

ALLAN T GIBSON FCPA

The Standing Committee on Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government.

P.O. Box 6021
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600.

INQUIRY INTO A NEW REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT FUNDING PROGRAM.

Dear Chair,

As a community volunteer I have managed four grants received through the Regional Partnership Scheme. These grants have all had the aim of developing tourism infrastructure and of providing a community asset for the benefit of residents. All of these projects have been completed within budget and are greatly appreciated by residents and used by tourists.

One such project was opened on 7th June this year with Hon Mike Kelly in attendance. Some 700-800 people attended the opening.

The application processes were all via the Bega office of SEACC and their efficiency and help was instrumental in our being able to achieve the funding.

The majority of the labour for these projects was volunteers and the community contributed in kind in many ways. Limited funds were received from Bega Valley Shire Council: a council with severe money management problems. You will be aware that this area of NSW is classed as a disadvantaged area with few employment prospects and a high dependency on social services. This costs the government money. By developing physical infrastructure to attract not only tourism but new businesses and residents to the area we will be reducing the social security dependence and improving the mental and physical health of the residents.

In any new program I would ask that the 50% funding rule be relaxed as the only source of cash contributions is normally the

local council and with the current economics of small councils this is becoming increasingly difficult to obtain.

As an example we are currently seeking to raise funds for a tourist attract at Aslings Beach in Eden. This asset will be of considerable benefit to both the town's people and the tourists. Council has agreed to contribute some funds and volunteers will build and local businesses will contribute in kind. However without a grant from the Australian Government the project will not happen.