

ACC Handbook

June 2004



ACCs

*The Australian Government's
Regional Development Network*



Australian Government

Department of Transport and Regional Services



TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	4
1. PURPOSE AND FUNCTIONS OF AN ACC	5
1.1. OVERVIEW	5
1.2. MINISTERIAL GUIDANCE	5
1.2.1. ACC Charter	5
1.2.2. Ministerial Statement of Priorities	5
1.2.3. ACC Work Principles	5
1.3. PLANNING FOR THE ACC AND THE REGION	5
1.3.1. Strategic Regional Plans	5
1.3.2. Annual Business Plan	6
1.4. WHOLE-OF-GOVERNMENT APPROACH	6
1.4.1. Role in Promoting Australian Government Programs	6
1.4.2. Memorandum of Understanding	7
2. LEGISLATION AND CONTRACTS	7
2.1. ESTABLISHMENT	7
2.2. CONSTITUTIONS, INCORPORATION AND OBLIGATIONS	8
2.2.1. Incorporation and Constitutions	8
2.2.2. Obligations	8
2.3. LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS	8
3. POSITIONS WITHIN AN ACC	9
3.1. ACC CHAIR	9
3.1.1. Appointment of an ACC Chair	9
3.1.2. Role of the Chair	9
3.1.3. Resignations	10
3.1.4. Termination of Appointment	10
3.1.5. Leave of Absence	10
3.2. ACC MEMBERS	10
3.2.1. Appointment and Selection of ACC Members	10
3.2.2. Role of ACC Members	11
3.3. ACC EMPLOYEES	11
3.3.1. Role and Functions of the Executive Officer	11
3.3.3. Other Staff	13
4. CONFLICT OF INTEREST	13
4.1. INTRODUCTION	13
4.2. DEFINITION	14
4.3. ACC CONDUCT	15
4.3.1. Conflicts of Interest	15
4.4. ACCS AND THE POLITICAL PROCESS	16
4.4.1. Contesting Elections and other Politically Aligned Activities	16
4.4.2. ACC Employees Elected to Local Government	18
4.4.3. Use of ACC Facilities for Political Purposes	18
4.4.4. Display of Political Material	18
4.4.5. Public Comment on Political and Social Issues	18
4.4.6. Information Campaigns and Promotional Activities	19
4.4.7. Dispute Involving Conflict of Interest Issues	19
5. MANAGEMENT OF ACC OPERATIONS	19
5.1. CORPORATE GOVERNANCE	19
5.2. RISK MANAGEMENT	20
5.3. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT	20
5.4. REPORTING	21
5.5. COMMITTEE RESPONSIBILITIES	21
5.5.1. Meetings	21

5.5.2.	Minutes	22
5.5.3.	Sub-Committees	22
5.6.	GENERAL ADMINISTRATION	22
5.6.1.	General Insurance	22
5.6.2.	Workers' Compensation Insurance	23
5.6.3.	Asset Insurance	23
5.6.4.	Record Keeping	23
5.6.5.	Reimbursement of Costs incurred by ACC Members	25
5.6.6.	Travel Reimbursement for ACC Chairs, members and employees	24
5.6.7.	Bank Accounts	25
5.7.	ASSET POLICY / PROCEDURES AND LEASING	26
5.7.1.	Purchasing	26
5.7.2.	Register of Assets	27
5.7.3.	Portable and Attractive Items	28
5.7.4.	Stock take	28
5.7.5.	Asset Replacement Account	28
5.7.6.	Asset Disposal	28
5.7.7.	Method for Calculating Depreciation	29
5.7.8.	Motor Vehicle leases	30
5.7.9.	Asset Insurance	30
5.8.	RELOCATING, REFURBISHING OR EXTENDING ACC PREMISES - POLICY AND PROCEDURES	30
5.8.1	ACC Relocation, Refurbishment or Extension to premises - no additional costs involved	31
5.8.2	ACC Relocation, Refurbishment or Extension to premises where additional costs are involved	31
6.	THE ACC AS AN EMPLOYER	32
6.1.	OBLIGATIONS	32
6.2.	JOB DESCRIPTION AND DUTY STATEMENT	33
6.3.	SELECTION OF ACC EMPLOYEES	33
6.4.	EMPLOYMENT ARRANGEMENTS	33
6.4.1.	Remuneration	33
6.4.2.	Leave and Entitlements	34
6.4.3.	Staff Training and Development	34
6.5.	EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE	34
7.	PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT	34
7.1.	KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	35
7.2.	QUALITY ASSURANCE ASSESSMENT (QAA)	35
7.3.	AUDITS	35
8.	COMMUNICATION	36
8.1.	FEEDBACK TO THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT	36
8.2.	MARKETING AND BRANDING	36
8.3.	NAMING OF ACCS	36
8.4.	COMMUNICATION WITH THE MEDIA	36
8.5.	LAUNCHES, SEMINARS OR OTHER PUBLIC EVENTS	37
8.6.	ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION	37
9.	SUPPORT FROM THE DEPARTMENT	38
9.1.	DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT AND REGIONAL SERVICES	38
9.2.	ACC INTERNET SITE	38
9.3.	COMMUNICATION WITH THE DEPARTMENT	39

INTRODUCTION

The Handbook for *ACC's – The Australian Government's Regional Development Network* is designed for use by Chairs, Members and employees of the Area Consultative Committees (ACC). It is a guide for ACCs on the obligations and requirements of an ACC and must be read in conjunction with the Operational Funding Contract between the ACC and the Commonwealth of Australia.

Disclaimer

The Handbook is a living document and will continue to be amended in response to new Australian Government policies / programmes and other developments. Where there are differences between the Handbook and the Operational Funding Contract, the Contract and any subsequent Contract Variations take precedence.

1. PURPOSE AND FUNCTIONS OF AN ACC

1.1. OVERVIEW

Area Consultative Committees (ACCs) are apolitical, not-for-profit, community-based committees funded by the Australian Government under the *Regional Partnerships* programme. Committee chairs and members are volunteers drawn from the community, local business and local government. The ACCs are a National Network that cover all of Australia's regions (including metropolitan, regional, rural and remote areas) and are the key regional network for the Australian Government. Their role is to build community capacity and find local solutions to local problems by working in partnership with the community and other stakeholders to identify and facilitate opportunities for sustainable regional development.

1.2. MINISTERIAL GUIDANCE

1.2.1. ACC Charter

The Australian Government defines the role and functions of ACCs through its *Charter for the National Network of ACCs*. The Charter describes the outcomes the Australian Government is seeking from ACCs and defines the ACCs' functional responsibilities. A copy of the ACC Charter is available at **Appendix A**.

1.2.2. Ministerial Statement of Priorities

The Minister has issued a statement of priorities to provide a nationally consistent direction for ACC strategies and activities. The priority given by an ACC to its local activities must reflect this statement. Details of the Ministerial Statement of Priorities are incorporated into the ACC Charter at **Appendix A**.

1.2.3. ACC Work Principles

The ACC Work Principles shall visibly guide the operations of all ACCs. A copy of the principles can be found in the ACC Charter at **Appendix A**.

1.3. PLANNING FOR THE ACC AND THE REGION

1.3.1. Strategic Regional Plans

All ACCs operate with a 3-year Strategic Regional Plan. The current Strategic Regional Plan covers the period 1 July 2004 to 30 June 2007.

The Strategic Regional Plan identifies strategies for addressing the key social, economic and environmental barriers to and taking advantage of local opportunities for regional development. It is not a work plan but a statement of strategic intent which should be adjusted as circumstances change. ACCs are expected to review their Strategic Regional Plan each financial year. Any changes in the ACCs' Strategic Regional Plan priorities should be negotiated with the Regional Manager and reflected in the Annual Business Plan.

ACCs consult in the development of Strategic Regional Plans with key regional stakeholders including local government, State government agencies, business organisation groups, community groups, local MPs, and the broader community.

The Strategic Regional Plan forms an Annexure to the Operational Funding Contract. A guide to assist ACCs in developing their Strategic Regional Plans is available on the ACC web site at www.acc.gov.au.

1.3.2. Annual Business Plan

Each ACC is annually required to prepare a business plan linked to their 3 year Strategic Regional Plan. The Annual Business Plan documents the ACCs' objectives and activities for implementing their Strategic Regional Plan during each financial year.

