

## House of Representatives Inquiry Submission Wheatbelt Region

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

*Please complete as many pages as required*

Name: Pam Masters
Position Role (if applicable): Manager
Organisation (if applicable): Central Wheatbelt Visitor Centre
Region: Wheatbelt Region
<b>Signature:</b>
1. Please provide your thoughts on future funding of regional programs in order to invest in genuine and accountable community infrastructure projects.
<p>The funding of Regional projects is essential for the future of regional areas in this State and to in some small way address the imbalance in services and infrastructure between regional areas and the Perth Metro Area.</p> <p>There needs to be positive lifestyle incentives for people to live outside the Perth Metro Area and to create sustainable communities in regional areas. Investing in infra structure such as adequate medical and educational facilities and services, sporting facilities, cultural facilities and activities, passive recreation facilities, attractive townscapes and parks and gardens and the enhancing of nature reserves and national parks for passive recreation are all aspects that should be considered as part of this for regional programs. People will stay in areas where their lifestyle aspirations are met.</p> <p>Regional areas should also be given incentives to adopt sustainable environmental activities such as waste management, water and power sustainability. In a number of cases communities could become self sufficient in these areas given adequate sub regional incentives, sharing of knowledge on these topics and the adoption of pilot programmes that could be emulated elsewhere. Often such major new ways of thinking are beyond the ability of individual local governments or Regional Organisations of Councils to put in place or develop beyond the idea stage. This is where a flexible grant system back by experts (say from the CSIRO) funded by Government in the field could assist. Innovation should be encouraged by the Grant Scheme.</p> <p>It appears at present that everyone who wants to do the same thing or put in the same infrastructure in their area has to invent the wheel again every time rather than if one area has a great innovation or way of overcoming a particular problem this is taken up by a special Regional Department and its use is encouraged, through incentives and the sharing of knowledge, to be adopted in other areas to the benefit of all.</p> <p>The future funding of regional programs should be allocated based on projects</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) That every town may want e.g. Sporting facilities – small regular grants managed at Local Government level and assessed and prioritised at regional level with an easy to fill in application form.</li> <li>b) What is needed on a sub regional basis and agreed upon by regional partnerships and as a result of an agreed Regional Planning Strategy e.g. Regional Hospital facilities, upgrade of educational institutions at a regional level, road funding (this should not be decided by individual Shires but at the sub regional level other wise end up with one Shire not sealing a road that has sub regional access implications because it may lead away from their town or it is not in their road plan). Larger regular grants .</li> <li>c) Major grants -that would benefit a larger area or could be adopted by other areas (considered a pilot study)and have innovative ideas or practises. These grant funds could be sectorised with</li> </ol>

*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, the Committee would prefer posted submissions to be sent on disk or CD-ROM in Microsoft Word® or Portable Document Format (PDF).

Submissions  
funding allocated into each sector depending on the current assessment a SUBMISSION level of the needs e.g. Environmental sustainability – water, power projects- waste management Health & Well being : innovative methods in health service delivery Education and Training : Tourism and the Environment : Workplace & Industrial Development:.

These projects should be allocated significant funding and demonstrate impacts at the sub regional level and should involve a number of local government areas. They should fit into identified regional planning strategies. The applicants should have the opportunity to develop their projects with skilled staff from the funding body or other experts prior to placing in the final submission. They should be able to put in an outline of the project and its possibilities and be able to seek funding for the experts to further develop the idea and at a later stage funding to help with the infrastructure.

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

Assessment of the value of regional programmes should be in the hands of Staff in the region and the State in which the region lies not in Canberra. They are in a better position to prioritise and assess applications on needs and capacity basis that Canberra staff.

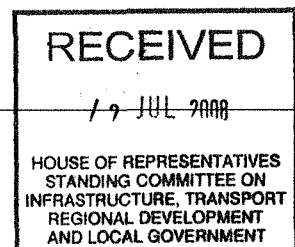
Minimising administration costs is the function of the appropriate Department and relates to the level of accountability required. I feel it would be better to have a five year programme of grant funding published well in advance. Have only two or three specific programmes available each year and do not repeat that grant programme again for 2 years. In other words these grant opportunities will be available in 2009 – these in 2010 etc. Put out guidelines for applications early, at least two years in advance. It would mean the funding through the budget process would have to be allocated over the 5 year programme but staff would only be concentrating of a fewer industry sectors each year.

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.

Beyond me to access

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.

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