

Goulburn Mulwaree Council
Submission to Inquiry into a New Regional Development Funding Program

In response to an invitation to comment on the Terms of Reference for the above Inquiry, Goulburn Mulwaree Council would like to submit the following comments.

Term of Reference 1:

Future funding of regional programs – a program which provides for the funding of regional programs for community infrastructure projects is seen as a very important initiative which should be continued. There is a high need for this type of program in rural and regional areas and this is generally beyond the capacity of the local government for that area to provide. One of the significant benefits of such a program has been the forging of partnerships between the three tiers of government and the community in the development and delivery of projects. It is vitally important that any future program should retain the flexibility to cater for both small and medium sized projects. These should not be limited to only physical infrastructure but should also allow the development of planning type projects and community information type projects.

Term of Reference 2:

Minimising Administrative Costs and Duplication – a significant feature of the Regional Partnerships Program was the amount of bureaucracy associated with both developing an application and in milestone reporting (particularly for smaller grants). This often so discouraged applicants that worthwhile projects were shelved because it was just too hard for community organisations to meet.

A further frustration for applicants has been the role of staff in the Area Consultative Committee. Rather than providing a resource for assisting applicants, some of these staff have become another layer of bureaucracy to be negotiated before an application can be submitted. In the case of a Council project for an Economic Plan Development this process took many months for a \$25k grant.

Furthermore, the ACC have also taken a pro-active role in “selling” the program to communities at a specific project level resulting in unrealistic raised expectations and unsustainable projects being proposed.

Term of Reference 3:

Previous practices – Council contends that much more attention needs to be given to ensuring that any projects funded have a strong link to strategic plans and directions and where appropriate, contain a Business Case. Ongoing sustainable operation and maintenance of the asset should also be a key part of the consideration. Community based projects should require the support of the Council to ensure that they do not duplicate other community facilities and are consistent with community planning processes.

