

Australian Women in Agriculture.

Submission to:

**The Standing Committee on Primary Industries and
Regional Services.**

**Inquiry into infrastructure and the development
of Australia's regional development.**

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1. Deficiencies in infrastructure which currently impede development in Australia's regional areas.

Background.

Rural urban, rural and remote communities are a complex combination of economic, social and environmental relationships. In the past years government and industry policy has been to centralise regional services to increase the overall efficiency of their organisations. The cumulative effect has had a devastating effect on rural communities.

Deficiencies in the infrastructure of regional areas are a major inhibiting factor to the development of sustainable regional communities. AWiA members have identified the following contributing factors;

- Lack of co-ordination of policy, actions and initiatives between federal, state, local government, industry bodies and local communities.
- Lack of information of what is available to local communities and to the private citizen to assist the work of building sustainable businesses and communities.
- Lack of access to information and services provided on the Internet.

1.1 Energy.

AWiA has identified the following inhibiting factors:

- Cost of bringing electricity to sites, particularly for farming families.
- Cost and availability of increasing the potential use of electricity, the transformer capacity. Reliable three-phase power would benefit industries, particularly value added.
- Management of the restructured power authorities, service delays are reported and access charges impact on volunteer/charitable organisations.
- There is a need for research and development of alternative sources of energy such as solar, wind and ocean water power particularly for remote regions.

1.2 Transport.

AWiA has identified the following inhibiting factors:

- Joint road safety strategies are needed involving community, local, state, and federal governments to cover such areas as road management, vehicle safety and appropriateness, road safety, road environment and road trauma.
- Poor infrastructure and almost non-existing public transport in many localities hamper development in the regional areas.
- Public transport may be unsuitable and deny access to the elderly and incapacitated.
- Rail transport should be encouraged as a cheaper alternative to road.
- Lack of all weather roads
- Excessive transport costs, taxes on fuel, truck registration, insurance and tires must be passed onto the consumer and inhibits the operators financial viability.
- Regional ports need better access by road and rail.
- Access to air transportation is needed for speedy delivery to export markets.

1.3 Telecommunications.

Background.

Technology has the potential to allow authorities and industry to obtain information and to consult with communities for input to policy. To allow access to the global marketplace, for education and training, health services, to overcome geographic isolation and an alternative method of employment, particularly relevant to regional areas.

AWiA members have identified the following inhibiting factors:

- Totally inadequate technical capability of much of the telecommunication infrastructure in many regional areas.
- High telecommunication costs restrict access to industry, education, training and user support services, particularly for regional economically disadvantaged.
- Lack of Commonwealth, State and Local/Regional government collaboration on electronically delivered services and information.
- There is no co-ordinated effort to manage the services.
- Access to skilled teachers and support services for the technology is limited or not available.
- While telecommunications may be seen to overcome geographic isolation, it should not be used to replace personal services.
- Concerns that government, industry and service providers will continue to take services from rural areas and centralise them in urban centres.
- Infrastructure costs for development are significantly higher in higher in rural areas.
- Economically disadvantaged rural families cannot access computer technology, cannot afford a computer and/or access to the Internet. Their children do not have access to public library facilities as an alternate source; therefore they have an educational disadvantage and will be computer illiterate which will restrict their employment opportunities.
- There is a question as to whether the CDMA or digital network will be available to all remote areas in the future.

1.4 Water.

Background.

Management of the water resource of this continent is one of the most contentious issues facing our nation for the future, some of the issues AWiA members identified are:

- Rural urban communities cannot expand due to insufficient water and sewage provisions.
- Limited water means limited development, new industrial and the expansion of the existing.
- There is significant agricultural/urban competition for water.

Agricultural use of water.

- Murray, Darling Basin – four state governments have overcommitted the river's waters supply.

- This has created unrealistic environmental pressures.
- There are vested interest/internal political inconsistencies.
- Water policy is not based on research data.
- Sale of water can result in external interests purchasing water rights resulting in chaos within the system.
- Previously sleeping licenses are now being sold for profit.
- Land valuations are now based on water allocations.
- Irrigators are being asked to fund the infrastructure, this should be shared with leisure activities, fishing, golf, resorts and the urban share.
- Greater population – greater demand – new catchments are necessary.

