

Our Ref: U10:0010  
Enquiries: Russell Pritchard

The Secretary  
Standing Committee on Infrastructure, Transport,  
Regional Development and Local Government  
House of Representatives  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600  
Email: itrdlg.reps@aph.gov.au

Dear Mr Crawford

## **INQUIRY INTO A NEW REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT FUNDING PROGRAM**

The Great Southern Development Commission (GSDC) welcomes the opportunity to provide some comment to the Standing Committee on Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government's inquiry into a new regional development funding program.

The GSDC has restricted comment to the first two points of the Standing Committee's terms of reference.

Over the life of the Regional Partnerships program, the Commission has been able to work productively with the Great Southern Area Consultative Committee (GSACC) in order to attract funding for local projects. The GSDC trusts that a similar Commonwealth funding program will be in place by 2009/10 and that it will be accessible for regional projects. The following comments refer to the scope and structure of any new program and how it might complement State Government funding initiatives for the regions.

### **1. Provide advice on future funding of regional programs in order to invest in genuine and accountable community infrastructure projects**

#### **Background:**

The Regional Partnerships program generally worked well where it complemented State Government and community sourced funding packages for regional projects. This was the case where local government and community projects received a mix of funding from Regional Partnerships and State Government schemes (eg Regional Infrastructure Fund, Regional Development Scheme) and these initiatives tended to generate productive working relationships between all three levels of government. A significant percentage of the projects supported by the GSACC did focus on the provision of regional infrastructure. The business planning and funding for the

mainly community infrastructure initiatives was almost exclusively undertaken on a partnership basis involving the proponent group, local government and the State Government.

**Recommend:**

A future regional funding model should be structured to encourage investment in key pieces of community and other infrastructure and to generate local projects which deliver social, economic and environmental outcomes. The development of local and region wide strategies in relation to a future funding program would improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the assessment process.

The program should be in place to deliver funding to local government, community and other applicants in 2009/10. Resources should also be made available that will allow local input, assistance and information to regional applicants as they go about the drafting of submissions to the program.

The regional funding model should complement those available from other levels of government and industry, operate over a minimum of a three year cycle, include a range of project categories and, if the application meets the criteria, be decided upon within a set time frame.

**2. Examine ways to minimize administrative costs and duplication for taxpayers**

**Background:**

The Regional Partnership program was effective in delivering key projects where community and regional agency planning processes were able to be mobilised. In the Great Southern, the process did, in most instances, involve the GSDC working with local government or a proponent group to develop a business case in cooperation with the GSACC. Further assistance was also provided with the drafting of a funding application to the program.

**Recommend:**

A new program should streamline the funding process, avoid duplication of effort and increase the take up by regional communities. This could be achieved through consultation with all stakeholders in the drafting of the program priorities/criteria and by aligning the timing of funding rounds with existing State Government schemes.

Clear and concise program guidelines, which are broadly in line with those being applied by the State agencies, should also assist potential regional applicants. After submissions are made to the program, means should be in place to deliver feedback and advice to the applicants, particularly where additional information is necessary.

Thank you for your consideration of this submission. If you require any further information regarding the issues raised, please contact Russell Pritchard at the GSDC Albany office

Yours faithfully

**BRUCE W MANNING**  
**CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER**