

Chapter 4

Outcomes for regional Australia: a showcase of RPP and SRP projects

4.1 As noted previously, the Government Senators of this Committee are concerned that the majority report reflects predetermined, politically motivated conclusions. The partisan nature of this inquiry is demonstrated by the case studies to the report. The majority report has focussed in detail on only six projects, where the ALP members believe they can score some political 'points' by amplifying perceived faults and minor administrative issues. The majority report has bypassed the overwhelming body of evidence relating to the Regional Partnerships and Sustainable Regions programs, that is, the hundreds of successful projects delivering real outcomes to communities all over Australia.

4.2 The Government Senators cannot let this report stand without providing some balance to the evidence presented. Below we canvass just some of the highly successful projects delivered by the Australian Government, in partnership with state and local governments and the community, through the RP and SR programs.¹

New South Wales

4.3 In New South Wales the Campbelltown City Council, through the assistance of a SRP grant will establish a regional cultural precinct adjoining the Bicentennial Art Gallery, including a 2000 capacity amphitheatre, water features and terrace garden. Another good example of the projects delivered through SRP is the Centre for Sustainable Living. This project, developed by the Macarthur Regional Organisation of Councils, will establish a world class educational facility and a model for the promotion of suitable technology and practices for homes, urban precincts and businesses.

4.4 In Holbrook RPP funding will enable the Greater Hume Shire Council to develop Holbrook Park into a major tourism centre by co-locating the visitor centre with the submarine and updating the interpretive centre. Development of the site will create a premier roadside stop, with flow on tourism benefits to the community including for other local attractions, facilities and small businesses.

4.5 At Port Macquarie RPP funding will assist the Port Macquarie Hospital Lodge Association to construct seven, one bedroom motel-style units, a laundry and storeroom that will be used by the families of patients using the radiotherapy facility at the Port Macquarie Base Hospital. On the NSW South Coast, RPP funding will

1 Unless otherwise noted, information about these projects is sourced from DOTARS, Revised RPP tables and Revised SRP tables, received 11 May 2005.

assist the establishment of an Australian Ultrasound Training Centre of excellence in Nowra, to provide broad-based training in sonographic skills.

Victoria

4.6 In Victoria the SRP has provided funding for numerous worthwhile projects. At Lakes Entrance SRP funding is helping the RMIT University scallop hatchery and research facility to investigate reseeding offshore scallop beds and establishment of aquaculture systems for scallops. In East Gippsland SRP funding is enabling a consortium of farmers located on the Red Gum Plains to work with the CSIRO on research and development to produce crops that are adaptable to the variable climate of Gippsland.

4.7 In Ballarat, RPP funding was approved for the 'So you want to build bridges project'. This project is targeted at unemployed youth and older-age men and will address building, construction and metal fabrication skill shortages in the Ballarat region by establishing an engineering and building workshop in a disused shed.

4.8 In Latrobe, RPP funding has been approved to establish an organisation, Green PC Gippsland, who will receive and remodel donated second-hand personal computers for sale on a not for profit basis to identified low income and disadvantaged households in Gippsland.

4.9 The Mitchell Shire Council, with the assistance of RPP funding, is able to replace the bowling green at Kilmore Bowling Club with a synthetic bowling surface, providing a better facility for the Kilmore community. In Rutherglen, the Indigo Shire Council, with the assistance of RPP, will be able to direct electronic marketing, advertising and e-commerce functions for a wide range of Rutherglen regional businesses, particularly wine producers and tourism operators.

4.10 The strengths of the partnerships program are evident in the RP grant for the Regional Women in Business Network project. This project involves one metropolitan and one rural council and combines Australian, State and Local government funding.² In this project RPP funding will assist the Cardinia and Casey Councils to establish a regional women in business network. The network will provide a forum for the attainment of business and professional goals, professional and business development, and the exploration of various networking models both locally and nationally for raising the profile of local businesswomen.

Queensland

4.11 Among the successful RPP projects delivering outcomes to communities in Queensland is an important project focussing on water safety for children. RP funding assists Laurie Lawrence Swimming Enterprises at Currumbin to present the Kids Alive Do the Five national tour targeting three to ten year olds. The show includes

2 South East Development ACC, Minutes and recommendations, received 4 April 2005.

water safety messages which are designed to reduce the number of deaths and long-term injuries due to water misadventure.

4.12 In another example of the strong projects supported by RPP funding, a grant was approved to Self Help Queensland Inc to develop and publish a comprehensive Directory of self help and support groups targeted at primary health care providers for the Greater Brisbane area, as well as the wider Queensland community.