The Annual Business Plan sets out projected operational expenditure for the financial year, which, once agreed by DOTARS, is used to determine the amount of operational funding provided to the ACC. The Annual Business Plan forms an Annexure to the Operational Funding Contract.

1.4. WHOLE-OF-GOVERNMENT APPROACH

1.4.1. Role in Promoting Australian Government Programmes

Consistent with the ACC Charter and the Ministerial Statement of Priorities, ACCs are expected to perform specific activities for designated programme areas of DOTARS. In particular, ACCs core business is the promotion and facilitation of projects under the *Regional Partnerships* programme, and they are a key provider of independent advice to the Department on all *Regional Partnerships* applications from their region. Their role also includes facilitating whole-of-government responses to opportunities in their communities through building stakeholder networks, and through identifying and drawing together the range of resources available to foster regional development.

ACCs also have a role to play in the promotion and facilitation of other Australian Government programmes and initiatives. DOTARS will advise and consult with ACCs where possible when approached by other agencies wanting to utilise the ACC Network.

Individual ACCs may also see opportunities for involvement in other programmes that are relevant for the community and complement the ACCs priorities (as identified in the ACCs' Strategic Regional Plan and the Annual Business Plan).

However, they must seek approval from the DOTARS Regional Office before entering into any contractual agreement with another agency or third party.

When considering any additional service delivery role, the ACC must ensure that taking on the additional responsibility:

- Does not compromise their ability to deliver on their ACC operational funding contract including their core business under *Regional Partnerships*; and
- Is fully costed to the third party concerned (including any administrative costs for supervision, insurance etc).

1.4.2. Memorandum of Understanding

MOUs set out protocols for departments wanting to utilise ACCs to deliver information and / or services to Australia's regions. Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) will be established between DOTARS and other Australian Government departments where this is in the interests of the community, the National Network of ACCs and DOTARS.

DOTARS will advise and consult with ACCs on MOUs as appropriate.

2. LEGISLATION AND CONTRACTS

2.1. ESTABLISHMENT

To receive Australian Government funding under the *Regional Partnerships* programme, ACCs enter into an annual Operational Funding Contract with DOTARS. The Operational Funding Contract sets out the agreed outcomes and the terms and conditions for the ACC to receive Operational Funding from the Australian Government and is a standard contract for all ACCs.

The Secretary of DOTARS may cease funding of an ACC where a breach of the Operational Funding Contract has been identified. Subject to the Operational Funding Contract, the

Secretary also has a general power to cease or vary Operational Funding of an ACC in response to administrative or Government policy changes.

2.2. CONSTITUTIONS, INCORPORATION AND OBLIGATIONS

2.2.1. Incorporation and Constitutions

To receive Operational Funding, ACCs must be incorporated bodies under the relevant State or Territory legislation. ACCs need to understand the rights and responsibilities that attach to incorporation.

The ACCs' Constitution provides the rules for running an incorporated legal entity. ACCs should regularly review their Constitutions in light of the Operational Funding Contract and its Schedules, the requirements of the Handbook, and the ACC Charter and Ministerial Statement of Priorities.

As part of the conditions of the Operational Funding Contract each ACC must ensure that the rules in its Constitution are consistent with the requirements of the Contract. From time to time DOTARS may provide guidance to ACCs on specific issues which need to be included in a ACCs' Constitution to ensure that the ACC is meeting the requirements of Operational Funding.

Further information can be obtained from the relevant State or Territory body that administers the legislation under which the ACC is incorporated. For more information visit the Business Entry Point website at www.business.gov.au and search under the term "incorporation".

2.2.2. Obligations

ACCs are voluntary associations. However, like all other public, private or community entities, they are subject to certain mandatory obligations. It is each ACCs' responsibility, under the direction of the Chair and with the assistance of the ACC Executive Officer or equivalent staff member, to ensure these obligations are met.

2.3. LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS

The Operational Funding Contract specifies several Acts of Parliament with which ACCs must comply. Additionally all ACCs must comply with Australian Government policies, particularly those that relate to employment matters such as occupational health and safety.

3. POSITIONS WITHIN AN ACC

3.1. ACC CHAIR

3.1.1. Appointment of an ACC Chair

The Minister with portfolio responsibilities for ACCs appoints the ACC Chairs for a two-year calendar-year period. Wherever possible Chairs will be drawn from the local business community. The Minister is committed to increasing the number of women and Indigenous Australian Chairs.

When a vacancy occurs, DOTARS, in consultation with other community leaders and organisations, makes recommendations for appointments to the Minister. Appointments to fill vacancies that occur outside the two year cycle will generally be made for terms that fall in line with the normal two year cycle of Chair appointments.

If a vacancy becomes difficult to fill, the position may be advertised locally in order to attract a broader range of potential candidates.

3.1.2. Role of the Chair

The role of the Chair of an ACC is to:

- provide strategic leadership and direction to the ACC in fulfilling its charter and functions;
- represent and promote the ACC in its region;
- identify, understand and comply with his or her responsibilities under the relevant Incorporated Associations Legislation, the Operational Funding Contract, and the Handbook (especially in relation to Conflict of Interest);
- play a lead role in recruiting suitable ACC members with a mix of skills and who represent the breadth and diversity of the community and business sectors;
- establish networks to facilitate wide consultation and provide broad representative feedback to government;
- work in partnership with DOTARS and key stakeholders, including Australian, State and local governments to promote whole-of-government initiatives;
- manage and oversight the activities of the Executive Officer or equivalent, and ACC staff;

- exercise the rights of an employer on behalf of the ACC; and
- be responsible for ensuring the ACCs' legal and contractual obligations are met, and for the efficient, transparent and accountable management of the ACC, its staff and its funds.

3.1.3. Resignations

A Chair may resign at any time by providing written advice to the Minister. If a Chair's personal interests or business activities result in an ongoing perceived or actual conflict of interest with the activities of the ACC, the Chair is expected to tender his or her resignation.

3.1.4. Termination of appointment

The Minister may terminate the appointment of a Chair at any time through the provision of written advice. Reasons for termination of the appointment of a Chair include, but are not limited to:

- a perceived or actual ongoing conflict of interest;
- concerns regarding the administration or performance of the ACC; or
- a change in regional or Government priorities and/or policies.

3.1.5. Leave of absence

A Chair may request a leave of absence by providing a written request to the Minister. Such requests should outline the reasons for the leave, the period for which leave is sought, the agreement of the ACC Board to the request and the proposed interim arrangements for filling the Chair position as determined by the ACC Board and Constitution.

3.2. ACC MEMBERS

3.2.1. Appointment and Selection of ACC Members

It is the ACCs' responsibility to ensure that Members are appointed in accordance with the ACCs' rules of incorporation. The ACC Chair takes a lead role in the identification and appointment of suitable members and should be encouraging a broad and representative Committee membership that reflects the diversity of the local community.

For insurance purposes, the ACC must notify their local DOTARS contacts of any changes in the membership of the ACC as they occur. ACCs may also need to notify any changes to the appropriate State or Territory authority responsible for incorporated bodies.

3.2.2. Role of ACC Members

Under the strategic direction of the Chair, the role of ACC Members is to:

- provide support to the Chair;
- actively contribute their particular skills and experience to the roles, functions and operations of the ACC;
- identify, understand and comply with their responsibilities under the relevant Incorporated Associations legislation and the Operational Funding Contract and Schedules (especially in relation to Conflict of Interest);
- represent the interests of the community, local business, and/or local government;
- contribute to sustainable economic development and foster the generation of practical solutions to address social, economic and environmental issues within their region;
- represent and promote the ACC in its region; and
- actively support and be accountable for ACC performance outcomes as a Committee, an incorporated body and as an employer.

3.3. ACC EMPLOYEES

The Operational Funding Contract provides funding for administration, including employing staff, to conduct the day-to-day operations and to support the ACC to achieve its outcomes under the Contract. DOTARS expects all ACCs to employ an Executive Officer or equivalent and such other staff as is required to deliver the outcomes under the Operational Funding Contract.

Section 6 of this Handbook addresses some of the ACCs' legal and other obligations relating to the employment or engagement of staff.

The Chair will exercise all the rights of an employer on behalf of an ACC.

