



MID NORTH COAST (NSW)

Regional Consultation – Topic 1: AUGUST 2008

IMPROVING THE ENGAGEMENT OF REGIONAL COMMUNITIES WITH THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT

Contents	Page
1. BACKGROUND	
1.1 Brief “snapshot” of the region	2
1.2 Summary of existing activities and plans	3
1.2.1 Regional Industry Economic Plan	3
1.2.2 NRM/Indigenous Green Teams	3
1.2.3 Strategic Projects	4
1.2.4 Indigenous Business Development	4
1.2.5 Indigenous employment	4
1.2.6 Renewable Energy	4
1.3 Partnerships	4
1.4 The Government’s Proposed Role for RDAs	5
2. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT	
2.1 Purpose of Consultation: Topic 1	6
2.2 Summary of Consultation Strategy	6
2.3 Level of response	6
3. REGIONAL RESPONSE: IMPROVING THE ENGAGEMENT OF REGIONAL COMMUNITIES WITH THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT	
3.1 Future Vision	6
3.2 MNCACC – current role	7
3.3 RDAs: Proposed charter – role from 1 January 2009	7
3.4 Committee structure and membership	11
3.5 Governance – management and administrative arrangements	13
3.6 Boundaries	13
3.7 Reporting requirements	14
3.8 Priorities for ways to improve communication between the Australian Government and the region; Rationale/explanation for these priorities	14
4. APPENDICES	
4.1 Draft Structure diagram of RDA	
4.2 RDA role	
4.3 List of written responses to consultation	

1. BACKGROUND

1.1. Brief “snapshot” of the region

(Information Source: AEC, Mid North Coast Regional Economic Profile Report –December 2007)

NSW remains the most populated State in Australia and plays a vital role in the national economy. While the majority of the population is focussed around the centres of Newcastle, Sydney and Wollongong, approximately 20% of the State's population lives in regional areas, particularly along the eastern seaboard. Many of these NSW regions have not enjoyed the benefits of the resources boom and lack any large-scale industries. Too many residents in these regions fall into the category of being "working poor". A lack of economy has implications for the capacity of Local Governments to generate income through rates to provide essential services and infrastructure, exacerbated when the population base for many NSW Councils is limited.

A lack of scale in the business sector in many NSW regions means employment remains tenuous. The corollary is that there are significant opportunities to grow employment through judicious intervention, particularly initiatives that support the growth of those industry sectors that enjoy a genuine competitive advantage and offer an expansion of high value employment. This is particularly the case in the NSW Mid North Coast.

The Mid North Coast is the coastal strip and hinterland from the Bulahdelah ranges, the southern boundary of the Great Lakes Council, to the northern boundary of Coffs Harbour City Council. This represents a distance of 400 km along the Pacific Highway and a total area of 21,335 square kilometres.

The Mid North Coast region includes eight (8) Local Government Areas:

- Great Lakes
- Greater Taree
- Gloucester
- Hastings
- Kempsey
- Nambucca
- Bellingen
- Coffs Harbour City

with 284,676 residents (2006 census).

The region encompasses three (3) Federal Electorates of Patterson, Cowper and Lyne, and the five (5) State Electorates are: Upper Hunter; Myall Lakes; Port Macquarie; Oxley; and Coffs Harbour.

The region has experienced significant economic and social change over the last decade that is expected to continue in the future. The 'sea and tree change' population shift to the region has placed increased pressure on infrastructure and land usage exposing some structural weaknesses in the regional economy.

The major economic, social and environmental challenges confronting the communities of the region include:

- A relatively weak and shallow economy with few established large-scale industries;
- Relatively high levels of unemployment and underemployment;
- The predominance of low-wage semi-skilled casual service jobs;
- Skills shortages in particular sectors;
- Workforce constraints due to a relatively low participation rate, relatively high over 65 population, and relatively high levels of welfare dependency;
- The rapidly growing needs of an ageing population;
- A significant and disadvantaged indigenous population;
- Pressures on the natural environment from urban expansion, mining and climate change;
- Pressures on the rural/agricultural sector from urban expansion, fluctuating commodity prices, water constraints and climate change;

- Extensive infrastructure deficiencies in areas outside the region’s major urban growth centres (including transport, roads, broadband, health and social services, etc); and
- Relatively high levels of population mobility, weakening traditional social support structures.

