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Select Committee on the Reform of the Australian Federation
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SUBMISSION TO THE SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE REFORM OF THE AUSTRALIAN FEDERATION

Regional Development Australia Peel Inc (RDAP) thanks the Committee for the opportunity to make this submission.

This submission relates to item (b)(v) of the purpose of appointment, namely “strategies for strengthening Australia's regions and the delivery of services through regional development committees and regional grant programs.”

As the Committee is aware the roles and functions of the RDA network across Australia are:

1. Advice, consultation and community engagement

- Consult with regional stakeholders on needs and priorities
- 2-way conduit for information and advice between communities and government
- Engage with all levels of government, regional stakeholders and communities in developing solutions to regional needs and priorities

2. Contribute to regional planning

- Develop strategic regional plans (in collaboration with Australian, State/Territory and local governments)
- Annual reporting against milestones/performance indicators
- Annual analysis against a different area of Government policy each year.

3. Whole of government activities

- First point of contact for agency consultations
- A first point of contact for communities for information about Australian Government services and programs
- Contribute to other national agendas from a regional perspective (eg from time to time this may include infrastructure, transport, social inclusion, climate change and so on)
- Administer third party contracts for other agencies as appropriate



4. Promotion of Government programs

- Provide information to regional stakeholders about government programs, particularly regional
- Identify potential government programs to support regional projects and initiatives
- Provide advice and assistance with accessing funding from existing programs towards regional projects

5. Community and economic development

- Act as an advocate for the region
- Build networks and develop leadership within the region
- Broker solution that address regional issues and barriers to development
- Help to broker partnerships which will address the needs and aspirations of regional communities

In Western Australia RDA Committees were formed by a transition from the former Area Consultative Committees (ACC).

For many years during the existence of the former ACCs the administering Government Departments (Transport and Regional Services, then Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government) advised that they foresaw a role where these Committees could become a “one stop shop” for Australian Government programs and services. This view never materialised for reasons such as a lack of a coordinated and determined effort by the administering Departments, the failure of other portfolio agencies to cooperate and unwillingness by portfolio agencies to divest functions and resources to ACCs.

In fact, some Australian Government agencies sought cooperative ventures with State Government agencies in preference to ACCs (e.g. Austrade, Immigration).

When this cooperative approach did occur, as in the case of AusIndustry with the Small Business Field Officer Program (formerly GST Signpost and Small Business Assistance programs), the programs had great success and built on the local knowledge and contacts of the Committees across regional Australia.

During implementation of the RDA network the role of “Whole of Government Activities” was discussed with Departmental Officers (Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government- DITRD LG). Initially RDAs were advised that approaches to other Australian Government Departments for RDAs to deliver services and programs under contract would be arranged by DITRD LG, acting through inter-agency forums in which they participated. RDAs were later advised they would each be responsible for their own arrangements.

Given the limited resources of RDA Committees, the travel expenses to Canberra (where such decisions are made) and the fact that the efforts of 50+ RDA committees could more effectively be handled

centrally this seems an unconsidered decision. Additionally WA has a very limited presence of Australian Government Departments, and very little or no permanent presence in the Peel region.

RDA Peel is willing to offer services under contract to fill this gap in the market, however approaches to WA State Managers of agencies have been unsuccessful.

Former ACCs had extensive experience with delivering the former Regional Partnerships program which has now been replaced by direct funding to Local Government under Regional and Community Local Infrastructure program. Granted the Australian National Audit Office review of the Regional Partnerships program disclosed some concerns with administration of it, however it must be conceded that most of these concerns dealt with Departmental and approval processes, not the role ACCs played in local assessment and prioritisation of projects.

In fact the processes most ACCs used, which included practical assistance with completion of applications (including project planning), identification of project funding partners and general program advice was appreciated by proponents, which also included a high number of not for profit agencies as well as local governments.

At the recent RDA Executive Officers National Induction it was revealed that 66% of applications received from local governments under the RLCIP were incomplete or incorrectly completed. The former processes used by ACCs during development of Regional Partnerships applications applied to RLCIP would see this number reduce substantially and increase productivity at DITRDG if made a mandatory qualification for application.

One cannot help but feel that if these same robust processes were used by RDAs to assist in development of applications under Australian Government programs such as the Building the Education Revolution, the former home insulation scheme, the former Green Loans Program and others, the transparency of process, monitoring and outcomes could have been more successful.

For the period 2010-11 to 2014-15 RDA Peel is concentrating its efforts and resources on 3 priority areas:

1. To work in partnership with the Peel Development Commission, Local Governments and other agencies in enabling projects identified in the Peel Region Priorities 2010-2012 and subsequent years; and
2. To work with not for profit organisations across the Peel region to improve sustainability in the community sector; and
3. To work in partnership with other agencies in addressing issues identified in the "Peel Away the Mask" study of the social condition of the Peel region

Working in these priority areas gives the RDA Peel Committee exposure to regional issues across all portfolio areas of responsibility

The lack of an exclusive regional funding program for RDAs to access in order to address these issues remains a barrier to development in the regions. Where issues are identified RDA Peel attempts to encourage and assist local relevant community groups to develop projects addressing the issue and then locate and make application to suitable funding sources, regardless of their origin.

Unfortunately, mainly due to the Government's focus on infrastructure development in response to the Global Financial Crisis there appears to be a dearth of general community development type funds available.

