



Reports from the Regions



Commonwealth – Better Coordination of Governments to assist Regional Development

The respective roles and responsibilities of each level of government - commonwealth, state/territory and local government - in delivering outcomes for Australia's regions have never been clearly delineated. Indeed the complex and all-encompassing nature 'regional development' would make it very difficult (or undesirable?) to clearly delineate areas of responsibility. However, from the perspective of many regional communities, issues of duplication, lack of coordination, gaps in service and programme delivery and perceived cost shifting across the different tiers of government may be all too evident. At the very least, regional communities expect the three levels of government to be able to work together and to coordinate their activities to deliver better outcomes.

The Regional Development Council (RDC), comprising Australian Government and State and Territory regional development Ministers and the President of the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA), was established by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) for the purpose of facilitating more effective cooperation across all spheres of government. At its inaugural meeting in July 2003, RDC endorsed a *Framework for Cooperation on Regional Development* and supported five measures to improve cooperation amongst regional development agencies:

1. Seeking to increase common membership of regional development organisations;

2. Sharing information;
3. Maximising the use of existing structures;
4. Clarifying roles and responsibilities; and
5. Improved coordination for regional planning.

The Standing Committee on Regional Development (SCORD) is the committee of senior officials that supports the RDC. It comprises the Chief Executive Officer or equivalent from the key government agency in each State/Territory responsible for regional development, and from the Australian Local Government Association.

SCORD has established a number of cross-jurisdictional working groups to progress work on several key areas including: regional infrastructure, attraction and retention of professionals to regional areas, linking regional policy and research and developing strategies for implementation of the Framework for Cooperation.

SCORD has recently prepared a publication examining how to attract and retain professionals in regional areas called *Practitioners' Guide to Attracting and Retaining Professional and Skilled People in Regional Australia*. This publication contains numerous case studies and contact details for key government agencies as well as those involved in the case studies and should prove a useful resource for all involved with regional development. The document will be publicly released in early 2004.

The next RDC meeting is scheduled to be held in Wollongong during March 2004. In addition to the above key issues, RDC will consider the role of regional universities in regional development, and

the linkages between Australian and state/territory government regional development bodies.

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DOTARS

Victoria

Regional Development Victoria (RDV) is a statutory body which was established in March 2003 to facilitate economic and community development in rural and regional Victoria. It is dedicated to coordinating the delivery of Government programs, services and resources. RDV works with local councils to boost investment, jobs and infrastructure in country Victoria. It also markets and promotes rural and regional Victoria.

The *Regional Development Advisory Committee*, consisting of six prominent regional Victorians, has been established to provide advice on economic and community development issues and assist in promoting regions.

The *Community Regional Industry Skills Program* (CRISP) and *Your Town Your Bank* are two new programs being delivered by RDV. CRISP is \$10 million initiative designed to address skills shortages and support the development of sustainable industries and jobs across rural and regional Victoria. It is jointly delivered by RDV and the Department for Victorian Communities (DVC). Funding administered by RDV addresses skills needs at enterprise level, while the DVC component funds local government and community organisations.

Your Town Your Bank provides matching funding for rural, regional and interface councils to undertake a feasibility study on behalf of a local community group, aimed at establishing banking and other financial service facilities.

RDV is promoting regional Victoria through its \$1.3 million *Make it Happen in Provincial Victoria* campaign which was launched in October 2003. It incorporates print and television advertisements aimed at encouraging Melbourne residents to live, work and invest in Provincial Victoria.

Western Australia

The Western Australian Government's Regional Development Policy - An Integrated Approach to Regional Development

Regional Western Australia encompasses one-third of Australia's land area but it's half million people

represent only 2.7 per cent of Australia's population and only 27 per cent of the State's population.

One impressive measure of the importance of the regions to Western Australia is their contribution to exports: collectively they contribute 22 per cent of Australia's exports and 82 per cent of Western Australia's exports. Whilst this is an important measure of the of the regions contribution to the State and national economies, the State recognises that regional development is not just about exports or economic growth, it must integrate into a triple bottom line approach.

This size of the State provides the Western Australian State Government with a challenge to ensure that this small population, which is spread across vast distances, is provided with adequate infrastructure and services and the opportunity to have their say about regional development.

