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Dear Rob,

I thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the New Regional Development Funding Program. I wish to make the following points.

Interface Councils

Consideration should be given to additional financial support for the enormous infrastructure costs, compounded by relatively low rate base's for interface Councils such as Cardinia Shire Council. Being some 60 km's from the Melbourne CBD, with population to double to 120,000 in 2021, Council is limited in its ability to deliver the much needed community infrastructure for existing and future residents.

This funding is vital for local communities, particularly at the Interface to develop infrastructure, ensure liveability and deliver social and economic prosperity. A number of strategically important projects of Council have been delayed/deferred as a result of the changes to the Program, denying the community access to necessary facilities.

A separate funding category for interface Councils is sought. A more favourable ratio of funding for the interface is also required given the infrastructure challenges faced.

Transparency / Consistency of Process

In the last round of applications, Council submitted an application in May 2007. This application had the strong support of the local ACC, was supported by a number of strategies, Tennis Australia, Tennis Victoria and the local community. This application was not processed prior to the Federal Election, some 6 months later. A transparent process with timelines for applications to be evaluated and determined on, with limited political involvement, is required to allow projects supported through strategy, community and federal government agencies receive due consideration.

A significant amount of Council resources were exhausted preparing applications that didn't receive consideration by DOTARS.

It is noted, when observing projects nation wide, rural recreation projects appear to receive more favourable consideration than those in metropolitan locations / the interface. A redress of this inequity is sought.

New initiatives

Consideration needs to be given to expanding the funding provided under the program from an infrastructure focus to supporting regions to grow through projects such as; Business Investment and Attractions Strategies, Feasibility Studies, "Audits" - regional skills audits, Small town sustainability plans, "Company Assistance" complying with new carbon trading regime etc.

Previous Program

A positive aspect of the previous program was the support provided by the local ACC as part of the application process.

I welcome the chance to discuss any aspects of this submission in further detail with you and can be contacted by phone or email at the details below.

Kind Regards

Jim Davine
Manager Sustainable Communities
Cardinia Shire Council