

Chapter 6

Government members' conclusions and recommendations

6.1 In contrast to the majority report, the Government Senators have made below a number of sensible recommendations. Rather than overburdening the system with administrative detail, some broader responses are appropriate.

Promotion of the programs

6.2 The ALP's politicisation of this inquiry has tarnished the good reputation of these important Australian Government programs, and generated misperceptions about how the programs operate. The inquiry has been used as a forum to make spurious political attacks and unsubstantiated allegations. Government Senators consider that action is required to remedy the politically motivated fall out from this inquiry.

6.3 Government Senators consider it essential that RPP and SRP now be promoted, to rebuild confidence in the programs and to restore the public's faith in the administrative processes. The real benefits of the program should be promoted. The public should be given a true picture of how the programs work, the proper and accountable administrative procedures that are in place, and the exceptional outcomes which are provided to local communities through the programs.

6.4 The KPIs should be promoted publicly. The KPIs demonstrate unequivocally how successful the RP program is in delivering real outcomes to communities, both in terms of the direct jobs created and the partnership funding invested in regional development. These programs are among the most successful government programs in history, and the unsubstantiated attacks generated during this inquiry which have marred the public's perceptions of the program cannot be left unattended.

Recommendation 1

6.5 The Government Senators recommend that the Government promotes the RP and SR programs and educates the public on how the programs work, to restore the public's confidence in these programs following the misperceptions generated by this inquiry.

Recommendation 2

6.6 The Government Senators recommend that the Key Performance Indicators be promoted publicly, to assist in educating the public about the benefits of the programs and the outstanding returns delivered to local communities.

6.7 In Tasmania, less than half of the ACC's notional allocation has been used in the last year, in large part due to denigration of the program by the ALP throughout this inquiry. Government Senators consider there is a need to redouble efforts to

restore the confidence of the Tasmanian community in these programs, so that outcomes can be delivered back to the community.

Streamlined co-funding

6.8 Where a project is seeking partner contributions from other levels of government, currently those funding sources have to be secured before the project will be considered under RPP. Government members therefore recommend that to increase the effectiveness of the programs local, state and federal levels of government simultaneously consider projects that are seeking co-contributions. This would streamline the process.

Recommendation 3

6.9 Government Senators recommend that project applications requiring co-funding be considered simultaneously by the relevant levels of government.

Support to ACCs and SRACs

6.10 As noted in Chapter 5, Government Senators strongly support the work of the ACCs and SRACs and their need for appropriate training and resources. Government Senators therefore support recommendations 9 and 10 of the majority report, regarding a review of ACC resources and training, and the introduction of three-year operational funding contracts for ACCs.

Role of ACCs

6.11 As discussed in Chapter 2, Government Senators consider that the role and operations of the ACCs can be further strengthened and expanded in two areas: ACC media and marketing and ACC involvement in grant announcements.

6.12 Currently, ACCs are required to have every media statement cleared by DOTARS, which can cause unworkable delays. As bodies with an important independent role in RPP, ACC's should be given more freedom in relation to their media activities. Government Senators are also concerned at the duplication of cost and effort currently required to produce ACC marketing material.

Recommendation 4

6.13 Government Senators recommend that restrictions on ACC media activities be lessened.

Recommendation 5

6.14 Government Senators recommend that template marketing material be developed for only minor adjustment by individual ACCs.

6.15 Chapter 2 described the role ACCs should play in grant announcements. It is logical for these bodies, that work closely with proponents often over an extended

period of time, to be involved in funding announcements. ACCs are also well placed to assist in organising appropriate grant announcements in their local region.

Recommendation 6

6.16 The Government Senators recommend that ACCs be advised of grant approvals in advance, and that they be encouraged to assist with arranging grant announcements and any follow up matters relevant to their local projects.

Senator David Johnston
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Senator Guy Barnett