1.5 Education, Health and Financial Services.

Background.

“There is an urgent need for co-ordination between the Commonwealth Government, State Governments, and local governments and community organisations in the delivery of services in rural, remote and isolated areas of Australia. These include family support services, employment, education and health services.

The regionalisation of services offers efficiencies, but regional services need to be carefully negotiated with affected communities rather than imposed as a centralised model on all communities.

The value of integrated services, across the Commonwealth, State, Local Governments and community organisations is maximum service for minimum cost. Without co-ordination, rural areas will lose access to essential services.”

National Women’s Stakeholders Meeting. 1996

Crucial to the development of regional Australia is the adequate provision of these services if we are to attract investment and new industries. Industry, government and community must work together to improve the education opportunities, to provide adequate human services in an effort to attract the investment and to facilitate economic and social change. Potential investors will not be attracted to regions, which do not provide these services for their families.

“Government reports have shown that, in relation to access to social services, people living in communities of between 5,000 and 10,000 face what they describe as ‘considerable’ disadvantage while those living in communities of below 5,000 face extreme disadvantage. Those living in isolated areas are especially affected. They face ‘lack of information’ about what is available; the absence or invisibility of many services; poorer quality services; higher costs associated with accessing services; inappropriate urban services and funding models and poorly motivated staff.”

Australian Catholic Social Welfare Commission, Valuing Rural Communities. 1998 page 15.

1.6 Education.

Background.

“Children in rural and remote Australia are less likely to complete their education than children in regional and urban centres. The factors contributing to this are varied

and complex. Agricultural workers are much less likely than others to have completed secondary school.”

HREOC “Bush Talks” 1999.

“Family factors, previous education experience, inadequate access to secondary schools, high turnover in teachers, lack of subject choices, poor skills in the use of technology, poor facilities, poor future employment prospects, and disincentives created by government assistance schemes are among the causal factors.”

National Farmers Federation, ‘Trends in the Delivery of Rural Health, Education and banking Services’ 1997, page 31.

AWiA members would concur with these statements and in addition believe there is:

- A lack of co-ordination between government, state and federal and industry bodies in the planned delivery of these services.
- The highly competitive nature of funding of educational institutions does not necessarily produce the best outcomes for their students. Funding may be dependent on the number of the students rather than the needs of the students.
- Lack of tertiary institutions in regional areas is also of concern. Where tertiary institutions have been provided they are often the poor relations of metropolitan based universities. However when facilities are provided, for example the Edith Cowan University, Bunbury Campus, WA, many people access tertiary education who would not have done so without that access, including people on benefits, indigenous and those with disabilities.

Difficulties are experienced of access to the Youth Allowance for rural and remote families, which may be asset rich and cash poor. The problems, which arise from the Actual Means Test, are:

- 1) Wages paid to students who are employed by the family business, even if they are declared and tax paid by the recipient of the wages, are deemed to be income and added to the parent’s total for calculation of the family’s ATM.
- 2) Income from the forced sale of stock: - under section 36 AAA of the Income Assessment Act, this income may be spread over 5 years. Under the ATM this income is brought into one tax year, which may put the family’s income over the benchmark and deny income to a dependant student.

1.7 Child Care.

Background.

Within the context of regional development adequate child care facilities are essential to the full use and development of our human resources. Programs must be available to meet the children’s development needs and to meet the working parent’s needs. Parents involved in continuing education, health crises and a number of situations need adequate care for their children. Childcare, particularly in the agricultural industry is a health and safety issue.

The traditional models of childcare for 0-12 year olds may be available in some rural communities although funding cutbacks have been an issue. These may include:

Centre Based Services – Long Day Care Centres.

- Occasional ChildCare Centres.
- Multipurpose and Multifunctional Centres

- Out of School Hours.

Family Day Care

Mobile Children's Services.

