

7 February 2009

Dear Committee Members,

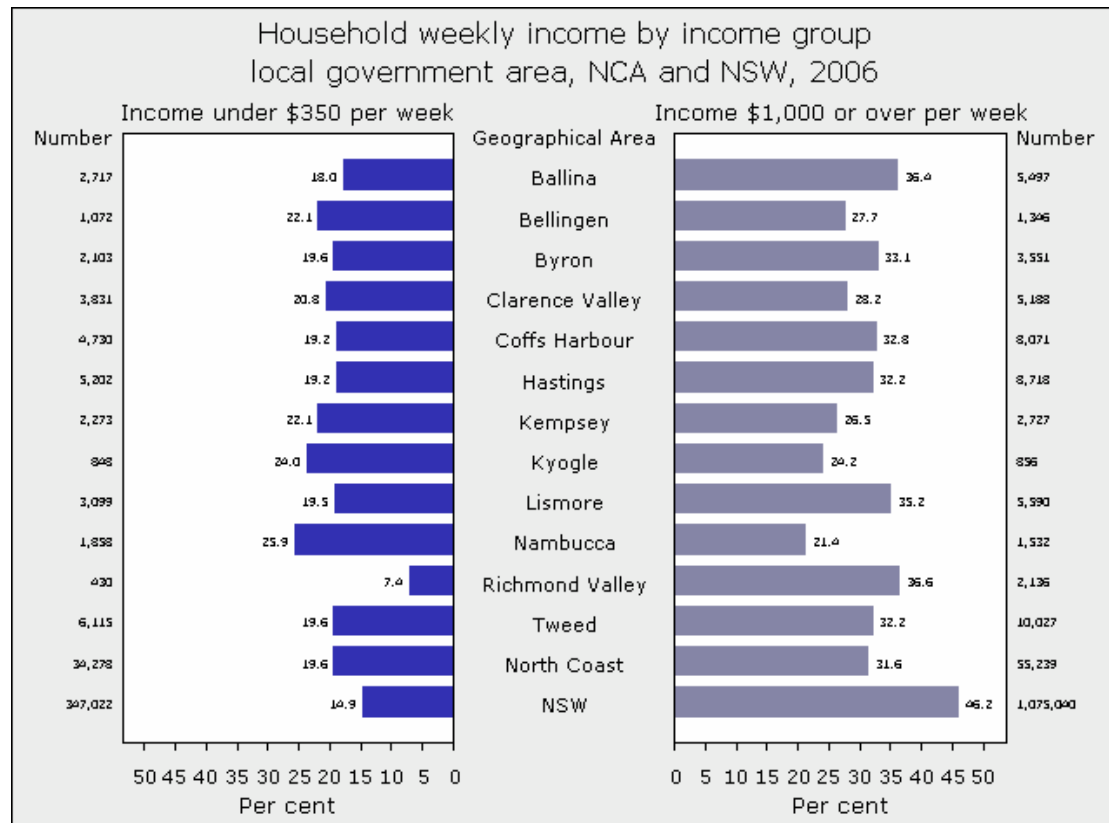
Re: **Inquiry into the Nation Building and Jobs Plan: Submission**

It is my understanding that the \$42 billion *Nation Building and Jobs Plan* includes the following key points:

- **Free ceiling insulation for around 2.7 million Australian homes**
- **Build or upgrade a building in every one of Australia's 9,540 schools**
- **Build more than 20,000 new social and defence homes**
- **\$950 one off cash payments to eligible families, single workers, students, drought effected farmers and others**
- **A temporary business investment tax break for small and general businesses buying eligible assets**
- **Significantly increase funding for local community infrastructure and local road projects** [www.pm.gov.au,media release,3 February 2009]

Personally meeting none of the requirements for direct benefit under this stimulus package, I can freely state that I wholeheartedly support these key points.

Living as I do in regional north-east New South Wales, I am aware that local government areas across the North Coast already have historically higher than average unemployment levels and some of the lowest average household incomes compared with the state average [www.ncahs.gov.au/health profile/social determinants [1](#) and [2](#)].



Source: ABS 2006 Census, Basic Community Profile - 2nd Release (Table B28)

This makes communities in these areas vulnerable to any prolonged economic downturn or national loss of business confidence.

Regional areas across Australia have also not fared well with regard to the redistribution of wealth and allocation of government funding over the last decade and, cost-shifting by both the Commonwealth and States has led to considerable stress on local government infrastructure as well as local bridge and road maintenance [See: [Inquiry into Local Government and Cost Shifting](#), submissions and report, 24 November 2003].

Additionally, public and community housing is under-represented in available housing stock in north-east New South Wales.

Roughly 10 per cent of rental accommodation in the Northern Rivers region is public housing compared to 15 per cent for Sydney and 14 per cent for NSW as a whole [Northern Rivers Social Development Council, media release, [State Budget Priorities](#) 2008].

Further, while the North Coast has been subject to prolonged population increase due to sea change and tree change demographic shifts, it is true to note that there are still significant numbers of pre-1960s houses on the coast which were not built with energy efficiency in mind.

Many of these houses are occupied by older or frail-aged residents.

Taking the aforementioned issues into consideration, it is obvious that the second stimulus package will benefit local government and business, as well as families and low-income workers on the NSW North Coast.

However, there remains some concern that media reports indicate:

- i) not all of the working poor (in particular lone individuals) will receive the \$950 one-off cash payments if income is below the taxation threshold; and
- ii) regional community housing (which is managed by incorporated bodies and co-operatives at arms length from respective state housing departments) will not be eligible for the plan's free ceiling insulation component.

I ask that the Senate Finance and Public Administration Committee consider including both these concerns in its deliberations.

In anticipation and appreciation of your assistance with this matter.

Yours faithfully,

JUDITH M. MELVILLE