



## Regional Development Australia Fund to receive Public Accounts and Audit Committee scrutiny

Parliament's Joint Public Accounts Committee will examine the ANAO Performance Audit Report, 2014-15, No. 9: *The Design and Conduct of the Third and Fourth Funding Rounds of the Regional Development Australia Fund*.

The Regional Development Australia Fund (RDAF) was established in early 2011 as a nationally competitive, merit-based grants program with discrete funding rounds. RDAF was one of the initiatives established to deliver on the then Government's September 2010 agreement with the Independent Members for Lyne and New England.

Committee Chair, Dr Andrew Southcott MP, said that the inquiry reflects the Committee's important role of holding Commonwealth agencies to account for the efficiency and effectiveness with which they use public monies.

"In the case of the RDAF, the ANAO concluded that there was not a clear trail through the assessment stages to demonstrate that the projects awarded funding were those that had the greatest merit in terms of the published program guidelines." Dr Southcott said.

"The ANAO also concluded that substantial work remains to be done on designing and implementing regional grant programs in a way where funding is awarded, and can be seen to have been awarded, to those applications that demonstrate the greatest merit in terms of the program guidelines. The ANAO also stated that there needs to be a greater adherence to the those guidelines, and decisions need to be made in accordance with the public interest and without regard to party political considerations".

"There are a number of issues which arise out of this report which need further public scrutiny. These include the failure of the Department of Regional Australia to implement previous recommendations from the ANAO and the Ministerial decisions made in May and June 2013 which saw recommended applications in Coalition-held electorates rejected and projects in Labor-held electorates which were not recommended for funding approved."

Interested persons and organisations are invited to make submissions to the Committee's inquiry, addressing the terms of reference, by Friday, 13 February 2015. Further information about the Committee's inquiry, including details on how to lodge a submission, are available on the Committee's website at: [www.aph.gov.au/jcpaa](http://www.aph.gov.au/jcpaa).

Public hearings will be held in early 2015.

**For media comment:** please contact Committee Chair, Dr Andrew Southcott MP, on 0402579674 (Matthew Hee).

**For information about the inquiry and public hearing:** please contact the Committee Secretariat on (02) 6277 4615, email [jcpaa@aph.gov.au](mailto:jcpaa@aph.gov.au), or visit the Committee website <http://www.aph.gov.au/jcpaa>.