

14th July 2008

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

Dear Sir

RE: Submission to the Inquiry into a new regional development funding program

The Wide Bay Burnett Area Consultative Committee (WBBACC) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Standing Committee on Infrastructure, Transport Regional Development and Local Government inquiry into a new regional development funding program.

The WBBACC is a community-based organisation that for thirteen years has worked with a broad cross section of the Wide Bay Burnett community. Throughout this period WBBACC's membership has included representatives of local government, the not-for-profit sector, business and industry, the aboriginal community and the education sector.

During this time WBBACC has gained a great deal of experience in the promotion and facilitation of Commonwealth regional grants programs and which bring enormous value to regional and rural communities. In this regard WBBACC has seen great benefits to the economy and social infrastructure of the Wide Bay Burnett region via funding delivered through the following programs:

- *Regional Assistance Program (RAP)*
- *Dairy Regional Assistance Program (DRAP)*
- *Sustainable Regions Program (SR) and*
- *Regional Partnerships (RP)*

Table 1: The following table represents our experience as a partner with the Australian Government in delivering these programs.

Name of Programme	No. of Projects	Program \$\$ approved	Total Project Value
RAP	31	\$2,060,744	\$6,182,232
DRAP	42	\$10,342,621	\$31,027,863
Sustainable Regions	27	\$7,663,618	\$37,077,179
Regional Partnerships	25	\$5,375,987	\$18,602,112
TOTAL \$	122	\$25,442,970	\$92,889,386

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While reporting on all the project outcomes listed in Table 1 above is impractical we would acknowledge that these reports are available from the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government and these along with our own experience and statements made by project proponents form the basis of the opinions contained herein.

Funding through the Regional Partnerships program between 1 July 2003 and 24 November 2007, included 31 applications lodged with DOTARS of which 25 were approved (81% success rate) resulting in total funding of \$5,375,987 approved for our region. A further 6 projects were lodged in 2007 (totaling \$1,592,756 sought from RP) but were not assessed fully following the Ministers announcement on 13 May 2008 that the Regional Partnerships program would not be proceeded with.

The WBBACC has previously expressed concerns about the operation of the Regional Partnerships program to the Department and the Minister and welcomes this opportunity to provide frank and fearless advice to the Inquiry and in doing so help to bring about improvements that will make such programs more effective for regional communities in the future.

In this submission WBBACC seeks to address the challenge of balancing the diverse needs of regional communities with the recommendations contained in the Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) *Performance Audit of the Regional Partnerships Program*.

The following points made by the WBBACC relate, in some measure, to all of the Inquiry's terms of reference:

Significant local benefit derived from regional development funding programs

The WBBACC would like to place on the public record our strong support for the future provision of catalytic funding by the Australian Government and the need to partner with proponents and invest in regional and rural Australia to underpin local economic, social and environmental priorities.

Strengthening regions is backed by key state and national policy agendas and is also reflective of international models such as the European Union's Regional Policy¹ which focuses on a renewal process for "regions whose development is lagging behind". Although the European Union is one of the richest parts of the world, there are striking internal disparities of income and opportunity between its regions. Regional policy transfers resources from the more affluent to poorer regions. It is both an instrument of financial solidarity and a powerful force for economic integration. In the EU the priority objectives which utilise up to 94 % of structural funding for the period 2000–06 is concentrated on three objectives:

- Objective 1:** Helping regions whose development is lagging behind to catch up.
- Objective 2:** Supporting economic and social conversion in industrial, rural, urban or fisheries dependent areas facing structural difficulties.
- Objective 3:** Modernising systems of training and promoting employment.

Strengthening regional communities is a key policy objective of the Australian Government and has recently been articulated by Minister Albanese in March 2008.

Importance of private-public partnerships

Our ACC is also of the view that partnerships between the Government and the private sector should be maintained in any funding program. It has been our experience that significant benefits result from such private – public partnerships including job outcomes and social infrastructure provision. Projects in our region that provide excellent 'case-in-point'

¹ An overview of the European Union Regional Policy can be seen at http://europa.eu/pol/reg/overview_en.htm

examples include; Austchilli (stage 1), Jabiru Aircraft, Queensland Sea Scallops, Abbotsleigh Citrus, Coral Coast Mariculture, Auspac Foods, Pedogenesis P/L just to name a few.

