

POINT LONSDALE BOWLS CLUB INC.

ABN 56 617 947 656

PRESIDENT : Rudolf Van Dam

SECRETARY : Alan Mansfield

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**The Secretary,
Standing Committee on Infrastructure,
Transport, Regional Development, and Local Government.
PO Box 6021, Parliament House, Canberra ACT 2600.**

Dear Sir / Madam,

Submission to the Standing Committee on Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government.

Inquiry into a New Regional Development Funding Program.

The Point Lonsdale Bowls Club Incorporated is privileged to provide a submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government for consideration of the proposed New Regional Development Funding Program.

The Club's submission is relevant to the Committee's consideration due to the Club's application for funding under the previous Government's Regional Partnerships Funding Program for the purpose of changing the character of the Club from one providing solely for the requirements of lawn bowlers to a club with facilities for the whole of the Point Lonsdale Community. The Club complied with the requirements of the previous program in that it is a small not-for-profit club with a low resource base located in the township of Point Lonsdale with a population of 2,400, 38.7% of which are over the age of 60 years.

The Club's commitment is to provide facilities for the spectrum of clubs, organizations, businesses and individuals in the Point Lonsdale Township in the form of meeting rooms, social and other community facilities for a township with very limited public indoor amenities.

The Club has been provided with the Terms of Reference for the Inquiry and intends to address each of the issues directed to the Committee for investigation under the Terms of Reference document numbered 1 to 4.

1. Provide advice on future funding of regional programs in order to invest in genuine and accountable community infrastructure projects:

Community groups/organizations are assisted in submitting relevant applications for the funding of genuine community infrastructure projects by the provision of detailed and clear application guidelines supported by consultants such as the Geelong Area Consultative Committee (GACC) representing the Minister's Department with oversight from the Department's Central Office in Canberra.

The Club's experience in submitting an application for funding under the previous Government's Regional Partnerships Program was a rigorous oversight facility provided by representatives of the Commonwealth in Geelong. The Commonwealth's representative (GACC) demanded complete adherence to the "worthy project", "genuine project" and "accountability" requirements before the Club's application to the central regulatory agency in Canberra. GACC was particularly committed to the requirement for the absolute accountability of the Club for the expenditure of the Commonwealth contribution and the proven long-term viability of the project. The Representative required proof to be provided to the Department that the Club was in a position to make a reasonable contribution, both in funds and *in-kind*, to the project.

It is the view of the Club that the principles dictated by the Commonwealth in the paragraphs above, including the *reasonable contribution by applicants* requirement be one of the cornerstones of any new funding regime.

The Club recommends to the Committee the close adherence to the fundamental Public Administration principles dictated by the Department through the GACC under previous funding application guidelines.

2. Examine ways to minimize administrative costs and duplication for taxpayers:

Administrative and other costs and charges on the public purse should be kept to a minimum while at the same time ensuring that the costs to non-profit organizations and their **volunteer** members are not wasted.

It is the experience of the Club and its members that the Commonwealth Public Service (the Executive) is committed to and skilled in the protection of the revenue and the funds of ordinary citizens/non-profit organizations. The Executive should therefore be charged with the administration of any grant applications referred to in this Term of Reference. The role of the Legislature and the Minister's Office should be limited to the approval of policy and the passage of resultant legislation with the administration of the policy initiatives left to the Minister's Department.

3. Examine the former Government's practices and grants outlined in the Australian National Audit Office report on the Regional Partnerships with the aim of providing advice on future funding of regional programs:

The Club has no direct experience in the administration of the previous Governments Regional Partnerships Program other than that gained through the submission of an application for funding under the program.

The administrative changes recommended by the Australian Audit Office and now agreed to by the Department appear to have improved the accountability of the process.

The Club does, however, have a view about the separation of powers at the Government level between the Legislature and the Executive to ensure good public administration.

It is the view of the Club that the creation of policy supported by the passage of legislation and the making of regulations is the responsibility of the Legislature/Minister with the administration of

the resulting Acts of Parliament/Regulations a matter for the Executive. It seems to the Club that adherence to the separation of powers principles would go a long way to satisfying the demands of good public administration and in so doing the requirements of the National Audit Office.

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 of regional programs:

The Club is not in possession of any information regarding the previous Government's practices and decision making processes other than the Club's contact with the extremely professional Departmental representative in Geelong (GACC) who was responsible for the supervision and oversight of the Club's submission for funding.

The Club has been concerned with the suggestion that it would have been to the Club's advantage to have received election promises from the previous Member for Corangamite and/or the incoming Member for the approval of the application for funding. The Club believes that applications for funding under the Commonwealth's expenditure programs should be the subject of due process through the Department's investigations, review and recommendation mechanisms before any commitment is approved and communicated by the Minister or local Members. Although the Club has no doubt as to the integrity of any of the past or serving Members of Parliament it believes that funding approval without due process can lead to a perception in the community that the Government authorities are not acting in an appropriate manner.

Another important issue worthy of consideration by the Committee involves the demands placed on volunteers preparing applications for consideration by the Commonwealth. It would seem to be appropriate that where an application is for \$250,000.00 or less the application should attract less stringent requirements for detailed information and analysis than that applying to applications for much more significant funding.

A further measure the Club believes would provide public confidence in the funding process would be for all of the papers concerning applications to be tabled in Parliament for fourteen sitting days following the decisions by the Ministerial Committee.

Those papers and documents to include:

1. The applications for funding.
2. The Department's report of the administrative review/investigation and its recommendations to the Minister.
3. The decisions of the Minister including detailed reasons why any Departmental recommendations were not followed.

The Club recommends that the final step in the suggested accountability/transparency process be advice from the decision maker/s, in writing, to the applicants as to why their application was not successful.

The Point Lonsdale Bowls Club Incorporated, it's Officers and Members are ready to provide the Committee with further information should it be required.

Yours Faithfully,

**Alan Mansfield
Hon. Secretary
7th July 2008.**

