Parliamentary Inquiry into Local Economic Development Initiatives in Victoria 2012

Economic Development Australia is the national professional body for economic development practitioners. Practitioners are employed in local government, regional development agencies, State Government economic development departments, private sector consultants and companies involved in economic development. Membership of EDA is open to all with a professional interest or involvement in economic development.

EDA’s purpose is to promote sustainable economic development in all levels of government across Australia.

Membership exceeds 400 Australia-wide with State Practitioner networks established in Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania, South Australia, Western Australia and the Territories.

EDA is committed to supporting economic development practitioners to increase the social, economic and environmental prosperity of Australian Communities.

EDA’s Victorian State Practitioner Network Committee of Management presents this paper on behalf of the organisations Victorian membership base with the aim of highlighting the key role the organisation plays in promoting and facilitating economic development and professional development programs that are accessible to all practitioners and organisations working in the space of economic development.
The EDA Vic Committee of Management comprises 12 members representing metropolitan, regional and rural communities. This places the organisation in a very strong position in understanding the many differing opportunities and challenges faced by communities with varying local economy structures throughout the state.

EDA Vic has worked diligently in building relationships with State Government organisations and we particularly recognise the support of the Department of Business and innovation and Regional Development Victoria in assisting with the funding of our state-wide conference programs. We look forward to building on this very important partnership.

**EDA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS & BEST PRACTICE INITIATIVES**

**Regional & Remote Area Training Program (RRATP)**

The RRATP has been developed and delivered pro-bono by Economic Development Australia members. The program provides a series of case studies, local community economic development workshops and outlines the role that economic development practitioners undertake.

A group of 3 EDA members donate 2-3 days of their time [either annual leave or with employers’ permission] to travel to remote and small regional communities and undertake economic development workshops. These have been designed in consultation with Regional Development Australia, Regional or Local Government Associations.

With the financial assistance of the Commonwealth Government this program is being delivered across Australia.

**Results:**

- Increased awareness in regional and remote areas of Australia of economic development and EDA.
- Increased capacity for regional areas to progress their economies.
- Promote the synergies between regional/remote Australian and major centres.
- Increased skill level for those who undertake the workshops.

**Outcomes:**

The program has been a success for the practitioners involved in the delivery and has provided value to the community of with the tool box presentation being seen as a valuable resource.

Facilitated workshops are an integral part of the weekend and provide the opportunity for community members to have open dialogue amongst themselves, in a structured manner. Providing a report of these discussions results in a concrete outcome that the community can then work from, as well as allowing all members of the community to have input rather than one or two.
The mix of the EDA members involved in this program is excellent with members coming from diverse backgrounds and experiences and able to add significant value.

**National Awards for Economic Development Excellence**

These awards are presented at the annual EDA National Conference.

Submissions are received from remote, regional and metropolitan areas of Australia, with a diverse range of applications including drought reform policies, innovative tourism ventures, indigenous employment programs and economic development partnerships. The judging covers 11 award categories and each year the program is extremely competitive.

Winners are awarded on the basis of demonstrating outstanding examples of economic development best practice. The awards recognise the work that individuals, communities, regions and governments continue to undertake as they build the strength of our nation.

All entries are compiled into a publication that has become a valued resource for economic development practitioners.

*Winners for 2012 were:*

**Strategic Planning Award – National**
WA Drought Reform Measures: Department of Agriculture and Food Western Australia

**Strategic Planning Award – Regional**
Brisbane Economic Development Plan 2012-2031: Economic Development Brisbane City Council

**Marketing Strategy Award**
Brisbane Economic Development Plan 2012-2031: Economic Development Brisbane City Council

**Partnerships Award**
Leeton Shire Council and Greater Shepparton City Council

**Environmental Economic Innovation Award**
Mornington Peninsula Shire: Best Bites Food Guide Program

**Community Award**
Bendigo Inventor Awards

**Business/ Industry Development Award**
Project Gold Coast City Council: Creative Connections
Digital Productivity Award
Ipswich Advancing Technology as a Tool for Construction: Ipswich City Council Office of Economic Development

