



11 July 2008

Correspondence to:

The General Manager

PO Box 21

Mathoura NSW 2710

Administration / General Enquiries:

☎ (03) 5884 3302

☎ (03) 5884 3417

Engineering / Building & Planning:

☎ (03) 5884 3400

☎ (03) 5884 3417

email:

admin@murray.nsw.gov.au

website:

www.murray.nsw.gov.au

Head Office:

21-25 Conargo Street

Mathoura NSW 2710

Branch Office:

6 Meninya Street

Moama NSW 2731

Committee Secretary
 Standing Committee on Infrastructure, Transport, Regional
 Development and Local Government
 PO Box 6021
 House of Representatives
 Parliament House
 CANBERRA ACT 2600
 AUSTRALIA

Dear Sir/Madam

**Re: Inquiry into a new regional development funding
 program**

Murray Shire Council would like to advise the Standing Committee on Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government that it strongly supports a regional development funding program, as they provide a means to support projects essential to the growth and development of the regions.

The previous Regional Partnerships Program (RPP) enabled the implementation of numerous important and very successful community projects within our area. A funding program such as this is essential for communities to accomplish major projects, which are necessary for the economic and social wellbeing of the community.

Murray Shire has experienced rapid growth over the past ten years and does not have the capacity to keep up with the infrastructure and community projects required by its communities. The growth of sport and recreation in the Shire is very positive, however lack of facilities and their poor standard, impedes the potential positive benefits to be gained from this growth.

The minimization of administrative costs in a new funding program could be achieved through a more streamlined application process and a review of the significant amount of acquittal reporting required by the RPP.

Local Councils are closely involved in the majority of community and infrastructure projects and would generally be the best placed body to submit applications under a regional development funding program.



The process for a funding program could be more streamlined, whereby applications submitted by Local Government require less detail, especially for issues such as capacity to deliver the project, the project's value for money and its priority for Council and the community. If Council is backing a project with financial support and submitting a funding application, it obviously sees it as a priority and has confidence in its success.

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The RPP reporting requirements on Local Government were very demanding and require more flexibility. Large community projects often require modifications, as timelines and costs often change, as the project progresses. The funding program needs to factor this into the reporting guidelines, so as not to force extensive reporting demands on Councils.

The assistance provided by the Central Murray Area Consultative Committee (ACC) was vital to the submission of Murray Shire project applications. If this assistance was not available, it would be extremely difficult to collate an application and would severely restrict the ability of smaller Councils to submit *any* applications. The ACC's provide a crucial resource to assist in the development of project ideas and applications.

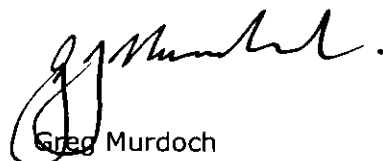
The Funding Agreement Managers, with the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government, are an essential resource to assist with the significant contract and reporting requirements associated with a grant.

The benefits of a program such as this are especially apparent for smaller regions, like Murray Shire, with a population of less than 10,000. Ideally a new funding program would be more flexible for smaller Councils, regarding the contribution requirements of applicants, as smaller Councils do not have as much capability to contribute towards infrastructure projects as larger Councils.

A regional development funding program is a very efficient and effective means of achieving economic and social development projects and outcomes, which would otherwise remain beyond Council's capability.

A new regional development funding program is essential to the further growth and prosperity of our region. Should you require further information, please contact Beck Rendle on 03 5884 3302.

Yours Sincerely


 Greg Murdoch
General Manager
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