Some consideration must be given to the seasonal nature of the work of regional industries and innovative measures taken to overcome the problems of Child Care, such as:

- 1) Itinerant Child Care Services – a mobile service which would move from venue to venue using existing community facilities.
- 2) Static Venues – provided in one location utilizing existing community facilities or purpose built demountables. Child Care provided in a home environment not the child's home.
- 3) Child Care provided within the family's home for a designated period.
- 4) Multi-sited and responsive – An organisation may buy in or provide ChildCare as required.

Service delivery could potentially be a combination of any of the above.

1.8 Health.

Background.

Inadequate, inaccessible and diminishing health services have emerged as the principle concern in the Bush Talks Consultations undertaken by the HREOC around Australia in 1998.

The rationalisation of services – the report to the National Farmer's Federation summarizes this area when it concluded that:

"...Rationalisation of services and shortages in health care providers has shown the pervasive effect on country areas as reductions in key services have impacts on others and social and economic impacts on communities and industries, including the agricultural industry...Further, in the push for centralisation and regionalisation for services, the real needs of rural people receive scant consideration despite the very significant economic power they wield."

Report for the National Farmer's Federation, 'Trends in the delivery of rural health, education and banking services.' 1997.

Some of the issues identified by AWiA members are:

- A need to retain rural hospitals and their acute beds for the benefit of rural communities.
- Access is needed to specialist medical and allied health support, residential and community care places.
- Lack of rural doctors. (Note the recent initiative of Minister Anderson with appreciation)
- Lack of adequate or regular dental care, particularly for low-income families.
- Lack of appropriate mental health services, acute and long term. The difficulties associated with telehealth psychiatric consultations, they are not face to face and cannot be claimed on Medicare.
- Lack of support services and locums for rural health workers.
- Costs associated with transportation to regional centres, extra accommodation and associated needs while supporting family members receiving health care.
- Lack of facilities means the burden for caring for the sick, elderly and disabled becomes an additional workload for rural women.

- Rural/Indigenous health – efforts should be increased to recruit and support rural (particularly indigenous) workers into health care including medicine, mental health and allied health professions.
- Lack of research into substance abuse and the issue of youth suicide in rural communities.
- Lack of Multi Purpose Services to small rural communities and the recognition they are a means of economically delivering a range of services to them when they do not have the ability to support stand alone services.

1.9 Banking.

Background.

The closure of banks has had a substantial and cumulative impact on rural centres and their economies.

- As they are forced to go to other locations to bank people spend significant amounts of money there diverting it from their local economy.
- The confidence of the community is undermined and the town is less attractive to potential investors.
- There is a greater security risk as businesses are forced to hold cash for longer periods and are forced to carry cash over distances to bank.
- There is an increased use of credit and more bad debts for local businesses.
- The lack of banking facilities and the banking policy of technological transfer is difficult for the elderly and those with intellectual and physical disabilities.
- The impact is potentially more severe where there are not towns with branches in reasonable proximity.
- Tourists, unable to obtain cash locally, move on and spend money.

2.0 Factors, which would enhance development in these areas, including the provision of infrastructure such as energy, transport telecommunications, water supplies, and the facilities that deliver educational, health and financial services.

Background.

Development of regional Australia needs effective long term planning which would include greater co-operation and co-ordination between Federal, State, Local Governments, industry and community organisations to identify and address the provision of the infrastructure necessary to meet the needs of the region's people and their industries.

The 1996 National Rural Women's Stakeholders Meeting recommended:

'That an office of Rural Communities be established in the Federal Government to:

- Play a co-ordinating role and develop cohesive policy at national level;
- Monitor and advise on the impact of policy proposals on rural communities (e.g. through a rural communities impact statement.)
- Develop policies and programs in consultation with relevant portfolios to deliver better and more co-ordinated services to rural communities.
- Advise government on general measures for overcoming locational disadvantage.

New and emerging industries and enterprises need to be nurtured and supported as the regions diversify their economic base. Small business is the backbone of regional economies and should be encouraged through business advice, education and training to become more competitive.