Indigenous Economic Development Award
SHINE: Geraldton, Western Australia

Leadership Award Community Member
Gee Foo: Christmas Island Economic Development Consultative Group

Leadership Award Economic Development Practitioner
Chris Hannaford: Economic Development Coordinator - City of Playford

These awards not only recognise outstanding achievement but also provide practitioners with valuable case studies which can be adapted and subsequently adopted in their respective communities. Full details of each winning program at www.edaustralia.com.au

Scholarship and Study Tour Program

These programs were first initiated and trialled by EDA Victoria in 2009. Subsequent to the success of the program they are now offered at a national level.

*The scholarship program* is ideally suited to both young professionals who are new to economic development and looking to develop their expertise, and to those who are more experienced and wish to further their studies or add formal qualifications to their credentials.

In 2011, the EDA Victoria SPN Management Committee offered two fantastic professional development opportunities to Victorian members. This was the second trial before offering the program on a national basis.

The study scholarship program provides $5,000 to develop professional skills through study in economic development related studies

*The study tour program* provides $4,000 to economic developers with five or more years’ experience. The successful candidate is required to develop a series of journal articles for the EDA national magazine and make a presentation to the EDA national annual conference.
**Professional Accreditation Program [ACEcD]**

This program recognises the experience and ongoing professional development of EDA Members. To be eligible practitioners must meet a number of criteria. The certification is reviewed annually to ensure evidence of continued learning and engagement in professional development activities and relevant education programs.

EDA is keen to further promote program for the betterment of the industry.

**Conference Program**

EDA Victoria delivers two state-wide conferences to members and non members working in the field of economic development. The conferences provide opportunity for practitioners to not only learn and develop new tools but also network with like minded people and share stories and information.

Conferences generally attract between 100 and 150 participants, alternating between metropolitan and regional destinations.

Recent themes covered at conferences include:

**Tourism is Economic Development**

“Metropolitan and regional communities invest heavily in attracting visitors. Astute marketing and the building of effective ongoing partnerships between local, state and federal government agencies and the private industry operators that ultimately deliver the experience is critical to growing visitor numbers. This conference will present key players from the tourism industry. With each presenter an expert in their respective field the conference promises to deliver to delegates both knowledge and a broad range of perspectives on current industry challenges and opportunities.”

**Planes, Trains and Automobiles**

“A conference based around lively and interactive sessions to stimulate discussion and find out what matters when it comes to transport for people living and working throughout metropolitan and regional Victoria”.

**Weathering the Change**

The conference provided time for everyone to reflect on the economic impact of the recent natural disasters that have affected many parts of Australia, including northern Victoria, as well as the looming shadow left by the Global Financial Crisis.

**Cutting Through the Noise: Connecting with Business, Government and Key Stakeholders**

Connecting with businesses, developing relationships with government agencies, business peak bodies and individual business leaders is essential to creating thriving, sustainable and prosperous local communities. This conference explored the issues and providing practical advice and strategies aimed at building on existing communication, marketing, relationship building and connecting skills.
Communication Tools

Weekly newsletters to keep members informed of important news and development.
Quarterly professional journal
EDA Facebook and Twitter
Freshly redeveloped website at: www.edaustralia.com.au

Summary

This brief response to the parliamentary Inquiry has been developed to specifically showcase the activities of EDA Australia and more specifically the activities of the Victorian State Practitioner Network.

We are well aware that many of our members will be contributing to this important inquiry and we are confident that such an inquiry will raise many issues in relation to the diverse challenges faced by metropolitan, rural and regional communities. Typically, a demonstration of such diversity is that whilst some communities seek to grow their resident population, others seek to meet the demands of regional population growth.

EDA Vic encourages all economic development practitioners working for State Government to join what is a very small but dedicated group of professionals. (currently 400 plus)

We would also like to extend a warm invitation to the Committee or a Committee member to join us at a future meeting of our executive team.