

Committee Secretary
Standing Committee on Primary Industries and
Regional Services
House of Representatives
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Secretary

The South East together with the Greater Green Triangle Area Consultative Committee would like to make the following comments in relation to the *Inquiry into infrastructure and the Development of Australia's Regional Areas*.

The major focus of our submission is that there is currently a national network of 58 ACCs, operating throughout regional and metropolitan Australia in partnership with government, business and the community to foster employment and regional growth. As part of this process, Area Consultative Committees identify projects for funding under the Federal Government's Regional Assistance Program.

Our regional strategies, developed following extensive consultation throughout the region provide direction for employment growth and economic development and identifies priorities for regional and other programme funding.

We have been resourced to ensure we take action on identified priorities – whether the need is for funding, information or community support.

Our two ACCs have been directly responsible for bringing in over \$700,000 in Regional Assistance Program funding from the Department of Employment, Workplace Relations and Small Business this year. Over the past nine (9) months 30 projects have been implemented that will lead to increased employment opportunities and develop the skills base of our regions.

We believe our network has been under utilised by other Federal Government agencies who should have a presence or access to an effective network that can be used as a conduit for information provision and dissemination in Regional Australia. Let us be your arms and legs. We are here, we are effective, we work across borders, we develop and implement effective employment creation projects, we have the regional labour market intelligence and plans in place for you to take advantage of.

A recent example we can highlight is the Rural Transactions Centre funding available through Transport and Regional Services that was recently announced. ACCs are well placed to undertake the widespread community consultation needed to identify service delivery gaps. We can then make informed recommendations back to Government about effective models of delivery and report on those organisations that are best able to take the establishment of Rural Transaction Centres to the next level. This role can be made possible with minimal funding as administrative infrastructure is already in place throughout Australia. We have already formed strong community networks and developed databases that can get the job done quickly and will provide value for money.

Following extensive community consultation it was identified that information flows, both to and from governments need to be improved. Regional decision-makers need accurate, up-to-date information that takes into account different sizes of small business. Regional small businesses need information about government programs, the local economy, population, income trends, local business networks, and the priorities of each level of government.

ACCs are well placed to be the conduit of information provision both into the communities and back to government. Many ACCs have web sites that have been strategically developed to link into a range of government services. These generally have been developed utilising core funding. If additional resources were provided each ACC would be able to develop their own community site and continually update the information. ACCs have developed effective databases for the dissemination of information but the effective maintenance of these databases is adhoc at best due to the lack of adequate resources.

The ACCs are making a significant contribution to the development and employment in Australia's regions and we want to develop strong partnerships with Federal Government agencies to maximise their presence and knowledge of issues in Regional Australia.

Yours sincerely

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16 April 1999

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