Businesses and community organisations would benefit from forming alliances and consortia to create economies of scale and share resources and talents.

2.1 Energy.

AWiA recommends:

- Those National Community Service Obligations be formulated by the Federal, State & Local Governments in consultation with industry and community representatives to be adhered to by Power Authorities, electricity and gas.
- That Research and Development into solar, wind and ocean water power be given the highest priority and should be encouraged by subsidy for those unable to access the normal services provided.
- That research is encouraged into more efficient use of white goods, heating and cooling devices.

That regional databases and social indicators be used to predict future needs in consultation with regional and industry bodies to enable manager of power services to:

- Identify the core services they need to provide.
- What structures they need to do this.
- What structures may be needed to change?
- To ensure targets are maintained.

2.2 Transport.

AWiA recommends:

- Joint road management strategies must be developed involving community, local, state and federal governments to cover such areas as road management, vehicle safety, vehicle appropriateness, road safety and road trauma.
- That regional databases and social indicators be used to plan reasonable access to public transport.
- That the manufacturers and operators of vehicles used in the public transport system design vehicles, which are accessible to the entire public.
- That rail transport be encouraged as a cheaper alternative to road and the maintenance of the existing infrastructure be a priority.
- That a reasonable grid of all weather roads be constructed within regional Australia.
- That the issues of excessive transport costs, taxes on fuel and truck registration be addressed.
- That regional airports are maintained in a suitable manner where necessary for the speedy air delivery of perishable products to export markets.(e.g. horticultural products)

2.3 Telecommunications.

Background.

A number of research papers are available regarding the use of telecommunications. The potential benefits of IT are outlined and appropriate to all regional Australia in the paper “What is the Role for Information Technology in Sustaining Regional Australia.” presented to the International Symposium on Sustainable Agriculture Technology, Beijing, China August 1997. The paper concludes:

- “I.T. and telecommunications can be effective as a rural development tool to allow rural communities to be competitive nationally and internationally. Competition, either direct or indirect, needs to ensure efficiency in the supply market.
- There is a need to ensure equity between rural and urban community’s otherwise rural communities will continue to decline. However any government intervention should be determined on the basis of a detailed cost-benefit analysis to determine the scale of that investment rather than on the electioneering and effectiveness of lobby groups.
- Needs a vision developed by rural communities themselves but they must also be made aware of what is possible to allow them to develop that vision. Infrastructure will not be provided to rural and remote communities as a matter of course because the marginal costs of provision are significantly higher than the provision of urban conurbations. There is therefore a market failure, which needs correction. Governments are correct to intervene in the market to correct market failure.... This should be done in conjunction with the private sector.
- Co-ordination of the process is necessary at all steps to ensure that an efficient and effective service is provided to rural communities and businesses operating in remote and rural areas.

The paper describes how the application of information technology is necessary and increasingly being seen by rural development professionals as a tool for rural development, it;

- Provides opportunities for rural business to become more efficient and more effective (remoteness from markets, decision makers and information sources are one of the major inhibiting factors.)
- Provides equality of opportunity between rural and urban dwellers in areas such as education, shopping, access to government services (explores Telehealth, Call and Telecentres)
- Allows for more diverse economic activity to occur in rural areas (Call Centres, high technology R & D and businesses)
- Provides regional areas with the opportunity to attract inward investment (research McKinsey 1994) shows access to telecommunications is a most significant factor in determining that investment into an area)
- Sustainable use of natural resources (access to data, information, and sophisticated modeling expertise)
- Quality of life factors (including access to entertainment, emergency services, television and radio services, communication links within communities)

The skills and utilization of the technology often lag behind the infrastructure, therefore education and training must accompany any information technology infrastructure. AWiA notes the availability of the many education courses available to the public of regional Australia, however member's experience with geographic isolation has led to the recommendation of an additional resource;

Australian Country Computer Support Service Program. (ACCESS)

Rural and remote citizens are having great difficulty in accessing suitable advice as to programs, updates, patches and many other matters regarding the use of this technology. AWiA has submitted a proposal for a "Australian Country Computer Support Service" Project to the National Office for the Information Economy.

