

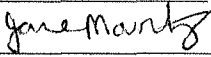
# House of Representatives Inquiry Submission

## Wheatbelt Region

SUBMISSION 45

**Closing Date for Submission - Monday 14<sup>th</sup> July 2008**

*Please complete as many pages as required*

Name: Jane Mouritz
Position Role (if applicable): Secretary (volunteer)
Organisation (if applicable): Hyden Progress Association Inc
Region: Wheatbelt Region
Phone:
<b>Signature:</b> 
<p>1. Please provide your thoughts on future funding of regional programs in order to invest in genuine and accountable community infrastructure projects.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence of community plan that identifies local needs and priorities ( please allow flexible ways of reporting this – not a prescribed process please, as local communities are all unique and must be encouraged to consult their communities in ways that best suit them.</li> <li>• EOI and pre-project liaison with Wheatbelt Area Consultative Committee representative provided effective check for Regional Partnerships and similar is recommended for future funding program</li> <li>• Federal government cash is essential to help with cost of rural community infrastructure – unaffordable for communities just by local fundraising.</li> <li>• See Lotterywest example for accountability and ease of grant management – the DoTaRS procedures were onerous and excessively demanding of community volunteers. Quarterly reporting was excessive and often untimely. There should be maximum of two project reports – one after 50% of funds expended and one at end. The TRAX application form that had to be completed after the Word document had already been done was excessively time consuming and confusing.</li> <li>• It is impractical for government to hold 10% of funds until after approved audit – in case of community building a facility they need ALL the funds in order to complete the project, not to have to be in debt to tradespeople for some of their accounts until after the audit and delayed release of last 10% of funds.</li> <li>• There needs to be TRUST demonstrated by government, after all rural community volunteers are actually doing a lot of volunteer work and raising a lot of funds to build facilities that city people would expect to be provided for them without any additional contribution.</li> <li>• Rely on more on-site liaison with local Area Consultative Committee officers – it was ridiculous to have an officer in the Perth office emailing demands on a weekly basis, when this officer never saw the project, never really understood local volunteer demands. The degree of “pressure” put on to local committee by these officers was very stressful and took away local sense of enjoyment of the project. It was made more so because local volunteers were working to the best of their capacity in their local situation and the reports and detail demanded by the Perth office often didn’t even seem relevant and were time wasting of our valuable local volunteer time.</li> <li>• Local committees who volunteer to do a project and who apply for funds do so with the best intentions and are motivated to see projects completed for their local community benefit – they do not appreciate excessive checking and reporting requirements of DoTARS.</li> </ul>
<p>2. How should the Federal Government design regional programs in a way to minimise administrative costs and duplication for taxpayers.</p> <p>Simplify to processes -the RP application form and mulit-budgets required in the application form were onerous and impractical.</p> <p>Opt for clear and simple application forms like Lotterywest.</p>

*Forward Submission to -*

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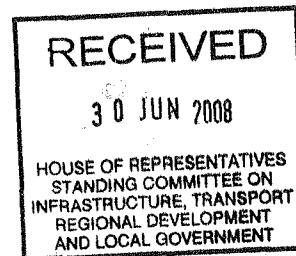
**Email:** [itrdlg.reps@aph.gov.au](mailto:itrdlg.reps@aph.gov.au)

**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, members, if they would prefer posted submissions to be sent on disk or CD-ROM in Microsoft Word<sup>®</sup> or Portable Document Format (PDF).

SUBMISSION 45

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](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.

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.  
See letter sent as attachment.



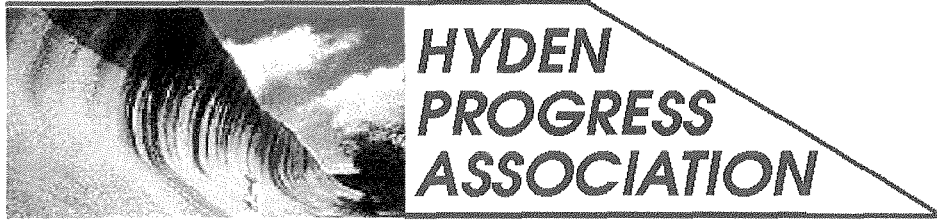
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C/- PO Box 98 HYDEN 6359  
20<sup>th</sup> June 2008

To Committee Secretary  
Standing Committee on Infrastructure, Transport,  
Regional Development and Local Government,  
PO Box 6021  
House of Representatives  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600\

Dear Sir

Our Valued Regional Partnerships Funds

It was with dismay that we recently learned that the Government has withdrawn support for Regional Partnerships grants. As a hardworking community that has attained two Regional Partnerships grants in the past six years we wish to inform you that they have led to much needed ongoing benefits for the environmental, social and economic health of our district.

It is offensive to our genuinely dedicated community volunteers to hear government members label Regional Partnerships as "RORTS", and to have this message highly publicized in national press.

Our community, and many others that we know of, have contributed extensive research, considerable community consultation, raised significant matching funds and then also contributed many thousands of dollars worth of unmatched in-kind hours, professional services and local machinery use in order to see much needed community/Regional Partnership projects achieved.