3.3.1. Role and Functions of the Executive Officer

The primary role of the Executive Officer is to provide expert advice to the Chair about matters related to the administration of the ACC. This advice should be based on a sound understanding of the Operational Funding Contract, this Handbook, the ACC Constitution and principles of good corporate governance.

The Executive Officer works under the authority of the ACC and is accountable through the Chair as the employer, to the Committee. For day-to-day matters, the Executive Officer or equivalent, takes direction from and reports to the ACC Chair.

Additional to the above role, the Executive Officer is to:

- manage the day-to-day affairs of the ACC and its staff in a manner consistent with the ACC's Strategic Regional Plan, the Annual Business Plan, the ACC Charter and Ministerial priorities, the Work Principles, the Operational Funding Contract, the ACC Handbook and the ACC's Constitution;
- provide expert advice to the ACC in accordance with the Operational Funding Contract and this Handbook including:
 - keeping the ACC informed of the status and progress of its business;
 - having responsibility for the accountable and transparent management of ACC funds;
 - ensuring all ACC reporting and compliance requirements are met;
 - ensuring that the ACC operates in accordance with the relevant State or Territory incorporations legislation;
 - ensuring that the ACC meets its obligations under the Operational Funding Contract;
 - implementing office policies and procedures; and
 - assisting the ACC Chair in leading and developing ACC employees.
- assist in the promotion of the *Regional Partnerships* programme throughout their region;
- assist in the development of project applications seeking funding through a range of Australian Government programmes including *Regional Partnerships*;
- coordinate the provision of comments on *Regional Partnerships* projects to DOTARS;
- assist in developing the ACC's Strategic Regional Plan and the Annual Business Plan;
- assist in the promotion and facilitation of whole-of-government responses to regional issues;
- promote the activities of the ACC within the community and act as a representative of the ACC as required; and
- work in partnership with DOTARS through the relevant Regional Office.

The formal employment contract between an ACC and the Executive Officer or equivalent must be derived through an independent, transparent process and be endorsed by the full ACC. It is recommended that ACCs utilise the services of an independent employment

expert such as an Industrial Relations consultant, legal employment specialist, or the Office of the Employment Advocate. The contract should include a duty statement and clearly outline the conditions of employment. Details on performance measures and reviews as well as reporting requirements should be clearly stated.

3.3.3. Other Staff

Where an ACC chooses to employ support staff it is important to ensure that lines of responsibility and day-to-day reporting arrangements are clearly specified in the employment contract. The formal employment contract between an ACC and the employee must be derived through an independent, transparent process and be endorsed by the full ACC. The contract should include a duty statement and clearly outlined conditions of employment. Details on performance measures and reviews as well as reporting requirements should be clearly stated.

If the ACC engages consultants to perform services, the contract should clearly specify the duties, obligations and deliverables attached to the services to be performed.

Further details on employment arrangements and selection are discussed in Section 6 of this Handbook.

4. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

4.1. INTRODUCTION

Conflict of interest is one of the most important governance issues facing ACCs. As a recipient of Australian Government funds, it is essential that ACCs perform their functions in a fair, non-biased, and politically neutral manner and such that there is no actual or perceived conflict of interest in the decisions taken by the ACC, on the part of a Chair, member or employee of the ACC.

While some conflicts of interest are unavoidable, ACCs need to manage all conflicts within an ethical, open and transparent framework that requires the Chair, members and employees to act with integrity, impartiality, good faith and in the best interests of the ACC at all times. The principles that apply are about good governance. Transparency is fundamental to this – ie. disclosure by Chairs, members and employees of ACCs, of any personal interests that could spark a real or perceived conflict of interest. Consistently requiring conflicts to be

identified, recorded and dealt with properly is essential to building an ethical culture within an ACC.

4.2. DEFINITION

A conflict of interest is any interest that is not compatible with a person's ACC professional duties whether as a Chair, member or employee of an ACC. A conflict of interest arises when:

- a Chair, member or employee of an ACC has a personal, business, political or financial interest that could be considered to influence;
 - their work with the ACC, or
 - decisions taken by the ACC; or
- information and/or contacts gained through working in a professional capacity for the ACC is used;
 - to benefit their own personal business interests in any way; or
 - to inform other organisations that they are involved in outside the ACC where those organisations could benefit directly or indirectly from the information imparted.

Conflicts of interest can be direct or indirect, such as:

- owning a business that is under consideration for project funding (direct); or
- a close family member being employed by an organisation applying for support for a project (indirect); or
- the ACC Chair, member or employee participating in a decision which results in
 - an economic or financial benefit; or
 - a non-financial benefit such as a gift to the individual involved in making the decision.

A perception of a conflict of interest arises when it could reasonably be concluded that a conflict exists.

Some other examples of a conflict of interest include:

- the ACC employs a partner, relative or close friend of an ACC employee or member who is then responsible for approving benefits such as reimbursement of travel or salary increase for that person; or

- progressing personal business or personal business relationships through the course of ACC professional business.

ACCs should contact their Regional Office Manager if they have any questions about conflict of interest.

4.3. ACC CONDUCT

Community perceptions of conflicts of interest undermine the integrity and effectiveness of an ACC and may undermine the personal integrity and credibility of ACC Chairs, members and employees. ACCs must ensure that there is no actual conflict of interest, or a perception of a conflict of interest, on the part of individual Chairs, members, and employees of the organisation in relation to internal or external ACC activities.

4.3.1. Conflicts of Interest

DOTARS expects that all ACCs will have clearly documented principles and procedures, consistent with their Constitutions, for handling conflicts of interest. All action taken to address these situations must be documented and readily accessible for auditing purposes. In addition, the Operational Funding Contract specifies that ACCs will notify DOTARS immediately if a conflict of interest arises. The first point of contact should be the relevant DOTARS Regional Office.

If a Chair, member or employee of an ACC believes there is a possible conflict of interest, he or she must disclose the nature of the conflict to the Chair or Committee as soon as possible. Interests of immediate family members and close associates should also be disclosed to the extent that they are known and could be considered to lead to a conflict of interest. The disclosure must be recorded in the minutes of the ACC meeting.

Following disclosure the members of the ACC must determine whether or not there is a conflict of interest. Where it is determined that there a conflict of interest exists, the ACC must determine a course of action that ensures any subsequent decisions/actions are, and are seen to be, free of undue influence or bias.

The decision of the ACC (and any subsequent action) in relation to a perceived or actual conflict of interest must be recorded in the minutes of the ACC meeting.

4.4. ACCS AND THE POLITICAL PROCESS

4.4.1. *Contesting Elections and other Politically Aligned Activities*

DOTARS supports the involvement of ACC Chairs, members and Executive Officers in community organisations and institutions such as service clubs, Chambers of Commerce and Local Government. However, a special case of actual or perceived conflict of interest arises when a Chair, Committee member or employee of an ACC is active in any capacity in a State, Federal or Local Government election, or when there is a perception that they are publicly aligned politically (eg. attendance in their ACC professional capacity at a political event). This situation may raise a perception of conflict of interest between their apolitical role with the ACC and their political affiliations. **It is general practice in public life to separate these roles.**

To avoid the potential conflict of interest:

- **Chairs and members of an ACC** who are candidates, campaign managers, running for pre-selection or aligned publicly in any way during a State, Federal or Local Government election must stand aside during the period of the election. As soon as possible, they must contact their DOTARS Regional Manager to discuss their replacement while they are campaigning as a candidate or assisting the campaign publicly in any way.
- **ACC employees** who are candidates, campaign managers, running for pre-selection, or aligned publicly in any way during a State, Federal or Local Government election are also expected to step aside during the period of the election campaign. In cases where it is not possible for the employee to take leave, the employee must not represent the ACC publicly during the period of the campaign and the onus is on the ACC to implement the appropriate action to enable the ACC to continue to function and meet its obligations under the funding contract.

The ACC Chair / Committee are accountable and responsible for establishing procedures to ensure any involvement in such organisations does not impact on the duties the ACC employee is expected to perform under their employment contract and in relation to their role.

