


## House of Representatives Inquiry Submission Wheatbelt Region

**Closing Date for Submission – Monday 14<sup>th</sup> July 2008**

*Please complete as many pages as required*

Name: Nicole Wasmann and Kym Harrington
Position Role (if applicable): CEO and Project Officer
Organisation (if applicable): Shire of West Arthur
Region: Wheatbelt Region
<b>Signature:</b> 
1. Please provide your thoughts on future funding of regional programs in order to invest in genuine and accountable community infrastructure projects.
<p>To be retained:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to trained support staff from regional ACCs to assist with the development of the project and completion of the application forms.</li> <li>• Amount of funding available. There are very few funding bodies which offer this amount of financial assistance.</li> <li>• Program objectives ie increase growth, improve access to services, support planning and structural adjustments.</li> <li>• Opportunity to apply for funding at any time and not be restricted to 'funding rounds'.</li> </ul> <p>To be changed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Although promoted as 'broadly based' the conditions and criteria are very strict this needs to be clear from the beginning.</li> <li>• The review/assessment process and length of time taken for official outcome has its problems. There seems to be a duplication of this process.</li> <li>• Amend the application form – increase word limit for answering questions; remove repeated questions which are worded differently.</li> <li>• There should be a different application form for community projects and commercial ventures and questions should be directed that way.</li> <li>• Introduction of a short expression of interest form to assess the project's eligibility – this will save the applicant a lot of time and energy which it takes to complete a full application form.</li> </ul> <p>Best aspects of programme:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Amount of funding available for projects.</li> <li>• Support staff.</li> </ul> <p>Worst aspects of programme:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficulty of application form.</li> <li>• Bureaucratic assessment process.</li> </ul>

2. How should the Federal Government design regional programs in a way to minimise administrative costs and duplication for taxpayers. SUBMISSION 29

- Minimise the number of committees/boards review/assess the application, recommendations by the regional ACCs should be approved by the Federal Government rather than reviewed again.
- Introduction of a short expression of interest form to assess the projects eligibility – this will save the applicant a lot of time and energy which it takes to complete a full application form.

3. Examine the former government's practices and grants outlined in the Australian National Audit Office report on Regional Partnerships [http://www.anao.gov.au/director/publications/auditreports/2007-2008.cfm?item\\_id=40BC1C6C1560A6E8AAA43AAB96708E61](http://www.anao.gov.au/director/publications/auditreports/2007-2008.cfm?item_id=40BC1C6C1560A6E8AAA43AAB96708E61) with the aim of providing advice on future funding of regional programs.

- Different application forms for community projects and commercial ventures should be introduced.
- Simplify the forms and remove repeated reworded questions.
- Reduce the duplication of the assessment process, the board in Canberra cannot appropriately assess a project located in the south west/wheatbelt area of Western Australia.

4. Examine the former government's practices and grants in the Regional Partnerships Program after the audit period of 2003-2006 with the aim of providing advice on future funding of regional programs.

- Issues regarding the flexibility of the funding being open to misuse for political reasons needs to be assessed.
- The ACC board making the recommendations needs to be aware of these issues and needs to be accountable and maintain transparency particularly when approving one project over another.
- Community and commercial projects should require different application forms and processes.
- ALL potential projects recommended by the ACC boards must have completed the relevant forms and meet all criteria.
- Ensure that all board members and staff of ACCs are trained adequately on the programme, its objectives, criteria and assessment processes.

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27 JUN 2008

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