

House of Representatives Inquiry Submission Wheatbelt Region

Closing Date for Submission - Monday 14th July 2008

Please complete as many pages as required

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Position Role (if applicable): Chief Executive Officer
Organisation (if applicable): Shire of York
Region: Wheatbelt Region

Signature:



1. Please provide your thoughts on future funding of regional programs in order to invest in genuine and accountable community infrastructure projects.

There is an urgent need to provide assistance to rural and regional areas to maintain and enhance the quality of life and to meet community service obligations. Better determination need to be made on where funding is allocated to underpin real sustainability and capacity to meet whole of life costs for infrastructure. The effect of droughts, climate change, fuel price increases, housing affordability and the reduction of services to rural areas have a detrimental effect on rural living and there is a need to provide support for resilient communities. New funding programs may need to be sectionalised to provide value for effort eg. Differentiation between ageing and new infrastructure. Ageing infrastructure funding may be more appropriate for towns either stagnant or in decline while new infrastructure may be more beneficial for growth areas. Specific emphasis may be needed to meet needs for peri-urban and tree change growth particularly over the next 1 – 7 years. Similarly funding to private enterprise may need to be separated from community benefit funding to allow greater accountability processes and concentration of effort. The Regional Partnerships process had significant benefit to rural and regional areas and a similar targeted level of funding would be of value.

2. How should the Federal Government design regional programs in a way to minimise administrative costs and duplication for taxpayers.

The Area Consultative Committee system worked effectively through many regions of Australia particularly where membership was based on community members with genuine interest in their regions and a similar assessment system should be utilised provided that sufficient resource funding is allocated. There is an opportunity to partner with state governments is an ACC model is not accepted by utilising Regional Development Commissions and similar entities for administration, management and monitoring processes to minimise regional duplication. A standard multi criteria analysis system could be utilised for both self and government assessment of applications could be developed and utilised across Australia to ensure commonality and accountability at the distribution level. A multi criteria analysis score would minimise the need for initial expressions of interest prior to a formal application as the applicant could easily deduce if a minimum funding score was achievable. This would also support the assessment process for any regional committee in place to promote the programs.

Forward Submission to –

Email: itrdlg.reps@aph.gov.au

Post: Committee Secretary; Standing Committee on Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government; PO Box 6021; House of Representatives; Parliament House; CANBERRA ACT 2600
(Note- In order to facilitate electronic publishing of submissions, the Committee would prefer posted submissions to be sent on disk or CD-ROM in Microsoft Word® or Portable Document Format (PDF).

The simplest method of regional delivery may be to utilise the local government to submit applications, warehouse the funding, monitor the project and provide an acquittal provided that this service is appropriately resourced and it does not become another cost shifting exercise and a devolution of powers and responsibilities without funding.
This would ensure that all projects meet land planning and environmental requirements, it is in the forward planning for the community and government standard accounting systems are available.

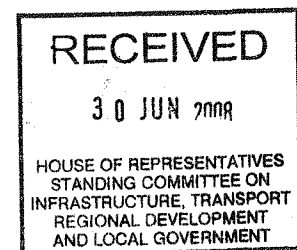
3. Examine the former government's practices and grants outlined in the Australian National Audit Office report on Regional Partnerships http://www.anao.gov.au/director/publications/auditreports/2007-2008.cfm?item_id=40BC1C6C1560A6E8AAA43AAB96708E61 with the aim of providing advice on future funding of regional programs.

Nil

4. Examine the former government's practices and grants in the Regional Partnerships Program after the audit period of 2003-2006 with the aim of providing advice on future funding of regional programs.

The information available at the applicant and recipient levels indicates that the Regional Partnership Program was extremely beneficial at the local level and that this benefit and value was sullied by the decision making at the government level.

Future decisions on funding to meet regional community needs should not be solely based on past electioneering practices but rather it should be based on meeting identified community needs



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