

To: The Secretary  
Committee of Inquiry into a New Regional Development Funding Program.

**Submission:**

I am writing as a resident of Beverley, a town in the central wheatbelt of Western Australia.

With respect to the proposed New Regional Development Program, I am concerned that the former funding program is to be discontinued. There needs to be a future funding program which looks after the welfare and interests of the ageing population in all country towns. In particular, projects like Men's Sheds, which is one of the many support groups throughout Australia. Such groups keep elderly men active, allowing them to interact widely, and encourage social inclusion. There is an urgent need to find ways for men to communicate, to lessen the high suicide rate in rural areas. Furthermore, the broadening of skills, presents opportunities for members of a group, such as a Men's Shed, to help improve the appearance of country towns, to the benefit of the whole community.

I submit that the infrastructure, and the financial support, via grants, that previously existed for the Wheatbelt Area Consultative Committee, should be included in any new funding program. This would minimize administrative costs, and duplication for taxpayers.

Philip Butherway

