



31 October 2008

Submission No:	156.1
Date Received:	5/11/08
Secretary:	<i>[Signature]</i>

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

Dear Sir/Madam,

Supplementary submission to the Inquiry into a New Regional Development Funding Program

Given the importance of regional development to Australia's future prosperity, the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) would like to add several comments to its' submission forwarded to the Inquiry in July of this year.

ALGA acknowledges the valuable roles played by respective Federal and State based regional development organisations over the past 20 years. Whilst the various regional development models had their respective strengths, each sought to work closely with and leverage community, business and local government engagement.

ALGA would like to place on record that it believes strongly that any new regional development programs must avoid unnecessary duplication and instead be based on a collaborative network model. Future programs/ initiatives must be designed on the basis of strong coordination between the three spheres of government and regional stakeholders, and in line with several broad yet guiding principles as outlined below:

1. Integrated arrangements - given that all spheres of government are equally committed to building sustainable communities in the most efficient, effective and inclusive manner, every effort should be made to work towards delivering more integrated and aligned regional arrangements;
2. 'Whole of government' approach - by its nature, regional development requires all spheres of government to work in a collaborative manner;
3. Consistent regional boundaries - every effort should be made to agree on regional boundaries of mutual benefit. This would see the boundaries of the future Federal and State designated regions complement those of the relevant local/regional council (s);

4. Acknowledge differences - whilst consistency and integration are overarching goals, there is an equal need at times to accept and acknowledge differences where circumstances require this;
5. Tripartite engagement - to ensure the most effective and efficient use of resources, all spheres of government must be engaged as formal partners in regional development activities;
6. Information exchange - sharing of information and intelligence is critical in developing credible strategies, action plans and evaluation programs;
7. Funding mechanisms - where appropriate, regional development bodies and governments should seek to leverage joint funding arrangements to enhance project feasibility and implementation success; and
8. Co-locate offices - where possible and economically viable, regional development offices should be co-located. This has the potential to strengthen lines of communication and minimise duplication of a range of supporting resources.

Soundly based economic and regional development is fundamental to the wellbeing of Australian communities. Effective local government participation is vital to the success of many economic development initiatives.

Cooperation between the spheres of governments, and their respective agencies, is essential to prevent a multiplicity of inappropriate single purpose administrative structures being established for specific functions and programs. Governments must understand the adverse impact on regions produced by a proliferation of regional structures. Local government supports the use of multilateral agreements between governments and agencies to improve service planning, funding and delivery.

In conclusion, ALGA believes that any future regional development program for Australia needs to:

1. continue to engage local government formally in any institutional arrangements;
2. ensure the three spheres of government seek to enter into appropriate collaborative and integrated approaches; and
3. have the ability to adequately address the deficiencies in local and regional community infrastructure because that infrastructure underpins the social, economic and environmental life of local and regional communities.

Yours sincerely



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Chief Executive