We acknowledge the new Government's preferred position in relation to the proposed Regional and Local Community Infrastructure program (RLCIP) which is to make 'for profit' applicants ineligible, however while there are additional challenges in assessing these applications e.g. competitive advantage considerations we would contend the benefits experienced in our region have been significant from this type of investment.

It may well be that another Commonwealth agency such as AusIndustry may be better placed in the future to deliver this type of business development program into regional Australia; however we would encourage the Government to give this proposition serious consideration. We would further recommend for any funding programs targeting 'for profit' entities that funding rounds be introduced to improve contestability and transparency of the decision making process.

Importance of local or regional advice, information and networks

The WBBACC is pleased to note in recent correspondence from the Government that they acknowledge and value the role played in the past by the ACC network in the delivery of regional development programs and the significant worth of their stakeholder networks and strong reputation. These stakeholder networks have been built up over many years of hard work and have played a vital role in the delivery of programs such as Regional Partnerships.

The WBBACC undertook its role as an advisor to the Government in relation to the Regional Partnership (RP) program very seriously and formally set up a sub-committee to undertake these duties. The RP sub-committee was chaired by the WBBACC Deputy Chair and made up of 5 other ACC Members. These members were selected based on their qualifications, skills, experience and geographic location across our large region. This diversity of membership ensured informed and robust debate on all projects with codes of conduct around any perceived 'conflict of interest' strictly adhered to. All sub-committee meetings invited personnel from the DOTARS Regional Office to be in attendance and were always formally minuted. These minutes once endorsed then formed the basis of advice to the Department and the Minister. The WBBACC Chair deliberately maintained an arms length distance from the RP sub-committee and was then available as an impartial arbitrator for complaints from project applicants which arose from time to time.

While the role of the new Regional Development Australia (RDA) committees in any future regional development funding program is yet to be decided, we would contend that the utilisation of the local based advice as described above is essential for good decision making processes and represents good value for money to the Australian taxpayer.

Lack of understanding by the Department's national office about regional needs and practical program delivery issues

After 2005, as criticism mounted about the administration of Regional Partnerships program, the Minister for Transport and Regional Services sought to provide greater control of the assessment process to the national office of the Department. The assessment role of the Department's regional offices was removed in March 2006 and given to a new team in the national office. This was done in the mistaken belief that delays in assessment were due to inefficiencies at the regional office level. The WBBACC result was that, after a brief initial improvement, delays became as bad, if not worse than they had ever been.

An unfortunate outcome of this disempowerment of regional offices was their greatly reduced influence on the Department's level of understanding about the needs of regional communities. The decision to change the role of the Department's regional offices also signaled a profound alteration in the style of communication about regional issues. After the centralisation of the assessment role, WBBACC experienced a clear diminution of the Department's level of interest (at a national office level) in accepting advice and information about regional issues. This resulted in a reduction in the Department's capacity to address serious problems with the Regional Partnerships program and its

level of effectiveness in the regions. It is likely that any chance to make the Regional Partnerships program more effective in the regions was lost at this point. The Department's communication about grant applications became characterised by:

- Misunderstandings about the complex place-based issues facing communities;
- Unrealistic expectations of the capacity of community organisations to prepare complex grant applications;
- Unrealistic expectations about the capacity of community organisations to raise funds for local projects;
- Unrealistic expectations about the duration of funding required for projects to become sustainable;
- A lack of understanding about the damaging impact on community organisations and private sector applicants of delays in decision-making.

It was also our experience that for whatever reason there were considerable delays between the time an applicant was advised of their approval by the local Federal Member's office and the time a funding agreement was executed. This was the cause for much consternation by applicants and relationship management issues for the ACC. While it is to be expected that extra caution be taken with public monies, it did appear that this issue was again peculiar to Regional Partnerships with partnership contributions for the same project from other Commonwealth agencies being contracted with little difficulty and in a much timelier manner? We appreciate that in some cases applicants themselves may have been tardy in responding to questions from the Department and that there was a lack of resources in the Department's legal division, but it is recommended that any new regional development program give serious consideration to this element of the program delivery and ensure appropriately trained personnel and resources are available.

