Region, and Federal assistance relating to regional funding will be essential in filling the gaps between State and Local Government funding.

It has been twelve years since there has been a Commonwealth agency dedicated to regional development and MACROC sees the creation of Regional Development Australia as tangible evidence of the Federal Government's recognition of and commitment to the importance of regional development in the bigger picture of Australia's growth.

There should be no urban or metropolitan boundaries when it comes to regional development funding and areas should be assessed on the basis of their particular needs. Disadvantaged areas and groups should be central to any funding model and consideration must include building capacity to satisfy future needs.

With regard to a mechanism to deliver future funding of regional programs MACROC would see that Regional Development Australia would be the most appropriate agency to take on the role of funding body. This would ensure proper accountability for public investment in community infrastructure.

It is important that the decision making process be transparent and therefore MACROC would suggest that a Sub Committee be formed to deal with smaller scale projects (made up of delegates from appropriate agencies). For larger projects an Independent Panel could be established with members drawn from the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government, Regional Development Australia, The Social Inclusion Board and the Australian Local Government Association for example.

GROW Area Consultative Committees would be a valuable resource to assist in the development of networks across regional communities.

Regional Organisations of Councils, given their mandate and experience, are also well placed to act as advisors and facilitators for project identification, assessment and evaluation, on behalf of the Federal Government. ROCs have proven to be a successful regional framework because they are designed to manage political differences and to keep the focus on achieving outcomes for the whole region.

Finally MACROC would like to commend the Federal Government for acknowledging the importance of regional development with the creation of Regional Development Australia and look forward to working with the Government to deliver genuine outcomes for the community of South West Sydney.

Yours sincerely

Christine Winning
Executive Office
MACROC
On behalf of MACROC