4.4.2. ACC employees elected to Local Government

DOTARS supports the involvement of ACC Chairs, members and Executive Officers in community organisations and institutions such as service clubs, Chambers of Commerce and Local Government. However, ACC employees elected to LGAs may find themselves exposed to actual or perceived conflicts of interest given their role in promoting, coordinating comments and assisting applicants in the development of their application under the *Regional Partnerships*(RP) programme.

The ACC Chair / Committee are accountable and responsible for establishing procedures to ensure any involvement in such organisations does not impact on the duties the ACC employee is expected to perform under their employment contract and in relation to their role (as defined in the ACC Handbook).

The ACC Chair / Committee are also accountable and responsible for establishing procedures to maintain the apolitical nature of the ACC during LGA elections. ACC employees are expected to follow the arrangements outlined in this Handbook for activity related to State and Federal elections (which is currently to stand aside from their job or role on the committee if they are candidates, campaign managers, running for pre-selection or aligned publicly in any way during a state, Federal or LG election). When ACC employees have to stand aside during an election period, the ACC must advise their DOTARS Regional Manager as soon as possible to discuss the employee's replacement during the campaign period).

ACCs must inform DOTARS of any ACC employees elected to LGA's and employees are required to advise the Regional Manager of their election so that DOTARS can maintain a register of ACC employees elected to LGA's. In this advice, the ACC must also outline and / or confirm:

1. how the ACC will manage the employee's work including all RP related activity while the employee stands aside during the election period;
2. that the employee's dual responsibilities will not in any way impede their ability to perform the duties of their ACC position;

3. the process the ACC has implemented to deal with conflicts of interest that will inevitably arise for the employee in the course of their role in *Regional Partnerships* project promotion and applications; and
 4. that the processes implemented by the ACC to manage the issues can withstand public scrutiny.
- The ‘period of the campaign’ is understood to take effect from the time the election is formally called.
 - The Assistant Secretary of the Regional Communities Branch will consider exemptions from these requirements on an individual case by case basis. Anyone seeking such an exemption should contact his or her relevant DOTARS Regional Office Manager in the first instance.

4.4.3. Use of ACC Facilities for Political Purposes

ACC assets and premises must not be used for party political purposes. This includes producing or disseminating political material using ACC equipment or resources such as photocopiers, fax machines, and office supplies.

4.4.4. Display of Political Material

Display of party political material including posters, leaflets and badges, is not permitted on ACC premises. Similarly, information that is of a political nature must not be added to ACC websites or included in ACC printed material.

4.4.5. Public Comment on Political and Social Issues

The Government does not restrict ACC Chairs, members and employees making public comment. However, they must be aware that there is a tension between comments made in a personal capacity and in their capacity as a representative of an ACC. Therefore, ACC Chairs, members and employees should carefully consider the impact of any public comments they make. In particular, ACC Chairs, members and employees should not take any action or make any public comments in their role as a representative of an ACC that might imply that the ACC prefers or supports the policies of a particular political party.

In this context public comment includes comments made on political and social issues as part of public speaking engagements, radio and television interviews, general correspondence, and in any other circumstances, where it is reasonably foreseeable that the comment will flow to the community at large.

4.4.6. Information Campaigns and Promotional Activities

Some information and promotional campaigns related to Australian Government programmes and initiatives may need to be suspended or curtailed during an election campaign period, depending on the nature of the campaign and whether they are likely to affect voting in an election.

Campaigns, items on websites and newsletter articles which highlight the role of particular Ministers or which address issues which are controversial between the major political parties must be discontinued in the caretaker period (ie, from when the election is formally announced by the Governor General until the result of the election is formally declared).

DOTARS will circulate advice to ACCs on caretaker conventions that will apply during the caretaker period.

For clarification on specific situations you should contact your Regional Office.

4.4.7. Dispute Involving Conflict of Interest Issues

Where a conflict of interest by a Chair, member or employee of an ACC is brought to DOTARS' attention and is disputed by the ACC, the Programme Delegate, Assistant Secretary, Regional Communities has the power to investigate and determine the action necessary to address the conflict(s) they deem appropriate.

5. MANAGEMENT OF ACC OPERATIONS

5.1. CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

Corporate governance is about...

how an organisation is managed, its functional structures, its culture, its policies and strategies, and the ways in which it deals with its various stakeholders. In many ways governance is a combination of legal and better practice organisational structure and management requirements aimed at facilitating accountability and improving performance.

(Auditor-General, Better Practice Public Sector Governance p.2)

The Department requires ACCs to adopt good corporate governance through best practice including:

- clear definitions of responsibility, roles of the ACC Chair, members and employees, with clear lines of reporting;

- clear understanding of relationships between the ACC and all levels of government, business and the broader community;
- transparent management processes and procedures for addressing conflicts of interest from those entrusted to manage resources and deliver outcomes; and
- accountability for all operational aspects, particularly for decisions about funding.

Corporate governance is underpinned by a values system and code of conduct that outlines standards of integrity and ethical behaviour and highlights the level of transparency and consistency in actions that all staff should adopt.

Good corporate governance also requires sound risk management. Finally, reporting is needed for accountability purposes including outlining significant issues that arise and comparing performance against key indicators.

5.2. RISK MANAGEMENT

Each ACC should have a documented risk management process in place. A risk management process identifies key risks, outlines strategies for minimising those risks and provides a plan to address residual risks across the organisation. It is a process that includes four functions of planning, organising, leading and controlling losses of an organisation at a reasonable cost.

Each ACC is to periodically review its risk management plan, its decision making process on the level of risk, its management of planning and the day-to-day operational processes it utilises.

Both the process applied in the risk analysis and the control procedures to be implemented must be documented and reported to the appropriate ACC meeting for acceptance/amendment. ACCs are also expected to review their plans in consultation with their external auditor. The Department will review ACCs' Risk Management plans as part of the Department's Quality Assurance Assessment process.

5.3. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

DOTARS provides funds to ACCs through the Operational Funding Contract to cover the day-to-day operational and administrative costs as identified in the Annual Business Plan.

The Operational Funding Contract specifies the arrangements for payment.

- Each ACC is to implement appropriate financial management controls, guidelines and management information reports consistent with Australian Accounting Standards as specified in the Operational Funding Contract. Each ACC must maintain financial records so that they can readily comply with the requirements of the Operational Funding Contract.

5.4. REPORTING

The Operational Funding Contract specifies the requirements for ACCs to report to DOTARS. Essentially the reports are:

- a quarterly/half-yearly report that includes a financial statement as well as reporting on progress towards achieving the deliverables specified in the Annual Business Plan and the outputs and outcomes set down in the Strategic Regional Plan. DOTARS advises ACCs of the report format; and
- an annual report of outcomes against the Strategic Regional Plan and Annual Business Plan, submitted to DOTARS no later than 30 August, following the end of the financial year on which the report is based.

The Operational Funding Contract outlines reporting requirements.

5.5. COMMITTEE RESPONSIBILITIES

5.5.1. *Meetings*

All ACCs must hold meetings to enable the incorporated body to make decisions, in accordance with the requirements of their Constitutions.

DOTARS expects all ACCs to comply with the following requirements:

- Provide adequate notice of meetings;
- Notify DOTARS Regional Office of meetings;
- Report on Year To Date expenditure against budget;
- Report on progress against Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) in the Operational Funding Contract;
- Keep accurate Minutes of meetings;
- Record any declarations of conflict of interest and the action taken to address the conflict;
- Record ACC decisions; and
- Document any actions taken as a result of decisions.

5.5.2. Minutes

ACCs must keep accurate minutes of all proceedings and decisions of all ACC meetings in accordance with their Constitutions.

5.5.3. Sub-Committees

Where sub-committees are established, ACCs must ensure that their Constitution includes provision for decisions of sub-committees to be ratified by the full ACC. This is to protect the ACC from possible liabilities arising from decisions made on behalf of the ACC but to which the ACC Board has not been a party.

5.6. GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

5.6.1. General Insurance

DOTARS currently arranges for three types of insurance cover for all ACCs:

- Not for Profit Organisation Liability Insurance;
- Personal Accident Insurance; and
- Combined General Liability Insurance: (Personal Injury / Property Damage / Advertising).

Not for Profit Organisation Liability Insurance covers the ACC against claims arising from ‘wrongful acts’ / **professional indemnity** (eg misstatement, misleading statement, act, omission,), ‘employment practices’ (eg breach of contract) and/or ‘personal injury - publisher's liability’ (eg defamation, infringement of copyright).

