



SOUTHERN FLINDERS RANGES DEVELOPMENT BOARD INC.

Incorporating the Port Pirie Regional Council and the District Council of
Mount Remarkable and Northern Areas Council

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14th July 2008

The Secretary - Standing Committee on Infrastructure, Transport, Regional
Development and Local Government
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

RE : Inquiry into a new regional development funding program

The Southern Flinders Ranges Development Board Inc. (SFRDB) is one of 13 regional development boards in South Australia which share common funding arrangements with state and local government. This submission reflects the views of SFRDB notwithstanding our support for a separate submission prepared by Regional Development South Australia (RDSA).

Our experience with Federal Government regional development structures dates back to the early 1990s, including the former Regional Economic Development Organisations (REDOs) and Area Consultative Committees (ACCs). The primary inhibitor to their success relates to their inability to fully engage with regional stakeholders and local government. As a result there has been a tendency for Federal structures to work independently and without the full commitment and support of key players on-the-ground.

In attempting to advise the new Federal Government on the most effective structure for engaging regions we make a basic assumption that the Federal Government desires a consistent regional structure that can apply across all regions and all states. ***In terms of governance, transparency and efficacy we recognise local government as the only structure that is common to all states and capable of delivering on Federal Government expectations.***

There are a myriad of regional development structures across Australia that vary within and between states. It would be administratively difficult for Canberra to engage with regional communities through such varying organisational structures. ***It is therefore local government, through Regions of Local Government, that offers the most strategic and consistent vehicle for Federal regional engagement.***

Working through Regions of Local Government has some obvious advantages: -

- Working directly with those ***“closest to the ground”*** builds shared commitment and credibility
- Successful and similar examples exist such as ***Roads to Recovery***
- Regions of Councils ***already exist*** or can be easily established
- Regions of Councils are ***best placed to engage with other regional stakeholders.***

There is ample scope for Regions of Councils to work collaboratively with the array of existing state and local regional development structures. There are examples of this happening now and this would grow rapidly if the Federal Government acknowledged regional local government as their primary mechanism for regional engagement.

We would value an opportunity to expand on our views and will seek to participate in the Inquiry's Roundtable Discussion planned for Adelaide on 1st August. In the meantime if I and our Executive Manager, Mark Malcolm, can be of assistance please do not hesitate to contact this office.

Jeff Burgess

Chairman, SFRDB
Member, SA Regional Communities Consultative Council
Chairman, Northern and Yorke Drought Task Force