The outline for the suggested project is:

Services provided by this project would include consultations by a freecall facility. Any advice could be faxed, emailed or phoned to the customer.

Such a service could include training and information regarding:

- The millenium bug.
- Internet downloads of patches and programmes.
- Internet viruses.
- Repairs or upgrades.
- Supply of materials by floppy disc or C D- ROM.
- The setting up of new programmes.
- The installation of software.
- Availability of Internet providers.
- Internet training.
- Access to internet through a local call
- Access to Tele-banking, Tele-health, Tele-support services and others.

This service could entail a modest annual subscription and a small charge to the customer, i.e. \$15 per hour. The service would initially talk the customer through early problems and once they have Internet access working well, could alternatively be provided by e-mail or on the Internet.

Such a service would need to be provided to the most remote as well as rural areas. In many cases back up service is provided by the retailer but is inadequate or very expensive and not readily accessible. There is also possibility equipment and data may be damaged by transport over long distances on inferior roads.

AWiA notes the report and experience of the DSS Community Information Network Pilot Project, Strategic Research, Economic Analysis and Evaluation Branch, DSS Canberra.

“ Opportunities for Communities: Public Access to Networking Information Technology.”

The research pilot was carried out in urban, regional and fewer rural centres, the aim was to examine the potential of new and innovative community-based services to improve the living standards of people on low incomes. The Community Information Network was established using several hundred obsolete DSS computers in both government and non-government sites.

Outcomes were evaluated as efficient and effective for DSS and their clients. The conclusion was made:

By providing their client group with free or affordable access to networked information technology, community organisations and government agencies can ensure their clients obtain the many benefits of information technology and are not disadvantaged in the Information Age.

AWiA recommends:

- For business, safety, health and personal security reasons all Australians should have access to telecommunications and that radio reception should be seen as the acceptable norm.
- Obsolete computers from government departments be made available to rural low-income families at a reasonable cost within regional centres, sale opportunities to be well advertised within the rural press.

2.4 Water Supplies.

AWiA recommends:

- The implementation of a National Water Policy, based on accurate research data and a collaborative consultation process with all stakeholders, governments, federal, states and local, industry, environmental and community interests and to include major metropolitan areas in the funding of the infrastructure necessary for the future needs of this continent.
- That at all stages of this collaborative process skilled facilitators and mediators be used to overcome the dedication and commitment stakeholders have their particular interest group.
- The use of water is such a contentious issue with so many interest groups involved it is recommended a public education programme be implemented to inform all

the citizens of Australia as to the urgency of this matter and to involve them in the responsible management of this resource.

2.5 Education, Health and Financial Services.

A WiA members would like to draw to the attention of the Standing Committee the matter of the increasing reliance on community members to act in a voluntary capacity within the infrastructure of regional communities.

A WiA supports the concept of community involvement and consultation, however it must be remembered the population base of regional Australia has declined, commercial realities, particularly within the agriculture industry have meant increasing reliance on quality assurance and other programs on farm.

The time community members can devote to community activity is declining at a time when services which have been available to them in the past have been withdrawn or at the best available in regional centres at a cost of time and travel.

Best practice and correct reporting of committee activities is necessary, however the Standing Committee is asked they be kept to a minimum to allow scarce human resources to concentrate on the actual work necessary to maintain the infrastructure.

2.6 Education.

Background.

One of the factors, which would enhance the development of the facilities, which deliver education to regional Australia, is an understanding of the complex nature of the role these institutions have within regional and rural communities.

The Role of Universities and Institutes of TAFE in the Economic Infrastructure of Regional and Rural Areas.

Introduction.

- The role of a tertiary regional and rural education and training provider extends beyond its education and training function. It also has:
a major economic importance both as major business and an employer in its own right and as a significant element of regional infrastructure underpinning economic development within its region.
- An important role as a source of skilled people contributing to the broader life of the community and the region, maintaining a viable population base and supporting social and community activities.
- A unique capacity to contribute to regional and statewide information gathering and strategic planning.

