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The Secretary
House Standing Committee on Infrastructure,
Transport, Regional Development and Local
Government,
Parliament House
Canberra VIC 2600

Dear Sir/ Madam,

SUBMISSION IN RELATION TO INQUIRY INTO A NEW DEVELOPMENT FUNDING PROGRAM

Council appreciates the opportunity to have received the Inquiry into a New Development Funding Program Issues paper and to provide comments where information is being sought from parties who have had involvement in the former DOTARS Regional partnerships program.

I provide the following comments in relation to specific questions asked in the issues paper:

What should the overarching purpose and objective of the new program be?

To provide Commonwealth Government capital funding for water, energy, transport and social infrastructure that is not provided through recurrent state, federal and local government programs.

Where are the gaps in community infrastructure funding and how should community infrastructure be defined for the purpose of the new Federal program?

Community hubs / activity centres that become focal points for local communities to meet, and build supporting networks and empower local communities need to be the focus.

How should regions be defined?

Regions should represent geographic areas that have economic, social environmental and local government affiliations.

Should a program be focussed on providing funding for projects which promote the growth of regional communities (job creation) or the liveability of regional communities?

The program should promote liveability which can include growth (job creation) or may counter job losses in other specific market sectors. It can then address social infrastructure, urban design and physical infrastructure needs.



The only organisations that should be funded are not for profit entities that have an ongoing responsibility to deliver broad community benefit. (It should not go to private schools and for profit organisations)

Given the program will be a discretionary grants program, what expectations should applications have of the published eligibility criteria?

All projects should be required to demonstrate alignment with Federal, State and Local Government strategic and or policy objectives.

How can a new program best coordinate regional objectives between federal state and local government agencies?

The ACC process has facilitated a regional view of projects and positive information sharing with Regional Development Victoria, but has not fostered a formal or structured relationship with local government authorities within regions. More and more local government authorities are establishing regional forums such as mayors and CEO's groups, which are developing regional strategies.

Was information about the RPP adequately dispersed?

The Victorian Central Highlands ACC was particularly good at promoting the program to Council and making sure Council worked applications in accord with the selection criteria at the time.

Was there a conflict of interest with ACCs providing assistance for applications and being the assessor?

While there may not have been a conflict of interest, as presumably board members and staff would be expected to declare any interest they might have with any application, there was certainly conjecture within the region as to how transparent and equitable the process was.

What information do applicants need to help understand the assessment process?

Applicants need feedback on whether they partially or fully met the selection criteria and whether there is value in re-submitting applications with modified scope or outcomes.

I have provided these comments based on observations and discussions with staff of Council who have been involved in application and delivery of Regional Partnerships grants over the last 4 years.

I wish the House Standing Committee all the best in determining its findings and look forward to a continuing cooperative relationship between federal, state and local government agencies in delivering more liveable and sustainable communities across the nation.

Yours sincerely



Ian Rossiter
Director Sustainability