Development of such a fund for access by community groups with beneficial purposes need not impose a great financial burden on Government.

As an example of the amounts of funding needed to be committed the former Peel ACC distributed surplus funds to community groups in 2009 under three areas; sponsorship, initiative support and events.

A total of 31 applications requesting \$101,802 were received, with \$36,740 being distributed to 13 successful organisations. Successful applicants granted funds were:

Sponsorship:

APPLICANT	LGA LOCATION	PURPOSE	# OF MEMBERS	BENEFIT	AMOUNT (Max \$2,000)
Pinjarra Junior Football Club Inc.	Murray	Encourages participation in Aust Rules, provide essential Accreditation for Coaches & Senior First Aid Certs.	250	Support growing community, logo on www, letterhead, printed matter. Invite to windups	\$2,000
St. Vincent de Paul Society	Murray	To provide assistance to those in need in a responsive, responsible & dignified manner.	10 volunteers	Large notice board in reception room to house names & logos of those who contribute.	\$2,000

Pinjarra Golf Club Inc.	Murray	provide golf tuition to children age 5-16 to build confidence & social skills; runs 40 weeks for 20 children	200	Prominate signage & invitation to program; PACC acknowledged to all jnr & snr members;	\$2,000
Waroona Agricultural Society	Waroona	Provides annual Ag event which contributes to town identity & infrastructure; Attracts 11,000 pax	20 Committee & 141 members	Signage, acknow of logo on show program, naming rights for 2 hr period, pa announcements, invitation to afternoon tea in Presidents room	\$2,000
				TOTAL	\$8,000

Initiative Support:

APPLICANT	LGA LOCATION	PURPOSE	DURATION OF PROJECT	OUTCOMES	AMOUNT (Max \$5,000)	TOTAL BUDGET
The Compassionate Friends Mandurah Inc.	Mandurah	Basic grief counselling training for volunteers	2 day workshop	Improved knowledge and skill to assist Peel grieving families	\$2,800	\$2,800
Kwinana Recquatic (Town of Kwinana) - Midnight Basketball Australia	Kwinana	Diverting young people in area of need from risk of anti-social & criminal behaviour	8 weeks (18 Oct - 5 Dec 09)	Reduce in criminal & anti-social behaviour	\$5,000	\$13,053
Wanslea Family Services (My Place-Leaving Care Services-Peel) - Pukka Tukka		Educate young people (16-20yo) to budget, plan & cook cheap healthy meals	12 months (16 sessions)	Participants confident to plan, cook & shop healthy, develop a receipe book & develop further programs	\$4,900	\$4,900

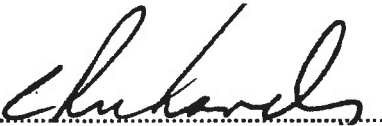
Mandurah Offshore Fishing & Sailing Club Inc.	Mandurah	Support training of "at risk" youth in Maritime Operations	3 courses per year	Train additional youth at risk in maritime operations (178 graduates to date)	\$5,000	\$8,000
Peel Preservation Group Inc	Mandurah	Website Update & Training - to enable PPG comm members to better manage, edit & update existing website	6 months	Ability to regularly & efficiently update the web to disseminate enviro info to comm.	\$600	\$600
Waroona Community Centre Inc.	Waroona	Course offering skills for cooking, pasta, jam, chutney, sauces to first time parents. Also assist recent redundant workers to reassess their budget.	July 09 - July 10	Teach 120 pax basic cooking skills, budget meals; distribute receipts to local newsletter	\$4,100	\$4,100
				TOTAL:	\$22,400	

Event Support:

EVENT NAME / ORGANISATION	LGA LOCATION	PURPOSE	DATE OF EVENT	OUTCOMES	AMOUNT (Max \$2,500)	OTHER INVOLVED
"British Auto Classic 2009" - Event Assist Inc	Waroona	6th event, bring 12,000+ visitors to Waroona, adding \$250,000 to community	Sunday, 25Oct09	Cement event to Waroona, provide an event for CG & small business to benefit from	\$2,500	Letters of support
"Night at the Civic" / Youth Advisory Council of Murray	Murray	conduct a movie night at Pinjarra Civic Centre for youth 12-18 within Shire of Murray	3 nights (July/Sept/Dec)	To provide entertainment for youth of SofM that will highlight the future needs & sves within area. This will reduce boredom & anti-social behaviour.	\$2,500	Shire of Murray, Fairbridge
"Volunteer Expo 2009: / Volunteer Resource Centre	Kwinana	Opport for residents & students ToFK to engage with agencies; promote & develop vol within ToFK; strengthen NFP orgs; increase knowledge & promote students to NFP agencies	13 May 09 (coincide with Volunteer Week)	More vols within ToK; more NFP utilise vols; stronger networking NFP within ToK; Higher vol participation for NFP agencies.	\$1,340	
					\$6340	

RDA Peel is of the opinion that, given the necessary opportunities and resources, it would be able to successfully deliver Australian Government programs into the Peel region across all portfolio areas.

If given further responsibilities for promotion and delivery of Australian Government programs across the Peel region, and I am of the opinion all other RDAs would be similarly committed, substantial reductions in program delivery costs would occur to the Australian Government and productivity within agencies would increase.

Signed: 

Coral Richards
Chair

July 13, 2010