4.13 In Redcliffe RPP funding is supporting a strategic review of tourism accommodation. The approved RP grant is to enable Redcliffe City Council to develop a report analysing accommodation demands, visitor numbers and needs, market supply, a current accommodation audit and future needs analysis. This information will then be used to develop an accommodation strategy for Redcliffe City, which will be used to prioritise planning and funding for accommodation related activity and to attract private sector investment and development.

4.14 In North Queensland RPP funding will assist the Burdekin Community Association to construct a purpose designed building to hold exercise, health and lifestyle education programs, designed to manage and reduce chronic heart disease, diabetes, obesity and arthritis in the Burdekin district.

South Australia

4.15 Among the successful projects in South Australia approved for funding under the SR program is an important project for the cities of Playford and Salisbury. This project, the Adams Creek/Edinburgh Parks flood mitigation and stormwater re-use scheme, will construct an Aquifer Storage and recovery system that will manage flood waters across a major industrial precinct and allow for the reuse of water by the community and by industry, reducing reliance on the River Murray.

4.16 Like the Sustainable Regions Program, the Regional Partnerships Program is delivering important outcomes for communities in South Australia. Like many areas in Australia, South Australia has an ageing population. An RPP grant to the Northern Adelaide Business Enterprise Centre Inc will assess the needs of the region's ageing population and examine the barriers to employment in the region's aged care industry.

4.17 RPP also delivers outcomes for young people in the community. An RPP grant to the City of Playford is to assist with the construction of a 'Rage Cage', an open-air multi-purpose sporting facility that will house a number of ball sports played simultaneously and will include a climbing wall as well as ramps for skateboards and bikes.

Western Australia

4.18 The Committee received evidence on a number of the important projects occurring in the Pilbara region with the support of RPP funding. For example, at a public hearing the Committee heard from Ms Fran Haintz, Manager and Mr Bruce Thomas, Chairman of the Wangka Maya Pilbara Aboriginal Language Centre.

Wangka Maya works with over 30 different aboriginal languages in the Pilbara region, both to preserve a record of languages no longer spoken or endangered and to preserve, strengthen and encourage those languages currently in use. As well as teaching the three main Pilbara languages, Martu, Injibarndi and Nyangamarta, in schools and TAFE Wangka Maya also provides regional interpreters, conducts cultural awareness raising courses and generally promotes the Indigenous people in the region.³ Ms Hainz told the Committee about the community support for Wangka Maya:

Wangka Maya is a strong place. It helps people to remain strong. Language goes hand in hand with culture and the land. Without language and culture, people are not strong and they do not remain strong. That is why we enjoy so much support from Aboriginal people. What we do is truly valued by the people of the region.⁴

4.19 The Centre has outgrown its current office space and with the help of RPP funding is establishing a purpose built language centre in which to base its important work.

4.20 In Bunbury the Committee visited the In Town Centre (also known as the Shoestring Café) and saw first hand the wonderful service provided by Mrs Geraldine Webster and her group of committed volunteers. The Shoestring Café provides meals and a network of support to homeless people and those needing a hand up. RPP funding helped secure and fit out a new lunch centre:

The new kitchen fit-out has enabled us to work with a properly equipped kitchen. We now meet all the health requirements and at long last we actually have a cooker, which we did not have in the old building, so we can provide more varied and healthy meals to the homeless and disadvantaged members of our community.⁵

4.21 Mrs Webster told the Committee about the benefits of the partnership model of RPP:

Above all, I would like to say thank you to the federal government and congratulate them on setting an example by working together with state and local governments, Lotterywest and members of the community to provide a solution to a local problem. It has been a true partnership to prevent an agency for the homeless in fact becoming homeless.⁶

3 The Pilbara ACC, *Submission 35*, p. 4.

4 Ms Fran Haintz, Manager, Wangka Maya Aboriginal Language Centre, *Committee Hansard*, 14 July 2005, p. 84.

5 Mrs Geraldine Webster, Secretary and Volunteer, In Town Centre Inc., *Committee Hansard*, 18 July 2005, pp. 37-38.

6 Mrs Webster, *Committee Hansard*, 18 July 2005, p. 38.

4.22 The Committee visited the Harvey Beef abattoir at Harvey and heard from the human resources manager, trainers and inmates about the exceptional RPP funded project operating there. In a carefully organised and monitored program, selected minimum security prisoners from Karnet prison came in to the abattoir every day to participate in trade certificate training. The Committee heard that the prisoners finished their sentences qualified in specialised trades, with offers of employment at the abattoir earning up to \$80,000 per annum. The benefits of the program were obvious – not only the direct outcomes for inmates on the program and the increased pool of appropriately qualified, job-ready workers, but also the benefits to the general community through reduced recidivism.

