



Batemans Bay Performance and Exhibition Centre  
Working Group Inc.  
PO Box 398, Batemans Bay, NSW 2536

14<sup>th</sup> July, 2008

## SUBMISSION TO THE INQUIRY INTO A NEW REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT FUNDING PROGRAM

This submission is made on behalf of the Batemans Bay Performance and Exhibition Centre Working Group Inc. (PERFEX).

PERFEX is a community-based committee formed to build a high quality, multi-purpose performance, art exhibitions, and conference centre in Batemans Bay. There is a demonstrated demand for high quality facilities for performers, arts exhibitions and conventions and conferences in Batemans Bay. The centre will provide on-going benefits to all members of the local community with a view to enhancing the sustainability and liveability of the Batemans Bay region.

The following comments are made in relation to the Committee's specific terms of reference:

1. ***Provide advice on the future funding of regional programs in order to invest in genuine and accountable community infrastructure projects.***

All regional programs should be initially supported by a detailed and independent feasibility study. This will ensure that the project is genuine and viable. The feasibility study should provide evidence for the need and scope of the project and demonstrate its viability in the long term. There should be specific funding for the feasibility study process to enable worthwhile projects to show their benefits prior to applications for capital funding.

2. ***Examine ways to minimise administrative costs and duplication for taxpayers.***

The requirement for a feasibility study will ensure minimisation of administrative costs and will establish the cost-effectiveness of the project. It should be noted that projects should be supported where the benefits to the community are such that they outweigh purely economic arguments.

3. ***Examine the former Government's practices and grants outlined in the Australian National Audit Office Report on Regional Partnerships with the aim of providing advice on future funding of regional programs.***

PERFEX withdrew its Regional Partnership funding application on the basis of a commitment from Senator Brandis, then Minister for Arts, of a special purpose grant of \$30,000 to assist with the preparation of a feasibility study for the Batemans Bay centre. This guarantee was subsequently dishonoured by the incoming Government. Any future grants program should ensure that once funding is announced the Government must proceed with the promised funds.

4. ***Examine the former Government's practices and grants in the Regional Partnerships Program after the audit period of 2003-2006 with the aim of providing advice on future funding of regional programs.***

PERFEX would strongly support the adoption of objective standards and practices in relation to the funding of regional development programs whereby projects are examined and funded purely on the basis of their overall benefits to regional communities.

With regard to administration, we found the assistance at the SEACC level very efficient and helpful, whereas once the application reached the Department, officers were negative in their approach, before even becoming acquainted with the contents of the submission; irrelevant questions were asked and it seemed that no-one had the direct authority to make decisions. Therefore, it is our view that improvements could be made at this level.

The Committee of PERFEX would be pleased to provide any additional information the Inquiry requires and requests for information should be directed to:

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