Dysfunctional assessment process

It is our contention that the RP assessment process could, at times, be best described as highly dysfunctional. This situation was greatly exacerbated by inferior information technology platforms including TRAX and Regional e-grants and the fact that every single grant application (whether the grant sought was \$3,000 or \$3 million), having already been assessed at least once by the Department, was then personally reviewed and approved, or declined, by the Minister or Parliamentary Secretary. This process involved hundreds of Regional Partnerships applications every year, and resulted in an enormous backlog of applications in the system. This situation led to extraordinary delays in assessment and decision-making. The officially stated target for processing Regional Partnerships applications was twelve weeks. Many funding applications took in excess of six months (sometimes even ten or twelve months) to obtain a decision.

Despite numerous reviews and changes to the application process things never seemed to improve, particularly timeliness of decision making. The assessment process must become more streamlined and stakeholder communication improved.

Operation of the program as an eligibility-based or competitive grants program.

WBBACC has assisted many organisations to prepare successful funding applications under programs *other than* the Regional Partnerships program. Programs, such as *Building Entrepreneurship in Small Business* and the *Australian Tourism Development Program* have not experienced the problems that have plagued Regional Partnerships.

WBBACC understands that the reason these programs have had a relatively straightforward and uncontroversial history is the fact that they are *not* discretionary programs. In order to better comply with the recommendations of the 2007 ANAO audit, WBBACC recommends that any new regional development funding program be implemented as an eligibility-based or competitive grants program.

The introduction of competitive rounds would provide benefits including:

- allowing for a stronger and more consistent comparison of the relative merits of proposed projects;

- in the interests of equity of access, assisting to ensure that the communication of opportunities to access funding through the Programme is more evenly broadcast; and
- avoiding some of the perceptions that projects may be approved for funding for party political purposes, including through the 'fast tracking' of assessment and approval processes, particularly in the context of a pre-election period.

Opportunities to further improve the delivery of a community infrastructure programme could be provided through structured funding rounds. It would for instance be possible to stream rounds to allow applications for particular purposes to be considered on a competitive basis. For example, natural groupings have emerged in terms of the nature of projects for which funding has been sought, such as:

- community and public infrastructure (for example, community pools or sporting facilities, community halls, community transaction and services centres, cultural or tourism facilities or attractions);
- health and education related projects; and
- regional and local government planning related projects (for example, tourism strategies, skills audits and attraction strategies, or business attraction programmes).

Creation of an independent panel with delegation to make grant approvals

It is suggested that decision-making authority relating to any future regional development program should be delegated to an independent panel. Ideally this panel would operate under the auspices of the national Board of *Regional Development Australia*. This would enable the Minister to closely monitor the performance of the program to ensure it meets the Government's policy objectives, whilst remaining at 'arms length' from individual funding decisions.

The WBBACC does however contend that the relevant Minister retains overall responsibility for the program and has the right to oversight decisions made by the panel. Should the Minister ever wish to overturn a decision by the panel he or she must provide clear reasoning for such a decision as set out in the *Financial Management and Accountability Regulations 1997* (FMA Regulations).

A further opportunity to improve the cost effectiveness of program administration relates to the arrangements applying to low value grants. For instance, a streamlined application process should apply to applications seeking funding of less than \$50,000. In a Risk management context, this is a sensible approach to balancing the cost of administration with the value of the grant. While such grants would necessarily still be subject to certain obligations on the part of the funding recipient, there may be options for reviewing both the manner in which the grants are administered and the reporting and other obligations imposed on funding recipients.

Strengthening the adherence to program guidelines

The strengths of eligibility-based and competitive grants programs are that guidelines can be adhered to with relative ease and there are fewer 'grey areas'. This is particularly the case for eligibility-based programs. A higher level of judgment is required for competitive grants programs. However, there is ample evidence that guidelines for programs such as *Building Entrepreneurship in Small Business* are able to be written in a way which enables balanced decisions to be made.

Simplification of the application process

The application process should be straightforward enough for regional community organisations not to have to acquire the services of professional grant-writers. A regular comment made by community organisations was that they simply could not afford to undertake the process of applying for a Regional Partnerships grant.

The completion of a Regional Partnerships application was a challenging task, even for organisations that possessed a high level of administrative and research capability. Staff and/or volunteers had to expend many days, to research and

prepare an application. Small community organisations that did not possess such capabilities either had to rely very heavily on the Area Consultative Committee to prepare major sections of the application or, if they had the resources, hire consultants to undertake the preparation. The Department was often critical of applications that were not prepared in a professional manner. *This created a situation where organisations with the best grant-writing skills were most likely to acquire the grants, rather than the most deserving projects.*

A simplified application process with a clearer, stronger set of guidelines would help to overcome this tendency.