Personal Accident Insurance covers the ACC against any personal injury liability to the Committee Members of ACCs whilst involved in ACC activities including travel to and from such activities.

Combined General Liability Insurance (Personal Injury / Property Damage / Advertising) covers the ACC against any legal liability to the general public in respect of bodily injury (ie, public liability) or damage to property arising out of the business of the ACC.

Extraneous “out of pocket” expenses such as damage to or loss of personal property while undertaking ACC activities (eg. damage to personal vehicle on way to ACC meeting, stolen suitcases etc) should be managed within the ACCs’ current budget where these incidents are not covered under the existing insurance policy. The Department will not pay for this type of

“additional” coverage as the cost benefit is not there. If an ACC has any questions when an incident arises they should discuss it with their Regional Office in the first instance.

Copies of the Insurance Policy statements and schedules are posted to the secure Members section of the ACC website. Inquiries or questions regarding claims in relation to insurance matters should be directed to Marsh Pty Ltd - the Department's Insurance Broker - in the first instance, citing the relevant Insurance Policy Numbers. Their contact details are: 03 9603 2222.

In order to maintain the currency of their insurance cover, ACCs are required to provide the information to the Regional Office and the Insurance Broker (Marsh Pty Ltd) of any changes to membership of their ACC as soon as they occur.

The insurance cover outlined above is based on the activities for ACCs defined in the ACC Charter. ACCs who take on additional initiatives outside the Charter may need to take out additional insurance cover (at their own cost) – and are encouraged to seek their own advice on whether this is necessary or not.

5.6.2. Workers’ Compensation Insurance

ACCs are responsible for taking out Workers’ Compensation Insurance under the relevant State/Territory legislation to cover their employees and ACCs must be aware of and comply with their legal responsibilities.

5.6.3. Asset Insurance

ACCs are responsible for the insurance of all assets owned or controlled by the ACC. The ACC is also responsible for the insurance of any motor vehicle leased by the ACC (subject to the terms of the lease).

5.6.4. Record Keeping

ACCs must keep accurate records of their operations and store them securely. ACCs must maintain records and documents in a manner consistent with their statutory and contractual obligations. This requirement includes the maintenance of records on vehicle usage consistent with the requirements of the Australian Taxation Office (ATO).

Much of the information gathered and recorded by the ACCs can be considered sensitive or “in-confidence”. The Commonwealth defines “in-confidence” to mean “information whose compromise could cause limited damage to the Commonwealth, the Government,

commercial entities or members of the public” (Commonwealth Protective Security Manual). ACCs need to be aware of the sensitive nature of the information and take appropriate action to maintain its integrity.

Under the Operational Funding Contract ACCs must implement a records management system that:

1. clearly marks and securely stores Commercial-in-Confidence *Regional Partnerships* applications and other confidential material and files;
2. manages the distribution and retrieval of *Regional Partnerships* applications to ACC Board members (particularly where these are Commercial-in-Confidence);
3. maintains accurate, up-to-date files of all ACC operational documents;
4. maintains secure, separate files for ACC personnel (that contain employment contracts, performance reports and other appropriate material);
5. retains records for no less than seven years and appropriately disposes of records when the records have ceased to be of current value;
6. ensures all electronic records are secure and appropriate back up and archival processes are established and maintained for such records, including off-site storage approved by the committee; and
7. maintains records of vehicle usage consistent with the requirements of the Australian Taxation Office (ATO).

5.6.5. Reimbursement of Costs incurred by ACC Members

ACC Operational Funds may be used, with Committee approval, to reimburse ‘reasonable expenses’ incurred by ACC Members in attending meetings or performing ACC activities. Reasonable expenses means travel and accommodation, meals and incidentals. Maximum reimbursement for accommodation, meals and incidentals is not to exceed Tier 3 rates as determined and published by the Remuneration Tribunal from time to time (www.remtribunal.gov.au). Current rates as at June 2004 are at **Appendix B**.

The Department acknowledges that in some country areas the cost of accommodation may be substantially higher or lower, depending on supply and demand. In cases where the standard local costs exceed the designated rates, the ACC can exceed the above limits. However the

ACC must ensure that the principles of reasonableness, accountability and value for money are upheld.

Reimbursement rates for travel are as follows:

- economy airfare where air travel is necessary for ACC Members;
- business class airfare for Chairs; and
- private vehicle travel to and from ACC duties covering out-of-pocket expenses for fuel at Remuneration Tribunal published rates.

Travel details and odometer readings are to be recorded on the claim.

Australian Government funds must not be used to pay ACC Members, including the Chair, 'sitting fees' or any compensation for discharging their duties as ACC Members.

An ACC Member, including the Chair, is not entitled to claim the cost of employing a person to look after their business whilst the Member is performing ACC duties.

5.6.6. Travel reimbursement for ACC Chairs, members and employees

It is recommended that travel costs incurred for ACC purposes be reimbursed at the current rates as set out by the Remuneration Tribunal. Current rates that would apply are:

- Tier 2 rates for ACC Chairs
- Tier 3 rates for all other ACC members and personnel.

Attached is the current schedule from the Remuneration Tribunal's determination as at March 2004, **Appendix B**. Updates to these rates are posted on the Remuneration Tribunal Website from time to time. These can be found at:

<http://www.remtribunal.gov.au/determinationsReports/byYear/2004dets/2004-03Determination.pdf>.

5.6.7. Bank Accounts

The establishment and maintenance of bank accounts (including credit card accounts) must be in accordance with the Operational Funding Contract and the ACC Constitution.

The Nominated Account must be established and administered as per the Operational Funding Contract. It can incorporate sub-accounts for related accounts (from Operational Funds) under this contract (such as the Employee Entitlement Account and/or Asset Replacement Account where these exist) where these sub-accounts are specifically separated from the main Operational Funding Account.

Each ACC should maintain a file containing all records relating to the bank accounts including authorisations to establish and operate the account, statements, and correspondence.

An additional file should be maintained for all account statements and reconciliations.

Where ACCs use a corporate credit card, the card must be in the name of the ACC, and records must be maintained as for other bank accounts. ACCs must ensure that rewards accrued through a loyalty/points accrual program are only used for ACC operations and not for personal benefit.

5.7. ASSET POLICY / PROCEDURES AND LEASING

ACCs are responsible for purchasing, managing and disposing of the assets they acquire with Operational Funding. ACCs must implement an Assets Management System that sets out procedures for management of assets and a consistent approach is recommended that includes the following aspects:

- Purchasing
- Register of Assets
- Asset stock take
- Asset replacement account
- Asset disposal
- Method for calculating depreciation

The Operational Funding Contract details the obligations of ACCs in relation to assets when using funds provided for under the Operational Funding Contract.

5.7.1. Purchasing

The key things ACCs must comply with in relation to purchasing assets are:

- the Operational Funding Contract;
- ACCs wishing to purchase assets valued at more than \$1,000 using Operational Funding must first receive approval from the relevant DOTARS Regional Manager;
- ACCs cannot use Operational Funding to purchase or hire purchase motor vehicles either directly or through the use of salary sacrificing arrangements;

- ACCs must keep appropriate documentation for all asset purchases. Where a case to purchase an asset over \$1,000 has been put to DOTARS for approval, both the case and the approval should be kept on file; and
- Asset purchases are to provide value for money so it is important that quotes for purchases are obtained and kept on file.

5.7.2. Register of Assets

As outlined in the Operational Funding Contract, a Register of Assets must be maintained for all assets valued at over \$1,000. Key components of a Register of Assets are:

- Asset number;
- Barcode or other identifier located on the asset;
- Asset type/class;
- Asset description;
- Capitalisation date;
- Type of lease (if applicable);
- Useful life;
- Expected expiration date;
- Contact;
- Location;
- Asset value;
- Annual depreciation based on accountancy standard methodology;
- Accumulated depreciation;
- Written down value;
- Disposal date;
- Disposal method; and
- Disposal receipt number.

The Register of Assets is to be updated whenever assets are acquired or disposed of by the ACC.

A sample Register of Assets that ACCs can adapt this for their own use can be found on the secure Member's section of the ACC website at www.acc.gov.au.

