



Tumbarumba
SHIRE COUNCIL
Experience the Magic

SUBMISSION 129

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SUBMISSION TO

**Standing Committee on Infrastructure, Transport,
Regional Development and Local Government
July 2008**

**INQUIRY INTO A NEW REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT
FUNDING PROGRAM**



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Contact: Chris Blake

14 July 2008

Standing Committee on Infrastructure, Transport
Regional Development and Local Government
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Sir

Re: Inquiry into a New Regional Development Funding Program

In response to the House of Representatives Inquiry into a new Regional Development Funding Program, Tumbarumba Shire Council provides the following response:

1. Advice on future funding of regional programs:

It is essential that the availability of funding from this type of program is continued to allow smaller regional councils the ability to establish projects of regional significance that would normally be beyond their financial capabilities.

Access to Commonwealth funding through a regional program provides these councils with an additional supplement to the very limited State Budget allocation for regional projects.

Typically, Regional Development Funding Programs provide financial assistance that complements the substantial 'In kind' contribution by community groups in developing any regional project such as:

- Community Assets
- Tourist Attractions
- Economic Infrastructure

Additionally, the continued involvement of Area Consultative Committees (ACCs) or similar organisations is essential, as their local knowledge and regular involvement within the region is invaluable in assessing and supporting any new projects.

2. Minimise administrative costs and duplication for taxpayers:

All Regional Partnership applications required that the same Expression of Interest documentation be submitted for all projects, regardless of the size of the project – whether the application was for \$10,000 or \$500,000.

It is suggested that to minimise the administrative costs in assessing this very detailed intense process, the following be adopted:

- Projects under \$50,000 – eliminate the need for an Expression of Interest with an application form that more closely reflects the amount of detail required for a small project.
- Projects over \$50,000 – simplify the Expression of Interest required for the assessment of a project of this size. This can be done without compromising the integrity of information required whilst still delivering the detail essential to allow valid evaluation



and approval for the project to go to application stage, or rejection of the project as unsuitable.

3. *Former Government Practices*

The previous system for acceptance or rejection of a grant application was adequate, however it appeared unnecessarily protracted. Long delays in confirmation of acceptance or rejection of applications were experienced and to address this, the following suggestions are put forward for consideration:

- The need to create a simplified system for assessing smaller applications (under \$50,000) and delegate evaluation and final approval or rejection to Area Consultative Committees or equivalent. ACCs would operate within the constraints of the Guidelines provided by Government under the Regional Development Funding Program.
- Applications for major projects above \$50,000 to be assessed by local ACCs or equivalent and forwarded to the Federal Government Department with a recommendation of approval or rejection. The responsibility of a final decision on the success of the any major project application therefore lies within the Department.
- The Federal Government Panel of assessors established to consist of senior representatives of relevant government agencies – not politicians. The recommendations of this Panel to then be passed on to the Federal Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government.

4. *Advice on Future Funding Programs*

The following suggestions are put forward as possible areas to be targeted by future funding programs:

- The Program should not be restricted to projects aimed at economic growth (i.e. job creation) and should be expanded to include community projects that will improve regional community lifestyle and provide community assets to enhance shire profiles within the region to attract new investment.
- Fund the establishment of projects that have a regional focus benefiting multiple shires, e.g. alternative energy community projects for community buildings – solar/photovoltaic power, recycled water and energy conserving appliances. These buildings could then be used for promotional and educational sites for alternate energy for business and community.
- Aged Care projects should be given a stronger focus in the Program. The need for fixed income accommodation for aged residents is of major concern in small regional towns. An ageing population combined with a drift of older city residents to small regional towns places an impossible burden on Councils to provide this form of accommodation, and “Percentage Pension” based accommodation is not likely to attract private developer funding.

The opportunity of providing input into this Inquiry is appreciated, and should you require clarification on any point, please contact me on telephone 02 6948 9116.

Kind regards



Chris Blake
Community and Economic Development Manager