Simplification of assessment processes

The adoption of an eligibility-based or competitive grants system would remove a major element of uncertainty for the public servants responsible for the assessment of applications. Professional assessors within the department would be able to make recommendations with much greater certainty, especially for applications that clearly adhere to program guidelines. This in turn would help to minimize administrative costs.

WBBACC considers that such simplification of the administrative procedures would also enable the Government to impose strict deadlines on the time taken to assess each application, thus remedying another cause of hardship for community-based applicants.

The WBBACC would also like see a panel of accredited consultant's established by the Department (based on qualifications and experience) from whom they would accept certification of applicant and project viability. Too often the Department will seek 2nd and 3rd opinions (from external consultant's) on applicant and project viability at great cost to the Government and significant increases in the time it took to make a decision.

Interface with applicants

WBBACC believes that it is vital for the effective delivery of the proposed Regional and Local Community Infrastructure Program, that the Government is able to establish a genuine interface with communities. Without a system that enables the provision of assistance and advice to grant applicants, successful applicants will tend to be large, well resourced organisations with access to professional grant-writing capability.

A grant program that genuinely engages and assists regional communities (including disadvantaged rural communities) *at the application stage* will be more likely to benefit a broad range of organisations, including organisations that represent disadvantaged groups and the Indigenous community.

Genuine community engagement is often stated as an objective of grant programs but is difficult to achieve. It is less likely to occur for programs that are entirely administered at a national office level. *Successful grant recipients for programs administered entirely by the national office of the Department will most likely be those who are adept at understanding and dealing with bureaucracy, rather than necessarily those organisations representing communities with the most need.*

Could RDA have a role in monitoring project and programme outcomes?

Quote from ANAO report states: 'A three stage programme evaluation framework was established for the Regional Partnerships Programme. The Senate Committee in its report recognised that evaluation of individual project outcomes is fundamental to any measure of the success or otherwise of grants programmes. In this respect, the department's programme evaluations and associated performance reporting in relation to the Regional Partnerships Programme have not been informed by analysis of actual outcomes formally advised by funding recipients through the Funding Agreement reporting framework. Instead, in terms of categorizing and analysing project outcomes, evaluations and departmental performance reporting have used project assessment and Funding Agreement data of proposed, rather than actual, outcomes together with surveys of Programme applicants.'

The WBBACC would support a future role for local RDA Committees to support project and program monitoring. It makes sense that a regionally based organisation such as RDA be utilised to provide local or on-the-ground proofing of any assertions made by funding recipients through their formal reporting to the Department relating to project outcomes. Consideration of any additional role would however have to take into account available resourcing and adequate qualifications and/or skills to undertake the task.

Alternative Funding Models

The Standing Committee Terms of Reference ask for advice on future funding models for a regional development program in order to invest in genuine and accountable community infrastructure projects and also for ways to minimize administrative costs and duplication. The WBBACC believes there are already a number of programs or models used by the Australian Government to deliver funds into regional Australia that are worthy of consideration and are in many ways already tried and tested. Below are three examples:

1. The Roads to Recovery Programme (R2R)

Detailed information available from the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government and/or can be seen at <http://www.auslink.gov.au/funding/r2r/index.aspx>.

In summary the program commenced in November 2000, when the Federal Government announced a \$1.2 billion boost in its funding for local roads through the *Roads to Recovery Programme* with \$850 million to be spent in rural and regional Australia.

The Roads to Recovery Programme was introduced as a single intervention by the Commonwealth to address the specific problem that much local government road infrastructure is about to reach the end of its economic life and its replacement is beyond the capacity of local government.

The *Roads to Recovery Programme* commenced in February 2001 and through AusLink now has funding of \$1.23 billion allocated over four years from 1 July 2005. Funding is available to local government authorities, and State and Territory governments responsible for unincorporated areas, for local roads maintenance and upgrading.

The AusLink Roads to Recovery Program operates uniformly across Australia. Under current arrangements, each council is guaranteed a share of the total available funding. Under simple administrative procedures whereby spending decisions are made locally and reported to the government, money is paid directly from the Australian Government to each council. Much of the administration is via the internet.