To establish a consolidated and strategic approach to regional development the State Government recognised the need for a commitment to a policy that embraces a triple bottom line approach, where economic, social and environmental issues and opportunities are integrated. Of particular importance is the principle of sustainability, where the needs of both current and future generations of regional people must be taken into account.

To bring this approach into reality the government committed to a regional development policy in November 2003, which is entitled 'Regional Western Australia - A Better Place to Live'. This policy succeeds in providing a clear vision for a future in which development opportunities are maximised to generate real improvements in regional living standards. Most importantly it also provides a useful instrument to develop a fairer approach to sharing Government resources between Perth and the regions.

This Policy was developed from a Draft Policy Statement, which was released in November 2002 for public comment. There were over 100 submissions received during the public consultation period, including nearly 20 from Local Governments. These submissions were carefully analysed and as a result many improvements were made to the final Policy.

This Policy ensures that sustainable regional development and quality of life are priorities right across Government, with an annual requirement for agencies to report to the public on implementation. These reports will be provided against the backdrop of a comprehensive framework for that focuses on four key goal areas:

- Government - Understanding, Partnering and Delivering Better Outcomes for Regions
- Economic - Growing a Diversified Economy
- Social - Educated, Healthy, Safe and Supportive Communities
- Environment - Valuing and Protecting the Environment.

These four goals incorporate a total of 16 Outcomes with an implementation section. The implementation sections list the government agencies which have responsibility for that Outcome, and the information that will be included in the annual review of the Policy implementation. This annual review will assess and review overall progress on the Policy, progress on each of the 16 Outcomes and processes to change and reallocate priorities and resources as necessary.

As an example, in Outcome 5: Improved Regional Infrastructure the following government agencies are listed as having responsibility for improving regional infrastructure:

Department for Planning and Infrastructure
Department of Industry and Resources
Department of Treasury
Department of Local Government and Regional Development
Office of Energy
Western Power
 Water Corporation
Main Roads Western Australia
 Western Australian Tourism Commission
And the various Port Authorities

It is expected that the annual report for this Outcome will contain:

- **Federal and State capital works expenditure (commenced and continuing) for each region.**
- **Allocation of funding through the Regional Infrastructure Funding Program.**
- **Quality and usage of telecommunications services in the regions (subject to availability of information).**
- **Availability and quality of energy supplies including the number and duration of electrical outages.**
- **Rail, road, air and sea services usage.**
- **Analysis on implementation of regional transport strategies.**
- **Progress towards implementation of regional components of the State Water Strategy.**
- **Update from the Water Corporation on regional water consumption and water reuse.**

To ensure the Policy is monitored and reported against two groups will be established to coordinate and monitor the ongoing development of this policy.

The first is a Regional Policy Steering Committee (RPISC) that will be established to review progress of the Policy. This will include Directors-General and other heads of agencies that have major roles in implementing the Policy.

The second is a Regional Policy Implementation Group (RPIG) that will be established to support RPISC and be responsible for day to day management and coordination of the implementation of the Policy. This Group will consist of officers from the Department of Local Government and Regional Development (responsible for managing the Policy) and Department of the Premier and Cabinet and other agencies as necessary.

RPISC and RPIG will work with individual Government agencies to reach clear understandings on individual agency responsibilities, actions and progress measurements for each of the 16 Outcomes.

A key component to the success of this policy is the underpinning principle of trying to develop stronger partnerships with regional communities and strengthen working relationships between Government agencies and local governments and other regional organisations to facilitate for more effective government.

This collaborative decision-making will develop a better across government understanding of regional needs and priorities.

This policy recognises that no two regions are the same, and that no region can be judged on some simplistic notion of relative success or failure. It provides an approach that recognises the diversity of regions and provides some direction to assist regional leaders in good decision-making processes and in developing strategic approaches to future development that are based on good information.

The Western Australian State Government supports such an approach and through this policy its ability to deliver resources and funding to support locally driven planning and development will be strengthened.

Copies of the policy are available from the Department of Local Government and Regional Development by contacting (08) 9217 1500 or freecall 1800 620 511, Regional Development Commissions or online at <http://www.dlgrd.wa.gov.au>



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