



**Australian Government**  
**Department of Transport and Regional Services**



Senator Michael Forshaw  
Chair  
Finance and Public Administration References Committee  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Senator Forshaw

I refer to two letters from your Committee Secretary of 14 February and 3 March 2005 regarding questions on notice from Senator O'Brien relating to the current Inquiry into Regional Partnerships and Sustainable Regions.

These matters have been considered in detail and I am able to provide the attached responses to these questions.

Yours sincerely

Gary Dolman  
A/g Executive Director  
Regional Services

23 September 2005

## TRANSPORT AND REGIONAL SERVICES

### Senate Finance and Public Administration Committee

#### ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

#### Transport and Regional Services

Department of Transport and Regional Services

Senate Inquiry into Regional Partnerships programme

**Topic:** Ministerial Alterations

**Hansard Page:** n/a

**Senator O'Brien**, asked the Department of Transport and Regional Services on 14 February 2005:

- (1) Ms Riggs has advised the Committee that 17 Regional Partnerships projects have been subject to Ministerial alteration. Is that number correct?
- (2) Will the Department name those projects?
- (3) If not, why not? Has advice on this matter been sought from Mr Anderson or has the Department made the decision to withhold this information from the Senate?
- (4) Will the Department provide a breakdown of these projects by seats held by Coalition/ALP/Independent members, and the nature of Ministerial intervention, consistent with the presentation of projects in a table in the department's submission? If not, why not?

**Answer:**

(1) All Regional Partnerships decisions are taken at the Ministers' discretion. There were 17 cases in over 855 decisions when a Minister or Parliamentary Secretary took decisions that were different in some way from the advice of the Department.

(2) and (3) In accordance with the guidelines of the *Regional Partnerships* program, the Department assesses applications and makes recommendations to the relevant Minister or Parliamentary Secretary. Based on this advice and the recommendations made by Area Consultative Committees (ACC), the relevant Minister or Parliamentary Secretary decides whether to fund or not fund the project; the level of funding to be provided; and whether any conditions should be applied to the funding. It would be inappropriate to discuss specific instances where, the Minister's or Parliamentary Secretary's decision differs from the Department's recommendation.

(4) Consistent with established practice, the Department will not disclose the content of its advice to the Minister or Parliamentary Secretary.

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# TRANSPORT AND REGIONAL SERVICES

## Senate Finance and Public Administration Committee

### ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

#### Transport and Regional Services

Department of Transport and Regional Services

Senate Inquiry into Regional Partnerships programme

**Topic:** ACC recommendations

**Hansard Page:** n/a

**Senator O'Brien**, asked the Department of Transport and Regional Services on 3 March 2005

- (1) Will the Department identify all Regional Partnerships Programme funding applications in which comments from relevant Area Consultative Committees were not submitted to the minister prior to decision?
- (2) For each case, specify why the ACC comments were not submitted.

**Answer:**

(1) It is standard procedure for the relevant Area Consultative Committee's (ACC) comments to be sought for Regional Partnerships applications when it is appropriate. There have been three exceptions when no relevant ACC existed to provide comment.

This process has not occurred with only four projects:

- Croc Fest
- Christmas Island Mobile Phone Upgrade
- Sugar Industry Reform Package
- Tumbi Creek Dredging

(2) **Croc Fest** - An ACC was not required to provide recommendations on it as this project had national coverage and was not confined to a single ACC area. This project represented a small contribution to a whole of government project coordinated by the Department of Health and Aging.

**Christmas Island Mobile Phone Upgrade** – There was no ACC that covered Christmas Island at that time.

**Sugar Industry Reform Package** – ACC comments were not required for this project as it was outside the jurisdiction of a single ACC.

**Tumbi Creek Dredging (Application 1)** – Central Coast ACC entered comments into the Department's on-line grant management system (TRAX) on 22 June 2004. However, it did not indicate on the system that the comments had been entered, therefore the Department was not informed that comments had been provided until the

ACC emailed these comments on 24 June 2004. This was after Mrs Kelly approved the first grant for \$680,000 (GST incl) on 23 June 2004.

**Tumbi Creek Dredging** (Application 2) – ACC comments on the second application were provided on 6 August 2004, after the Department had already provided the second application to Mrs Kelly for consideration on 1 July 2004.

The Department subsequently provided advice to Mrs Kelly on 13 August 2004 informing her of the ACC's concerns, prior to the project being announced on 26 August 2004.