RURAL COUNCILS VICTORIA

SUBMISSION TO THE VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT’S ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE

Inquiry into local economic development initiatives in Victoria

Rural Councils Victoria represents the 38 Victorian rural councils through the Victorian government funded Networked Rural Councils program.

One of the projects funded in the program’s first year (2011-2012) has been designed to collate data on the economic development programs being undertaken by the member councils.

RCV Workstream 5: Attraction and Retention
Project 5.2 – Population Attraction and Retention (Rural Migration Trends/ Drivers)

The terms of this project align with this inquiry in that the project will consider the barriers and solutions to local economic development initiatives, examples of initiatives that have worked well and good examples from other areas of which Economic Development practitioners are aware.

The project includes gathering information via a survey, community consultation and then preparing case studies for use throughout the member councils.

Rural Councils Victoria would like the Inquiry to be aware of this project, which will be completed in October 2012, the results of which can be made available to the Inquiry at that time.
Rural Councils Victoria will then provide the Inquiry with the documented results of the project which will include:

a. details on the range of existing local economic development programs being carried out in the 38 rural municipalities (as per the Inquiry’s ToR part a);

b. comment on whether the role of local government in rural and regional areas has different economic development tasks to that of metropolitan based municipalities (as per the Inquiry’s ToR part c);

c. details of the barriers to local economic development, including compliance costs for business and planning delays, operating in local municipalities and develop solutions to address these barriers (as per the Inquiry’s ToR part d); and

d. details of, and comment on, the investigation into best practice local economic development initiatives relevant to the terms of reference (as per the Inquiry’s ToR part f).

RCV’s position on the roles of local government and State government in economic development - (as per the Inquiry’s ToR part b)

Rural Councils Victoria believes rural and small rural councils play a very important role in generating economic development within their municipalities because the council teams know their area, opportunities and key people very well, often living in the same community. Therefore these teams can also understand and identify the local issues and needs.

However, RCV members acknowledge that the main constraints to this involvement are lack of resources – both financial and human resources.

RCV believes the allocation of government resources to this function needs to be reviewed.

RCV’s position on how local government and State government can work jointly in this area - (as per the Inquiry’s ToR part e)

Two programs, Putting Locals First and Planning for Development are programs that facilitate co-operation between State government and local government, to produce short-term economic development projects in the regions.

In addition, the comments made in RCV’s position statement regarding the roles of the two tiers of government in economic development indicate the significance of the local connection – to people, issues and opportunities. Therefore RCV believes the value of Melbourne-based economic development support services are reduced as small councils are often not contacted and offered support.
Likewise, the staffing of DPCD regional offices is imperative. Currently if regional DPCD staff resign they are not being replaced, which further diminishes the resources available to economic development in regional and rural areas.

Other opportunities for joint support of economic development exist in the area of infrastructure; such as broadband and gas.

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