



AUSTRALIAN SENATE

## FINANCE AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

REFERENCE COMMITTEE

PARLIAMENT HOUSE  
CANBERRA ACT 2600  
Telephone: 02 6277 3530  
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### **Inquiry into the Regional Partnerships Program**

#### **Terms of reference**

On 2 December 2004, the Senate referred the following matters to the Finance and Public Administration References Committee for inquiry and report by 15 August 2005. On 22 June 2005 the Senate extended the time to report to 6 October 2005.

- (1) The administration of the Regional Partnerships program and the Sustainable Regions program, with particular reference to the process by which projects are proposed, considered and approved for funding, including:
  - (a) decisions to fund or not to fund particular projects;
  - (b) the recommendations of area consultative committees;
  - (c) the recommendations of departmental officers and recommendations from any other sources including from other agencies or other levels of government;
  - (d) the nature and extent of the respective roles of the administering department, minister and parliamentary secretary, other ministers and parliamentary secretaries, other senators or members and their advisers and staff in the process of selection of successful applications;
  - (e) the criteria used to take the decision to fund projects;
  - (f) the transparency and accountability of the process and outcomes;
  - (g) the mechanism for authorising the funding of projects;
  - (h) the constitutionality, legality and propriety of any practices whereby any members of either House of Parliament are excluded from committees, boards or other bodies involved in the consideration of proposed projects, or coerced or threatened in an effort to prevent them from freely communicating with their constituents; and
  - (i) whether the operation of the program is consistent with the Auditor-General's 'Better Practice Guide for the Administration of Grants', and is subject to sufficient independent audit.
- (2) With respect to the future administration of similar programs, any safeguards or guidelines which might be put in place to ensure proper accountability for the expenditure of public money, particularly the appropriate arrangements for independent audit of the funding of projects.
- (3) Any related matters.