A recent review of the program has been undertaken by a team comprising representatives of both the Department of Transport and Regional Services and the Australian Local Government Association. They were asked to answer the question 'have the funds already provided to Councils under *Roads to Recovery* been well used?'

The key finding of the review was that the Roads to Recovery funds have generally been well used in ways consistent with the intention of the programme, namely to address the backlog of works on local roads.

The works undertaken had a strong safety emphasis with transport efficiency and economic development the next most common objectives. Most of the expenditure was on existing roads. The review team calculated an average Benefit Cost Ratio for a selection of projects at about 1.8. The programme provided economic stimulation to local economies across Australia and generated employment, particularly in rural and regional areas. Also important to the application of the funding was the widespread and growing recognition by Councils of the value of good asset management.

Councils saw the three main strengths of the programme as:

- local decision making, which has enabled them to implement their own priorities,
- simple reporting requirements and other administrative arrangements, and
- direct funding to Councils without State Government involvement.

While this program relies heavily on local government input and cooperation the WBBACC suggests that this model is one of the most efficient funding programs currently delivered by the Commonwealth with a very high percentage (NB: this figure would be available from the Department) of overall funds being applied to project implementation and very little spent on program administration.

2. Natural Resource Management – A Regional Approach

Detailed information available from the Department of the Environment and Water Resources and/or can be seen at <http://www.nrm.gov.au/nrm/index.html>.

In summary back in 2000 and in order to facilitate the integrated delivery of Natural Resource Management (NRM) priority issues, the Australian Government, in association with state and territory governments, identified 56 regions covering all of Australia.

An integrated NRM plan, developed within local communities, and supported by government and the best available science, has been developed for each region.

These plans consider the environmental, social and economic impacts of NRM decisions on a regional basis, which will help improve the sustainable management of natural resources on a regional scale.

In order to ensure the best outcomes, investment in NRM plans by governments and other organisations is based on the establishment of clear targets and appropriate monitoring.

Following the identification of Australia's 56 regions, an individual integrated Natural Resource Management (NRM) plan was developed for each.

These plans form the basis for regional investment from both the Natural Heritage Trust (the Trust) and the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality (NAP), allowing access to different types of government funding without the need for individual project plans or applications.

Accreditation of the plans by Commonwealth, state and territory Ministers occurred via an iterative process of feedback and advice from all levels of government and specialist advisory bodies.

Consultation and negotiation between regional bodies and key stakeholders was a crucial component of plan development and bilateral agreement conditions. Key stakeholders include:

- regional communities
- indigenous people
- academic and scientific communities
- environmental groups
- industry
- local governments
- state, territory and Commonwealth agencies

The means for identifying and achieving NRM targets, formed via agreement between government and the community, are set out in each regional plan.

The plans also defined investment strategies for implementation, the goals and contributions to be undertaken by all parties, and catchment-wide activities addressing a range of NRM issues, including:

- land and water management
- biodiversity
- agricultural practices

Accreditation criteria

Through the development of accredited regional plans, the Australian Government, and state and territory governments agreed to support integrated NRM across Australia. These plans identified regional priorities and established a framework for investment in action.

Accreditation of a regional plan was dependent on the fulfillment of criteria agreed upon by the Australian Government and state and territory governments through the Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council in May 2002.

It was necessary that regional bodies demonstrate that their plans adhered to key elements of the accreditation criteria. Each plan was required to:

- cover the full range of NRM issues
- be underpinned by scientific analysis of natural resource conditions, problems and priorities
- effectively involve all key stakeholders in plan development and implementation
- focus on addressing underlying causes rather than the symptoms of problems
- include strategies to implement agreed NRM policies to protect the natural resource base
- demonstrate consistency with the region's other planning processes and legislative requirements
- set targets at the regional scale, consistent with the national framework for NRM standards and targets
- identify strategic, prioritised and achievable actions to address NRM issues and achieve regional targets, including an evaluation of the wider social economic and environmental impacts of such actions and of any actions needed to address such impacts
- provide for the continuous development, monitoring, review and improvement of the plan

Investment strategies

Following accreditation of a region's NRM plan, regional bodies were responsible for developing investment strategies. Essentially, these strategies formed the region's business plan, used to attract investment.