5.7.3. Portable and Attractive Items

In addition to maintaining a Register of Assets, ACCs can maintain a register of portable and attractive items. Portable and attractive items are those that:

- Cost greater than \$300;
- Cost less than \$1,000 (if they cost more than \$1,000 they classify as a standard depreciating asset);
- Have a high inherent risk of theft;
- Are easily transferable/portable; and
- Are attractive in terms of their personal use or for resale.

A sample Register of Assets for portable and attractive items can be found on the secure Member's section of the ACC website at www.acc.gov.au.

5.7.4. Stock take

ACCs are to complete a stock take of their assets every 12 months. During a stock take, ACCs will:

- confirm that all assets are correctly recorded in the asset register;
- check on the condition of the asset; and
- add any unrecorded existing assets to the register.

5.7.5. Asset Replacement Account

An important part of asset management is making provision for replacement of assets as their useful life expires. ACCs must budget for asset replacement from their Operational Funding and are to maintain an Asset Replacement Account. The value of funds in this account would normally reflect the accumulated depreciation recorded in the Asset Register.

Interest earned on funds in this account shall be treated as if the interest were part of the Operational Funding, as specified in the Operational Funding Contract. This account will be audited as part of the annual audit provided to DOTARS.

5.7.6. Asset Disposal

All ACCs must have clear procedures for the disposal of assets, to ensure that there is a fair return to the ACC on the asset and to avoid any appearance of bias or preferential treatment.

Under no circumstances can assets be directly sold to an individual, particularly the ACC Chair, members or employees.

Assets must be sold either through a tender process or by obtaining quotes for the sale from local dealers. The process is to be clearly documented and the results recorded on the Register of Assets.

Profit from the sale (disposal price less any deduction for the depreciated value of the asset) of the asset is to be treated as part of the Operational Funding.

5.7.7. Method for calculating depreciation

The Department does not prescribe the method for calculating asset depreciation. However, a commonly used example for depreciation of assets over their estimated useful life is the straight line method which most organisations use, including the Department.

The Australian Accounting Standard 4 defines useful life as:

- the estimated period of time over which the future economic benefits embodied in a depreciable asset are expected to be consumed by the entity; or
- the estimated total service, expressed in terms of production of similar units, that is expected to be obtained from the asset by the entity.

All non-current assets, except land have a limited useful life. Finance leases and leasehold improvements are depreciated over the lesser of the term of the lease and its useful life.

The Department uses the following general rates of useful life:

Buildings	25 – 60 years
Leasehold Improvements	Lease Term
Infrastructure	10 – 80 years
Plant and Equipment	10 years
Computer Equipment	5 years
Software	5 years
Office Equipment	10 years
Intangible Assets	3 years

5.7.8. Motor Vehicle leases

Motor vehicles should only be acquired under an operating lease. Vehicles cannot be purchased or hire purchased with Operational Funding under any circumstances. Alternative leasing arrangements pose an unacceptable risk to the ACC and the Australian Government.

When selecting motor vehicles and other assets and negotiating leasing arrangements the ACC needs to ensure that the following principles are upheld:

- value for money;
- open and effective competition;
- ethics and fair dealing;
- probity; and
- accountability and reporting.

5.7.9. Asset Insurance

ACCs are responsible for the insurance of all assets owned or controlled by the ACC. The ACC is also responsible for the insurance of any motor vehicle (subject to the terms of the lease).

5.8. RELOCATING, REFURBISHING OR EXTENDING ACC PREMISES - POLICY AND PROCEDURES

It is recognised that there are a number of circumstances where ACCs will find it necessary to relocate, refurbish or extend ACC premises (eg. this could be in circumstances where premises are no longer available, or rent becomes exorbitant, premises are not adequate, or a location arises that is far better strategically positioned).

It is expected that in most cases, ACC relocations, refurbishment or extension to premises can be planned to occur when a lease expires and any of these activities that are proposed, should be discussed with the DOTARS Regional Manager well in advance.

5.8.1 ACC Relocation, Refurbishment or Extension to premises where there are no additional costs involved

The ACC should ensure the premises comply with Commonwealth legislation (such as disabled access) and advise their Regional Manager of the dates, the new ACC contact details and the cost of the activity and ongoing rental against the ACCs' current budget.

5.8.2 Relocation, Refurbishment or Extension to premises where additional costs are involved

The ACC is required to put a business case to the DOTARS' Regional Manager outlining the following:

- the reasons for the relocation, refurbishment or extension to premises;
- the benefits to be gained from the new location, refurbishment or extension;
- any savings to be gained from the new location, refurbishment or extension;
- advice that the premises comply with Commonwealth legislation eg. as ACC premises are funded by the Australian Government, they need to have disabled access;
- comparable rents in the area;
- the costs associated with the relocation, refurbishment or extension (removal costs, fit out, stationary, signage etc);
- the additional amounts the ACC seeks from DOTARS as a one-off amount and / or ongoing expenses (eg. higher rent);
- the costs the ACC is able to meet from within its current budget and from where;
- the Regional Manager will advise the ACC of the outcome and if successful, the amount the Department will pay;
- the ACC then undertakes the agreed activity, within the agreed budget;
- the ACC claims the reimbursement from DOTARS via a tax invoice to the Regional Office; and
- the ACC's operational funding contract will be varied by the agreed amount.

Note: Any ACC relocation, refurbishment, or extension to premises requiring additional funding will require approval prior to any arrangements being entered into.

DOTARS' National Office approval is required for all ACC relocations, refurbishment or extensions to premises where there is an additional cost involved. ACCs should not relocate,

refurbish or extend their premises and seek reimbursement of costs retrospectively as there are limited funds available.

6. THE ACC AS AN EMPLOYER

6.1. OBLIGATIONS

The ACC, as an independent and legal entity, is required to meet its contractual and legal obligations as an employer. ACCs should seek professional and/or legal advice as necessary on all Human Resource Management issues such as recruitment and management (including contracting), wages and conditions, workplace relations such as grievance procedures, performance reviews, occupational health and safety, staff training, superannuation, employment taxes and more.

Organisations with a documented, effective, formal grievance procedure, that is open and accessible to staff, will have grievances surface earlier, be resolved earlier, and be less likely to find a grievance issue escalate to a difficult management problem. Unresolved grievances can be financially expensive to organisations because they result in increased absenteeism, increased leave due to stress, low morale within the workplace, higher turnover of staff and underperformance. All ACCs must implement a documented formal grievance procedure that enables the ACC to investigate and resolve staff grievances efficiently and effectively.

All States and Territories have Government websites that provide practical information on a range of employer legal responsibilities. For example, the fundamental features of a sound grievance process that directs the user to sample grievance procedures and guidelines can be found at www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/adb.nsf/pages/grievproc.

Comprehensive information on ACCs legal obligations to its employees can be found via the Business Entry Point website at www.business.gov.au or through the Australian Government Department of Industry, Tourism and Resources' website at www.industry.gov.au.

ACCs should also be aware of the constraints and requirements on ACC staffing which are included in the Operational Funding Contract.

6.2. JOB DESCRIPTION AND DUTY STATEMENT

The ACC must have job descriptions and duty statements, agreed by the Committee for all employee positions. Job descriptions should reflect the core business of the ACC in assisting with the *Regional Partnerships* programme.

A comprehensive duty statement is to be provided as part of staff employment contracts.

6.3. SELECTION OF ACC EMPLOYEES

The selection of ACC employees must be based on the merit principle and follow a transparent and public process. This means that selection decisions are based on the qualifications, skills and experience of candidates in relation to the duties of the position and that the process is, and is seen to be, fair and open with all candidates having an equal opportunity for success.

6.4. EMPLOYMENT ARRANGEMENTS

The ACC should agree the terms and conditions for the position of Executive Officer or their equivalent and any other ACC personnel. Job descriptions determine the selection criteria for positions.

A comprehensive duty statement should be provided as part of the employment contract. The Department of Workplace Relations and Small Business can provide examples of job descriptions, employment contracts and Australian Workplace Agreements to serve as a guide to ACCs. These can be found at www.business.gov.au.

Employment contracts must be derived through an independent process and endorsed by the full ACC. The use of an employment expert such as an Industrial Relations consultant, legal employment specialist, or the Office of the Employment Advocate is recommended.

Employment arrangements must be clearly documented and ACCs must ensure that each employee has a copy of the agreed terms and conditions prior to commencement of his or her employment.

6.4.1. Remuneration

The term of employment for ACC employees must correspond with the Operational Funding Contract period. ACCs must determine and document remuneration rates, including non-cash items and reimbursement of expenses for employees.

Increases in remuneration should be in line with CPI increases, and aligned with performance assessments, industry standards and local conditions, and be clearly documented.

6.4.2. *Leave and Entitlements*

As an employer, each ACC is responsible for complying with all relevant legislative requirements for employees such as annual leave, sick leave, long service leave, maternity leave and superannuation. ACCs are provided with funding to cover all employment costs.

As ACCs are funded on a financial year basis, the ACC is also responsible for ensuring that staff take their accrued leave within the Operational Funding period/period of their employment contract.

6.4.3. *Staff Training and Development*

The ACC should determine the portion of its budget it allocates for staff training and development. Individual staff development plans should be negotiated between the ACC Chair and Executive Officer or equivalent, or between the Executive Officer and ACC staff as appropriate. Specific training and development activities should be linked to each employee's performance agreement.

6.5. EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE

Every ACC should have a Staff Performance Management Framework in place. Individual performance agreements should be negotiated between the ACC Chair and Executive Officer or equivalent, or between the Executive Officer and ACC staff as appropriate, and be linked to training and development activities, as well as increases in remuneration.

Performance reviews should be conducted regularly, preferably at 3 and 9 months into the employment contract. Performance reviews are an opportunity to provide two-way performance feedback, assess a staff member's overall performance, and identify strengths and weaknesses, to develop a plan to address weaknesses and to reward performance.

7. PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT

Performance assessment for ACCs has 3 components – feedback against Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), Quality Assurance Assessments (QAAs) and audits. The Performance Assessment Framework aims to determine the effectiveness of ACCs in delivering against their Operational Funding Contract as well as to assist ACCs to implement continuous improvement in their operations.

7.1. KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

ACCs are required to report on their effectiveness in delivering against their Operational Funding Contract using Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). KPIs are statements of those deliverables for which each ACC is accountable and take account of the ACCs' Strategic Regional and Annual Business Plans, *Regional Partnerships* funding and projects, and the *ACC Charter* and Ministerial Priorities. DOTARS will determine the assessment criteria and review the ACCs' feedback in consultation with individual ACCs.

7.2. QUALITY ASSURANCE ASSESSMENT (QAA)

QAAs are a standard administrative mechanism used by organisations to benchmark operations against best practice. ACCs will undertake a *Quality Assurance Assessment* (QAAs) of their operations against the QAA Checklist provided to ACCs in May 2004 and as amended from time-to-time.

The ACC shall provide a report on the findings to the Regional Manager in November each year against the Quality Assurance Assessment Checklist. This report is to be endorsed by the ACC Committee.

Every two years the ACC shall engage an independent person or agency (agreed to in writing by the Department) to conduct the Quality Assurance Assessment of the ACC and to report to the Regional Manager on the findings. This report is to be endorsed by the ACC Committee.

Where a Quality Assurance Assessment Report recommends action on the part of the ACC, the ACC is responsible for implementing these recommendations.

The ACC shall, upon request from the Commonwealth, provide information concerning the steps taken to implement the recommendations of a Quality Assurance Assessment Report.

QAAs focus on a range of governance aspects of ACC Operations to assist ACCs to improve their processes and procedures. Results of the QAA assessments will be utilised to guide continuous improvement in individual ACC's, across the ACC Network and the Department's Corporate Governance framework for ACCs.

7.3. AUDITS

DOTARS' annual internal audit plan includes independent audits of some ACCs each year.

The purpose of the audits is to ensure accountability and transparency in ACC operations and

in the management of Australian Government funds. The results of the audits assist ACCs and the Department in continuous improvement to achieve these operational standards both on an individual ACC level and across the national network of ACCs.

8. COMMUNICATION

8.1. FEEDBACK TO THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT

A primary function of ACCs under the ACC Charter is to provide feedback to the Australian Government on regional issues and Australian Government policies. The first point of contact for this feedback is the relevant DOTARS' Regional Office. The Department will brief the relevant Minister(s) on significant issues involving or identified by ACCs.

8.2. MARKETING AND BRANDING

ACCs are required to follow the designated protocols when using ACC or Commonwealth branding or logo and the tagline. The designated protocols and guidelines can be found on the secure Members' area of the ACC website at www.acc.gov.au

8.3. NAMING OF ACCS

The Minister has determined that all ACCs shall use the acronym "ACC" in their name preceded by up to 5 words that accurately reflect the ACCs regional location. The ACC Operational Funding Contract specifies this obligation and the requirements in the contract Schedule.

8.4. COMMUNICATION WITH THE MEDIA

ACCs must follow the Guidelines for Media Contact by ACCs which has been distributed to ACCs and can be found on the secure area of the ACC website at www.acc.gov.au

The media is an important stakeholder and should be treated as such. ACCs are to maintain good relations with the media in all its forms, including print, radio, and television, and are to use the media to promote the Committee, its activities and DOTARS' *Regional Partnerships* programme.

When dealing with the media, the ACC must maintain the good reputation of the Australian Government. If the ACC is dissatisfied with policy or programme decisions made by the Department, the ACC must contact the DOTARS' Regional Office to achieve a resolution of the issues rather than approach the media.

8.5. LAUNCHES, SEMINARS OR OTHER PUBLIC EVENTS

ACCs must follow the guidelines for launches in the ACC internal procedures manual for *Regional Partnerships*, at Section 3 of the manual June 2004, called ‘Invitations to Openings/Launches’. A template from the manual is at **Appendix C**.

8.6. ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION

ACCs are required to develop and maintain an Internet site, providing information about the ACC, its work and contact information. The site must include a link to the Australian Government website for ACCs at www.acc.gov.au. In addition, ACCs must maintain an email account for electronic communication with DOTARS.

9. SUPPORT FROM THE DEPARTMENT

9.1. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT AND REGIONAL SERVICES

The Australian Government Department of Transport and Regional Services (DOTARS) is responsible for policy development and implementation of a range of regional programmes and the administration and support of the ACC network. As part of this responsibility, the Department monitors, supports and assesses ACC performance to ensure the Department's programmes are addressing the priorities identified by the Government and achieving the required outcomes.

DOTARS provides support to ACCs in a number of ways including:

- Consultation - the provision of consultative forums to promote partnership, discussion and two-way feedback between the Australian Government and ACCs;
- Development and support - the provision of day-to-day assistance and advice to ACCs on strategic and operational matters;
- Training – the development and delivery of training for ACC Chairs and Executive Officers through conferences and workshops;
- Infrastructure support - the provision of practical support such as the ACC Internet site and promotional material such as ACC banners and pamphlets; and
- Administration - support for and advice about sound governance practices including the implementation of a programme of ACC Audits, Quality Assurance Assessments, ACC contract management and financial management of the ACC Network and *Regional Partnerships*.

9.2. ACC INTERNET SITE

The ACC website is maintained by DOTARS to enhance communication and the dissemination of information between individual ACCs, regional communities and DOTARS. The site is located at www.acc.gov.au. The ACC website provides direct links to individual ACC homepages and other relevant reference sites.

9.3. COMMUNICATION WITH THE DEPARTMENT

The Regional Offices of DOTARS are the primary points of contact for ACCs. As noted in the Operational Funding Contract, all communication with the Australian Government by an ACC shall be directed to the Departmental Liaison Officer or as directed by DOTARS.

NATIONAL NETWORK OF AREA CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEES

- CHARTER –

The national network of Area Consultative Committees (ACCs) provides an important link between the Federal Government and rural and metropolitan Australia. As volunteer community based organisations, ACCs are uniquely placed to respond to issues in their regions and provide a vital conduit to government on local, social and economic conditions.

The Chairs of the ACCs, who are appointed by the Minister of the Department of Transport and Regional Services, are leading members of the local community. They and their committee members are drawn from the community, local business and government, and provide strategic leadership and direction to ACCs in fulfilling their charter and functions.

The Government recognises that optimal regional growth and development will only be achieved when regional communities manage change at the local level, realise their potential and plan for and lead their own development with the support of both the Government and the private sector.

