

19th August 2010

Committee Secretary
Select Committee on the Reform of the Australian Federation
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600 Australia

Ground Floor
Brendan Hansen Building
50-54 Main Street
PO Box 1045
Hervey Bay QLD 4655

p: 07 4125 9271
f: 07 4125 9279
e: info@rdawidebayburnett.org.au
www.rdawidebayburnett.org.au

Re: Select Committee on the Reform of the Australian Federation

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the deliberations of the Select Committee on the Reform of the Australian Federation. Our response relates to your wish to explore strategies for strengthening Australia's regions and the delivery of services through regional development committees and regional grant programs.

We submit this contribution through a collaboration of the following four Queensland Regional Development Australia (RDA) groups:-

- Wide Bay Burnett Inc.
- Mackay Whitsunday Inc.
- Townsville and North West Queensland Inc.
- Far North Queensland & Torres Strait Inc

We view this opportunity to contribute as a chance to grow and embrace the Select Committee's vision and to assist in the realisation of the Core Principles of the MOU between the Commonwealth and the State of Queensland signed on the 30 July 2008.

The four RDAs making this submission represent people from over half of the geographic land mass of Queensland; people from the heart of the Channel Country in the west, to the Great Barrier Reef in the East; from traditional Indigenous lands in the north to the humpback whales' play ground on the Fraser Coast. More importantly we embody diversity; whilst recognising the importance of a united voice. We embrace our differences as much as we embrace the initiative to provide unique and inspired regional development across Australia.

Our specific comments on these processes are as follows:

1. Funding arrangements for each region should remain flexible.
 - Appropriate funding for one region is not necessarily appropriate for another. Our belief is that all funding arrangements should reflect regional potential not just those matters that are topical.
 - Dialogue with regional organisations needs to commence before funding commitments are finalised to ensure the alignment of agency and departmental funding initiatives.
2. Appropriate funding processes should include continuous feedback loops.
 - Funding models that ensure regions are not short changed by the very processes developed to assist, would bring stability to regions and promote confidence within the community.



3. RDAs must be adequately funded and resourced.
 - Community expectations and project credibility form one significant platform on which all others may rest. An under resourced region will not succeed. The authority of the enabling major partners needs to be reflected in the ongoing work of the regions. This will ensure increases to efficiency and will benefit and enhance reporting requirements back to Government.
4. Mechanisms should be designed to empower regions at their own pace.
 - This will ensure a better service is provided to regions and will offer a viable alternative to centralised decision making. In effect, regions will be able to develop appropriately, but not uncontrolled.
5. Policy development would benefit from regional consultation prior to its implementation.
 - The Government will gain more in depth understanding of issues and implications of policy changes.
 - Such knowledge sharing will raise the potential for the successful implementation of policy.
 - Successful implementation will lead to greater efficiency in the use of resources.

Appropriate and popular regional development requires an ongoing commitment from everyone concerned. At times, the processes can be contentious and unpopular. That is why we would also like to support the following initiative:

- As part of the Senate's evaluation process, a support group of RDA experts be entrusted to engage with and act as a further conduit for the community. This support group would compliment both the work of the Senate and the work of the RDAs

We believe we are able to contribute to such a group and request that, should the senate decide to implement this initiative, we are afforded a position in that group. We are all committed to ensuring the RDA processes and networks that are already in place succeed and are enhanced through the continuing support of Governments and through the ongoing professionalism of the members and boards of Regional Development Australia.

Thank you once again for this opportunity.

Yours sincerely

Paul Massingham
Executive Officer

Grant Maclean
Chair

RDA Wide Bay Burnett

Rebecca Andrews
Executive Officer

Darren Woodward
Chair

RDA Mackay Whitsunday

Glenys Schuntner
Executive Officer

Ron McCullough
Chair

RDA Townsville & Nth West Qld

Sarah Powell
Executive Officer

Andrew Griffiths
Chair

RDA FNQ & Torres Strait