The Australian Government, and state and territory governments invested in regional plans if they were based on:

- a 'whole of region' approach, addressing significant NRM issues and incorporating environmental, social and economic aspects
- development by an organised catchment or regional body representing the local community, accountable for expenditure of public monies
- meeting agreed targets and outcomes that reflect good science
- meeting a firm timetable agreed upon by all parties

All Commonwealth, state, territory and regional joint investment decisions for the NAP and the Trust were based on a region's investment strategy. An investment strategy defines the actions, costs and timeframes required to implement the plan and achieve regional targets. It also calculates expected returns on the investment.

This strategy was produced during or after the development of a regional plan. It was, however, a necessary step prior to signing of the final partnership agreement by the Australian Government, relevant state or territory government and relevant regional group. Signing of this agreement enacted the formal release of investment funds. A partnership agreement defines:

- funding amounts for salinity and water quality actions identified in the investment strategy
- responsibilities for undertaking the activities
- cost-sharing arrangements
- agreed outcomes to be achieved
- performance measures, targets and milestones
- monitoring and evaluation processes

3. The *Sustainable Regions* program

The flagship program under the 'Stronger Regions, a Stronger Australia' statement was the *Sustainable Regions* program. The Wide Bay Burnett was very fortunate to be included in the Sustainable Regions pilot program which commenced in 2002 and concluded in June 2005. During this time some 27 projects were approved. Of the \$8 M notionally allocated by the Australian Government to our region - \$7.6 M was directly invested into projects and this resulted in a total project value for the region of over \$37M. While we do not intend to go into all the details of these projects in this submission, we would as a key stakeholder add our strong personal support for the intent and outcomes of this program which was a true reflection of the adage 'local solutions for local challenges'. DOTARS undertook an extensive review and analysis of this program for each pilot region which if made available would greatly expand on the deliverables and value for money analysis that each region derived.

The ability of the local based advisory committee to vet and assess projects and proponents (a responsibility and duty taken extremely seriously) and then to make a recommendation direct to the Minister, delivered excellent and timely results for all parties. While the Wide Bay Burnett Sustainable Regions Advisory Committee (WBBSRAC) would be the first to admit they did not get it right 100% of the time, they never expected to and in supporting true innovation and initiative in regional Australia this will always be the case and should not be shirked away from. When you look at the employment outcomes and regional benefits derived not only today from these projects, but in many cases these benefits will only grow in the future and will underpin our economic and social growth for generations.

While similar to the *Regional Partnerships* program, it was the experience of WBBSRAC that RP had higher levels of bureaucratic intervention and influence and in many ways this dissipates the intent of local input and takes away from our ability to propose 'local solutions to local challenges'. With the local Advisory Committee providing advice direct to the decision maker (with the support and input from DOTARS as provided in the pilot program) they were able to support projects with a slightly higher risk profile, but where local intelligence (i.e. an evaluation of the character and project management ability of the people involved) provides them with assurances that the project will be effectively implemented and that the stated community benefits will happen.

While the WBBACC is a great supporter of self-help models where-ever possible, there are occasions, where under-performing regions will have to partner with Government to achieve real outcomes and in these cases the *Sustainable Regions* model of delivery for regional development assistance as a true partnership may be worthy of consideration.

Summary and Conclusion

To avoid the problems associated with the Regional Partnerships program, WBBACC recommends that a new Regional and Local Community Infrastructure Program should be designed with the following attributes:

- Decision-making derived from eligibility-based or competitive criteria;
- Decision-making authority delegated to an independent panel;
- Decision-making strictly based on new guidelines that can readily be understood and adhered to by applicants and assessors alike;
- Decision-making that is informed by local or regional advice (which could be provided by local committees of Regional Development Australia) to ensure local priorities are accounted for and that on-the-ground proofing of information claimed in applications is tested;
- An application process that can readily be understood and addressed by applicants, including organisations representing disadvantage groups in the community;
- Delivery strategies that attempt to promote genuine engagement with regional communities;

WBBACC considers that these measures will bring about improved administration of regional funding programs by encouraging:

- greater transparency,
- improved communication, and
- simplification of the assessment process.

WBBACC also believes that the adoption of these recommendations would lead to a reduction in administration costs and the investment in genuine and accountable community infrastructure projects.



Bill Trevor

Chair

Wide Bay Burnett Area Consultative Committee