As the only tertiary education and training provider in many rural and regional areas the University or TAFE is expected to provide an appropriate range of courses and programs covering the needs of industry generally, regional employers and the wider community.

Tertiary institutions are expected to link with secondary schools in particular with regard to teacher professional development and VET in schools.

The Rural and Regional Economic Development of Tertiary Institutions:

- The campus has an important part in the marketing and promotion of the region.
- Members who serve on advisory committees and others are local, work in the region, and are prepared to invest time and commitment to that campus.
- Has a strong connection to educational and economic outcomes, therefore on going strategic planning should link to the regional economic planning.
- Should have a close collaboration between tertiary campus, local government and the economic boards of the region.
- Have the capacity to develop and sell customized programs and services, which capitalize on the strengths and industry base of the region.
- Campus management, committees and staff are able to advocate for the region in a number of forums.
- The campus is usually one of the largest businesses and possibly the largest employer in the region. They attract outside income from both the public and private sector and provide real net income to the region.
- The campus and its staff live spend and invest locally. Local businesses are contracted to provide goods and services to the campus.
- Plays a role in strategic planning for the region, research and analysis of regional development.
- In addition to the strategic planning role also play a part of the State's public policy and service role.
- With the withdrawal and reduction of regional offices in a number of employment, economic and business related areas the campus is often the base for visiting services, advice and expertise.

Regional campuses of tertiary institutions have a significant impact on the demographic structure and add to the cultural diversity of a region. Their staff bring collective skills and energy to a range of regional bodies and organisations. They must be resourced and supported to enable them to continue to contribute to the development of sustainable rural communities.

This is also applicable to all the educational institutions within rural communities and indeed to other significant service providers.

AWiA recommends:

- A co-ordinated approach to the planning of educational services, facilities and programmes by governments, federal, state and local, industry and regional bodies is integral to sustainable regional development. Investment in regional areas is dependent to a large extent on the educational opportunities offered to the families of that region and to the appropriate skills of the labor force.
- That educational course delivery not be entirely dependent on rigid number criteria, that regional community needs be taken into some consideration.
- That I.T. and telecommunications access is essential to overcome the locational disadvantage experienced by students in the regional, rural and remote education system.
- That computer illiteracy is not acceptable within the regional education system.
- That education institutions be advised of the full potential of the agricultural industry as an employer of choice and encourage students to consider career opportunities in the industry.

- That initiatives such as the “Student Industries Linkages Outreach Programme” must be marketed adequately to both the education system and the potential employer.
- That the difficulties of student access to the Youth Allowance for rural and remote students be addressed.

2.7 Child Care.

AWiA recommends.

- That a flexible range of child care options using the existing resources and the innovations suggested in 1.6. That childcare not be relegated to “women’s issues” as is so often the case, rather it be seen as a whole of community issue relevant to workplace, health and safety, education and community service.

2.8 Health.

AWiA recommends.

- That within Regional Health initiatives funding is supplied to target reasonable access to rural hospitals and to retain some of the acute care beds within regional communities.
- That outreach services be developed to specialist medical and allied health support and funding and resources be guaranteed for residential and community care places.
- That Multi Purpose Services be extended within regional communities.
- That access to adequate telecommunication technology is essential to developing services within the health industry and the difficulties associated with Tele-Psychiatric consultation claims to Medicare be addressed.
- That preventative health education becomes a priority to redress the problems of rural health and decrease the burden on the existing services and infrastructure.
- That research into the causes of alcohol and substance abuse and suicide is given priority status within regional Australia.

The recent announcement by Minister Anderson of the strategy to overcome the problems of shortages of doctors in rural Australia is to be commended.

The matter of the extra cost of health care due to the smaller Medicare rebate for overseas-qualified doctors is an issue which also needs to be addressed.

Within the context of Regional Development adequate health care is necessary for those wishing to invest in rural areas.