We urge the Government to recognize the important value of Regional Partnerships funds as provided to regional and rural communities. To highlight the excellent aspects of these many and varied projects to the general public, and then to support a regional infrastructure funding program going forward that in some ways adequately replaces the Regional Partnerships Program.

In order to thrive, our community has had to provide many services and facilities for its residents – we have taken the initiative to improve our quality of life and to do all that we can to ensure people want to live and work in our district. Our rough estimation is that our district of Hyden and Karlgarin produces around \$60million of product for Australia's economy annually (\$45m agriculture, \$10m tourism, and \$5m mining). Our business people are not well off but they make an honest living and contribute considerably to the Australian food bowl and to Australian society in general.

We do not have a hospital, a police station, a highschool, a frail aged centre or many other services and facilities that are taken for granted as being provided by Government in larger communities. However, with partnerships with local, state and federal government and with a great deal of community fundraising and dogged persistence and hard work, we have raised funds and built a Telecentre, landcare and educational resource centre, youth base, Occasional Daycare centre, sports and recreation centre, public swimming pool, community hall, environmental and heritage signed trails, and most recently a People Care Place. We have done everything within our capacity to make our community a good place where people choose to live, work and play.

We bring to your notice two specific local projects that were achieved with Regional Partnerships funds combined with community effort.

<u>Name of Project</u>	<u>Project detail</u>	<u>Regional Partnerships funds</u>	<u>Other funds and inkind donors</u>
<p>The Humps Environmental and Cultural Strategy Total project value; \$171600.00</p>	<p>Managed by Hdyen-Karlgarin Land Conservation District Group 2005-2007 The project achieved was a managed environmental and cultural tourism experience that also will protect and preserve a valued Indigenous Cultural Site and unique geological feature for future generations. The project involved extensive consultation with Indigenous Elders. The project provided capacity building and enterprise opportunities for Indigenous people. It involved partnership with local, State and federal government departments. It involved extensive community volunteer contribution. It ensures the long term landcare strategy for the area. It encourages managed tourism and increased tourism visitation to the district.</p>	<p>\$60 000.00</p>	<p>\$111600.00 cash plus extensive in-kind volunteer hours. Contributing partners included;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shire of Kondinin</li> <li>• Trailswest</li> <li>• Department of Indigenous Affairs</li> <li>• Water Corporation</li> <li>• Hyden-Karlgarin Land Conservation District volunteers</li> </ul>
<p>Hyden Fellowship Accommodation Centre Total project value; \$450 000.00</p>	<p>The construction of a community owned and operated multi-purpose facility, aptly named HYDEN PEOPLE CARE PLACE. It comprises a pastoral care and counseling unit, a respite care day activity centre and respite overnight care unit, and a rental accommodation unit. In a district that does not have frail aged or hospital facilities, this centre provides flexible localized support for families in need of respite or other emergency care. It also provides overnight accommodation for visiting pastoral care and church ministers and a pastoral care centre. In a district where rental accommodation for professional service providers is seriously lacking, the rental unit provides quality housing to encourage such providers to live and work within our district.</p>	<p>\$185,850.00</p>	<p>\$264,150.00</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hyden Progress Association Inc</li> <li>• 45 local families</li> <li>• Hyden Fellowship group</li> <li>• Lions Club and several other local community groups</li> <li>• Shire of Kondinin</li> <li>• Lotterywest</li> <li>• Country Housing Authority (loan)</li> <li>• Corporate donor</li> <li>• Significant in-kind donation of expertise, machinery and labour by local community volunteers and local business.</li> </ul>

Both of these projects were only approved after rigorous checking by Wheatbelt Area Consultative Committee personel and close liaison with officers from the Department of Transport and Regional Services.

Though we did get a letter of support from one Western Australian senator, at no stage could either of these projects be considered to be politically aligned or “rorts”.

They were only approved after our community had demonstrated the projects were going to meet genuine local and regional needs, would bring economic value to the district, and would have sustainable benefits in the long term.

In both cases the community had to contribute enormous unvalued volunteer hours to prepare the grant applications and to acquire matching funds from other state and local sources, and then to manage the project through to fruition.

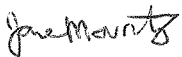
It is ironic that our volunteer administrators found the reporting and accountability demands of the Department Transport and Regional Services to be excessive and onerous. In fact they made these projects almost too much for local volunteers to manage. Yet, in parliament and in the press it has been publicized that Regional Partnerships projects were “rorts” and “money for jam” for communities favored politically by the previous government.

Our community experience certainly does not agree with these claims.

We urge the Government to acknowledge the high value and huge benefits achieved by Regional Partnerships funds and to immediately establish a substitute fund for future support of much needed rural and regional community infrastructure and projects.

Our community is willing to host a visit of Government investigators to show you first hand the value of our projects and to explain how Regional Partnership funds have not been a rort in our district.

Yours sincerely



JANE MOURITZ

Secretary Hyden Progress Association

Volunteer Project Coordinator for

The Humps Project and Hyden Fellowship Accommodation Centre project.