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29th May 2008.

The Secretary
The Standing Committee on Infrastructure, Transport,
Regional Development and Local Government.
House of Representatives
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

ltrdlg.reps@aph.gov.au

Re: Inquiry into a new Regional Development funding program

Dear Sir/Madam,

The Board of the Geelong Area Consultative Committee has considered the terms of reference of the above inquiry and concluded that for a community based funding program to function efficiently and effectively there are some key factors.

Program Design.

As a seed funding process that is often required to operate in new and innovative ways the program needs to foster creativity and enable communities to find new solutions. Having the capacity to respond to needs is essential. In the Geelong ACC region all of the projects that were approved under the former program emerged from the community and were championed by the ACC Board.

Application Approval

The due diligence required by the community when applying for funding is essential to ensure good quality projects are delivered. However, the process of evaluation conducted by the Department staff simply takes too long. The viability of some projects is jeopardised by the length of time taken in completing those evaluations and then decisions.

Budget for Program

The issue of "cost shifting" presents a constant challenge to project proponents and ACC staff. Projects often consist of a range of activities that cross over the defined budget items. In these cases project ideas often collapse because they do not fit the guidelines of either the defined budget or the funding program.

Geelong Area Consultative Committee



An Australian Government Initiative



- a unit of the Victorian Business Centre, 69 Moorabool St, Geelong

- part of a national network of Area Consultative Committees

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Success factors

Earlier I mentioned the organic nature of projects approved for the Geelong ACC region. The success we have had has come from the energy and idea's within our communities. The ACC role has been to help and expand on that energy by providing the broker role enabling these groups to access funding assistance. It is our view that communities need that type of help and that it should be continued under RDA.

Funding Mix

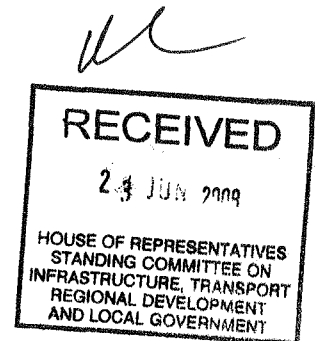
Ownership of projects is an important element in the success or failure. Building partnerships between community and all levels of Government is not only a healthy process for project outcomes but is a clear, strong community building process that creates lasting relationships. Again in Geelong region almost all projects have had funding from Victorian Government and this has served to strengthen relationships between the State Government representatives and ACC Staff.

National Audit Office

The auditors report into Regional Partnerships made a number of recommendations in the area of activity completed by Departmental staff and Ministerial responsibilities. Therefore the Geelong ACC board felt that ACC comment on these recommendations was inappropriate.

Yours faithfully

Dr Dennis Brockenshire. AO
Chairman



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