However, this in turn will work best if there is an effective organisational arrangement in place that enables the Government to respond to each region's needs and that encourages the local community to take up the Government programmes designed to achieve these goals. It is this role that ACCs fulfil.

ACC Core Responsibilities

The ACC Charter comprises ***three core responsibilities*** from which all activity is derived.

1. ACCs are a key facilitator of change and development in their region.

To do this, ACCs know their region and communities well, from an economic, social and environmental perspective, by:

- understanding the dynamics of their communities and region in terms of investment patterns and demographics;
- searching out the unique strategic advantages in the region that generate growth and development, and determining what is making these communities thrive;
- identifying and working in partnership with the leaders in the community who are able to build enthusiasm for new initiatives, and fostering their support;

- identifying issues that are impacting on their communities, and determining the needs and priorities arising from these issues; and
- being particularly conscious of any sector of disadvantage in their communities and region, and looking to ensure such disadvantage is addressed as a priority.

2. ACCs are the link between Government, business and the community.

To achieve this, ACCs create and maintain cross-regional networks with all levels of government, particularly the Federal Government by:

- promoting and disseminating information on Government policies and programmes, particularly those orientated towards business and communities;
- informing Government of the impact of policies and programmes on business and the community;
- from a local community context, providing comment on, and as appropriate endorsement of, project proposals submitted for consideration under Government programmes; and
- providing constructive and regular advice and feedback to Government on community needs, service and development requirements.

3. ACCs facilitate Whole of Government responses to opportunities in their communities.

To achieve this, ACCs act as a catalyst and coordination point for regional development by:

- drawing together the range of avenues and resources by which communities and regions can foster development;
- working to maintain constructive alliances with all levels of government, business and the community;
- actively identifying opportunities to bring Whole of Government solutions to community and regional issues; and
- facilitating the development and submission of suitable project proposals by local proponents and sharing ownership of the results.

Ministerial Statement of Priorities

The Government has determined the policies and programmes it will instigate in support of regional development. It has tasked Area Consultative Committees with contributing to regional development in the following priority areas arising from these policies:

- Supporting a planned, cooperative approach to regional development, particularly to the social and economic impacts of structural change, in rural, regional and metropolitan Australia;
- Improving the business and investment environment in regions;
- Addressing pressing social issues faced by regional communities, particularly through building community skills and capacity;
- Improving regional services, particularly by encouraging Federal Government programme take-up and support for partnership solutions;
- A partnership approach with indigenous communities to bring whole of government solutions to indigenous disadvantage;
- Encouraging the growth of regional businesses and employment;
- Sustaining our natural resources and environment; and
- Actively seeking out those opportunities that arise from the evolving economic, social and technological environment that lend themselves to / are suitable for joint private / public sector development.

ACC Work Principles

In undertaking the above, the following key principles will be embedded in and visible throughout all ACC operations.

Accountability

All activities will comply with good governance practices including sound administrative decision-making, and open and accountable financial management.

Ethical practices

All matters will be handled with integrity and honesty, and in accord with relevant legal obligations.

All members will understand what constitutes 'conflict of interest' and will openly declare any conflict of interest, perceived or actual, in relation to any discussion or decision of the ACC.

Inclusivity

All activities will be conducted so as to recognise the breadth of diversity across their communities and so as to include appropriate representation on their committees, from all within their communities whenever possible.

Independence

All activities will be conducted in a non-partisan manner and in such a way as to be beholden to no individual, group or organisation.

Openness

All processes and decisions will be transparent and open to scrutiny.

Performance orientation

All activities will have clearly defined and measurable performance goals and will be evaluated against these goals in a timely manner.

Professionalism

All activities and decisions will have an orientation to quality.

The ACC will seek to be a model of best practice in leadership in community development and capacity building.

Appendix B

REMUNERATION TRIBUNAL TRAVELLING ALLOWANCE RATES

A1. Travelling Allowance Rates: The Travelling Allowance rates set out in Table A1.A will apply from 28 March 2004, in accordance with the provisions of Part 3 (*Travel Expenses*) of this Determination.

Table A1.A – Rates of Travelling Allowance (Accommodation, meals and incidentals) per overnight absence.

Column 1	Column 2	Column 3	Column 4
	TIER 1	TIER 2	TIER 3
5.8 CAPITAL CITIES			
Adelaide	\$300	\$249	\$208
Brisbane	\$370	\$242	\$202
Canberra	\$300	\$227	\$186
Darwin	\$300	\$245	\$203
Hobart	\$300	\$217	\$190
Melbourne	\$370	\$274	\$236
Perth	\$370	\$230	\$203
Sydney	\$370	\$278	\$239
COUNTRY CENTRES			
Non- Specified Country Centres (ie not specified below)	\$196	\$171	\$146
NORTHERN TERRITORY			
Alice Springs	\$210	\$190	\$171
Jabiru	\$275	\$275	\$256
Nhulunbuy	\$226	\$226	\$207
Yulara	\$466	\$466	\$447
QUEENSLAND			
Cairns	\$196	\$186	\$158
Gold Coast	\$210	\$207	\$188
Horn Island (QLD)	\$213	\$213	\$194
Thursday Island (QLD)	\$235	\$235	\$216

Column 1	Column 2	Column 3	Column 4
	TIER 1	TIER 2	TIER 3
Weipa	\$220	\$220	\$201
NEW SOUTH WALES			
Bathurst	\$196	\$186	\$158
Gosford	\$196	\$186	\$158
Maitland	\$196	\$186	\$158
Newcastle	\$290	\$192	\$173
Orange	\$196	\$186	\$158
Wagga Wagga	\$196	\$186	\$158
Wollongong	\$210	\$190	\$171
VICTORIA			
Bendigo	\$196	\$186	\$158
SOUTH AUSTRALIA			
Marla	\$196	\$186	\$158
Wilpena	\$210	\$200	\$181
WESTERN AUSTRALIA			
Broome	\$221	\$221	\$202
Dampier	\$210	\$196	\$177
Exmouth	\$210	\$197	\$178
Geraldton	\$196	\$186	\$158
Halls Creek	\$196	\$186	\$158
Kalgoorlie	\$210	\$191	\$172
Karratha	\$251	\$251	\$232
Kununurra	\$210	\$203	\$184
Newman	\$218	\$218	\$199
Northam	\$210	\$190	\$171
Paraburdoo	\$222	\$222	\$203
Pt Hedland	\$214	\$214	\$195
Tom Price	\$210	\$195	\$176
Wyndham	\$196	\$186	\$158

Column 1	Column 2	Column 3	Column 4
	TIER 1	TIER 2	TIER 3
TASMANIA			
Burnie	\$196	\$186	\$158
Devonport	\$210	\$193	\$174
Launceston	\$210	\$189	\$170
EXTERNAL TERRITORIES			
Christmas Island	\$210	\$205	\$186
Cocos (Keeling) Island	\$210	\$205	\$186
Norfolk Island	\$210	\$204	\$185

A2. Meal and Incidental Components: The rates set out in Table A2.A provide the relevant meal and incidental components of the Travelling Allowance rates set out in Table A1.A. These rates are specified for the purposes of clauses 3.6, 3.7 and 3.8.

A2.1 The rates in Columns 3 and 5 of Table A2.A apply to Non-specified country centres and the centres listed in Table A2.B below.

Table A2.A – Meals and Incidentals Components

Column 1	Col. 2	Col. 3	Col. 4	Col. 5
	(refer to clause A2.1)		(refer to clause A2.1)	
	Tiers 1 and 2		Tier 3	
Breakfast	\$20	\$18	\$18	\$16
Lunch	\$27	\$18	\$20	\$18
Dinner	\$38	\$35	\$34	\$31
Incidentals	\$20	\$20	\$14	\$14
Total	\$105	\$91	\$86	\$79

Table A2. B –Country Centres (refer clause A2.1)

Country Centre	Country Centre
Bathurst (NSW)	Halls Creek (WA)
Bendigo (Vic)	Maitland (NSW)
Burnie (Tas)	Marla (SA)
Cairns (Qld)	Orange (NSW)
Gosford (NSW)	Wagga Wagga (NSW)
Geraldton (WA)	Wyndham (WA)