2.9 Banking.

AWiA recommends:

- That banks provide rural communities affected with bank closures greater access to ATMs and these be available to take cards from all banks.
- That banks, local authorities and businesses adopt a co-ordinated approach to cash handling and transport between rural communities.
- That federal, state and local governments and financial institutions sponsor education packages for communities affected by bank closures, about the

alternative forms of financial services available and how best to make use of those services.

- That government acknowledges the dependency of rural access to electronic banking and address the need for adequate infrastructure.
- That alternative agencies within rural communities act as agencies for banks and transaction centres to be established.

Note – The Department of Transport and Regional Services plan for Rural Transaction Centres with appreciation.

3.0 The Potential for Development in Regional Areas.

Background.

“Small businesses form the backbone of the Australian economy. In 1994-94, some 95 percent of businesses were “small”. It is not commonly appreciated how many of these are very small; 54 percent of Australia’s businesses do not employ any staff, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, a further 36 percent employed less than 10 people and a further 5 percent employed between 10 and 19 people.”

“Jobs in our Regions.” Report, Council of Small Business Organisations for the Department of Transport and Regional Development . Page 1

The resources, human and financial, are there to build on to the economic development of most of regional Australia given positive leadership by the private and public sector and to build on to the natural resource base by value adding, tourism and the service industries.

There are a number of positive regional initiatives developing as rural communities widen their perspective from the traditional local government areas to regional development. This process is inhibited by the plethora of service sub regions which overlap into the wider region, Health, Agriculture, Environment & Catchment Management, Education, all have differing boundaries making the development of a common vision for the region difficult.

A common vision for economic development is one for the most difficult concepts for those with small businesses and living in isolated communities to establish, as our past history has been a celebration of the individual endeavor.

The potential is there for development , but there is a need for a facilitated change of culture within regional Australia.

4.0. The extent to which infrastructure development would generate employment in regional Australia.

“Greater co-ordination across portfolios is needed, especially at the national level, to provide a more consistent approach to regional small business and to provide a more predictable environment for the sector to maximise its employment growth potential.”

“Jobs in our Regions”, Council of Small Business Organisations. Page 151.

Given a predictable environment where the needs of the population are met for adequate services and access to information, that reasonable housing is available in many areas and that unemployment is endemic in many areas;

With the development of adequate infrastructure, new and emerging industries would be nurtured and supported as regions diversify their economic base and employment would be generated.

5.0 The role of the different levels of government and the private sector in providing infrastructure in regional areas.

Government Role is to:

- Co-ordinate and develop a cohesive policy and programs at all levels within government, federal, state and local to address the infrastructure needs of regional Australia.
- Monitor the private sector service providers who are providing essential infrastructure requirements to regional Australia to ensure there are community service obligations and these are maintained.

The Private Sector is becoming increasingly involved in the provision of infrastructure to regional Australia as services are privatised, standards of service and supply must be maintained.

6.0 Planning, co-ordination and co-operation in the provision of infrastructure in regional areas.

Is essential.

7.0 The benefit to the national economy of developing regional infrastructure.

Regional Australia is an undeveloped resource, there is the potential to value add to existing primary industries, for tourism and service industries. To build on old and develop new industries, with adequate telecommunications services life style choices can be made for workers to telecommute.

Benefits include:

- The potential of the development of the people and the resources.
- Employment opportunities.
- Effective management of environmental issues, particularly land degradation and water management.
- Equality of opportunity for the citizens of urban, rural and remote Australia.
- The matter of National Safety.

A healthy, vibrant regional economy is necessary for a healthy vibrant national economy, regional Australia must have the infrastructure necessary for that development.

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27-4-99

Committee Secretary
Standing Committee on Primary Industries and Regional Services,

Dear Sir/Madam,

AWiA thanks you for the opportunity to submit to the current inquiry on the Infrastructure and the Development of Australia's Regional Areas and thank you for the extension to the end of the month.

AWiA members were surveyed by email and fax for their answers to the questions asked by the committee.

AWiA respectfully requests the opportunity to appear at any public forums convened as a result of this inquiry.

Thank you again for the extension, it was my first experience of computer failure and was a totally devastating experience.

Yours Faithfully,

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