Tasmania

4.23 In Tasmania the Committee received evidence about Links Golf Tasmania Pty Ltd's first class golf course at Barnbougle Dunes. The initial construction of the golf links and infrastructure was the result of grants and investment from local government, state government and the private sector. RPP funding was provided to expand the Barnbougle Dunes Golf Links from a golf facility to a public tourism facility by constructing a kitchen, public dining and function centre as well as wilderness accommodation villas. Mr Ramsay, Director, explained that the resulting jobs growth in the local community had exceeded expectations and that there had also been environmental benefits for the site:

If we received the funding for the full-service dining and function centre the breakdown of full-time employees was to be a minimum of 26 in the low season, which is what we are in right now, up to 38 in the high season. We have in excess of 26 right now and we certainly had more than 40 employees pretty much from January through to the end of March and the beginning of April. We delivered very much on employment.

We ended up building more cottages than we had included in the application. Instead of building the 15 that we provided for, we have ended up building 17. Another big factor was the environment. We have recently received a big tick from the Worldwide Fund for Nature that the golf course has delivered a range of considerable environmental benefits around the site, which was a very degraded coastal dune system.⁷

4.24 Casaveen Knitwear in Oatlands provides another example of RPP funding helping to expand an existing business into a tourism enterprise with benefits to the broader community. Casaveen knitwear is made from premium merino wool produced by the McShane family in the midlands of Tasmania. With the help of RPP funding, Casaveen was able to diversify into heritage tourism, with the development of an interpretation centre, tours of the factory and heritage buildings and the opening of a café to showcase Tasmania's fine food and wine.

7 Mr Greg Ramsay, Director, Links Golf Tasmania Pty Ltd, *Committee Hansard*, 30 June 2005, p. 13.

4.25 The Committee received evidence of the impact that the closure of the Simplot vegetable processing factory at Scottsdale had on the local community.⁸ An RPP grant was made to the Dorset Economic Development Group to assist the local community in negotiations for a community support package and to help implement a strategic plan for the region. This funding was important in assisting the community to adjust to the impact of the closure of a major employer in the region.

4.26 Another excellent example of the RP program supporting tourism in Tasmania is the grant to the Northern Midlands Council for its 'Branding Cressy' project. This project helps identify Cressy as the 'gateway to Trout Fishing Paradise' through restoration of the town's streetscape.

4.27 An RPP grant to the Volunteer Ambulance Officers Association of Tasmania provides further evidence of the important projects being funded by RPP in Tasmania. This grant has assisted with the purchase of a mannequin designed specifically as a learning tool for emergency first aid and medical training and will enhance the training of volunteer ambulance officers who attend emergencies in remote localities stretching from Zeehan to Smithton.

4.28 An artificial dive reef, to be created off Maria Island in Tasmania by scuttling the former coastal trade ship the Troy D, is another project only possible with the support of federal funding. In a submission to the inquiry the Tasmanian Orford/Triabunna Region Chamber of Commerce outlined some of the benefits of the dive wreck project, including social, environmental and economic outcomes.⁹ These outcomes include boosting tourism for the region, creating new business and job diversity, extending the marine park, replenishing fish stocks and providing an opportunity for academic research and marine biology education.

Northern Territory and Australian Capital Territory

4.29 In the Northern Territory RPP funding is helping to provide important community services and infrastructure and to expand tourism opportunities. For example, the Tiwi Islands Training and Employment Board Pty Ltd has been funded under RPP for the fit-out of a training centre for vocational training in administration, computing, finance, local government and other allied occupations.

4.30 In Alice Springs RPP funding is helping the Central Australian Regional Development Committee to establish a head office for the Desert Knowledge Business Centre. The important work of this centre will focus on the sustainable future of Australia's inland desert and will support the development of thriving desert knowledge economies in Central Australia.

8 *Committee Hansard*, 30 June 2005, pp. 13-14.

9 Tasmanian Orford/Triabunna Region Chamber of Commerce, *Submission 31*, p. 2.

4.31 The Regional Indigenous Music Community Partnership project in Alice Springs is about increasing access to the music industry for indigenous communities and preserving and showcasing indigenous language and culture. RPP funding to this project will help provide for pre-production workshops and the production of a music CD and music clip for five indigenous communities in the Northern Territory and the production of a worldwide music CD and clip. The project will lead to preservation and an increased appreciation and recognition by mainstream society of indigenous language and culture.

4.32 In the ACT, RPP funding is being used by Hockey ACT to upgrade and expand the National Hockey Centre. This upgrade will enable the Centre to host international major matches and tournaments, including the prestigious Women's Champions Trophy Tournament in November 2005.¹⁰

10 DOTARS website, Regional Partnerships Approved Projects, www.dynamic.dotars.gov.au/regional/approved_grants/grants_regpart.cfm, accessed 20 September 2005.