1.2. Summary of existing activities and plans

1.2.1 Regional Industry Economic Plan

The MNCACC is currently collaborating with the State Mid North Coast Regional Development Board (MNCRDB) and our other regional stakeholders in progressing a Regional Industry Economic Plan. The plan is based on opportunities identified in the Regional Economic Profile document recently released and widely circulated. The report aims “to be a catalyst and blueprint for collaborative action to advance industry and employment growth on the Mid North Coast over the next five years”.

The Report provides an outstanding contemporary framework for future industry development activities in this region. The economic and industry development priorities identified should prove invaluable in guiding the future regional development activities of all levels of Government.

1.2.2 Nrm / Indigenous Green Teams

The MNCACC and the Indigenous Coordination Centre are leading a diverse range of interest groups to endeavour to link strategic projects to improve water quality and climate change adaptation with skilled Indigenous Green Teams who are experienced in implementing on-ground works on private and public lands.

We are focusing on an integrated approach between NSW Coastal Councils, State and Federal governments, Catchment Management Authorities, landholders, Indigenous communities and organisations and industry bodies to maximise the outcomes from applying the "Clean Waters Model".

The outcomes from the model’s wider application will be reduced threats to waterways/estuary systems from seachange, climatic and peri-urban pressures and increased agricultural, seafood, tourism and Indigenous business development and employment with substantially improved water quality and water security.

A detailed consultant’s report documenting a situation analysis and recommended approach to address the issues facing the coastal catchment areas has been widely circulated and is now in the process of being implemented with formal agreement and collaboration achieved.

1.2.3 Strategic Projects

The MNCACC has, again in close consultation with its regional development partners, identified a number of strategic project initiatives in line with its SRP and annual business plan. These projects were being actively developed but are now predominately on hold with the cancellation of existing Federal funding programs and pending the finalisation of our new role with the transition to Regional Development Australia.

1.2.4 Indigenous Business Development

The MNCACC currently has a contract with Department of Employment, Education and Workplace Relations and is employing a consultant working with a steering committee to realise Indigenous business and cultural industry development opportunities in the Kempsey Shire.

1.2.5 Indigenous employment

The MNCACC is also on an interagency working group to increase Indigenous training and employment opportunities.

1.2.6 Renewable energy

Advancing pilot hydro power project for the Comboyne community, and examining broader feasibility of renewable energy options throughout the Mid North Coast. Again, this is a collaborative exercise with appropriate stakeholders. We are also looking at gas fired power stations and providing gas to industry and homes throughout the region, discussions occurring with Lucas Gas & Energy, and Metgasco Ltd who are undergoing explorations in the lower Mid North Coast and Northern Rivers regions. This will also result in business opportunities for Indigenous Green Teams (1.2.2).

1.3 Partnerships

The MNCACC consists of 11 Board Members, who are representative of all 8 LGAs in the region with a diverse background and interests across business, the environment and the community. The MNCACC currently has 3.6 staff members.

Members and staff participate in a diverse range of other Boards and activities including Local Councils, Catchment Management Authority, Regional Environment and Economic Committee, CFMEU, Division of General Practice, Education and Training, Aged Services, Community Cooperatives, community transport, Australian Business Ltd, Regional CDEP, Chamber of Commerce, environmental groups, Rotary and a variety of local community project and volunteer groups.

They regularly attend Local Government economic development meetings, Regional Mayor and General Managers' meetings and Regional Coordination Management meetings with State agencies.

The MNCACC works cooperatively with the State-based Mid North Coast Regional Development Board and jointly facilitate quarterly Regional Development Network meetings involving regional stakeholders, including representatives from all levels of government, education, employment, tourism, and the arts.

1.4 The Government's Proposed Role for RDAs

The new Rudd Labor Federal Government plans to build the capacity of the ACC network to genuinely empower regions and develop regional agendas. ACCs are being renamed Regional Development Australia (RDAs) to better reflect their broader role in coordinating a regional development strategy and the government plans to better resource them. Specifically, the government's proposed role of individual RDAs, and the network as a whole, is to advise on:

- Community infrastructure;
- Regional issues and opportunities;
- Local implementation of specific Commonwealth initiatives in the region, as requested;
- Facilitating economic development planning and investment attraction;
- Identifying any unique local attributes that would favour the development of new and innovative industries;
- Promoting initiatives to retain and expand skills and local businesses and industries;
- Disseminating information about Commonwealth programs;
- Undertaking ad hoc consultations on behalf of Federal agencies where a regional network is required;
- Advising on adequacy of service delivery in regions;
- Building networks and relationships with other levels of government and key stakeholders in the region;
- Social inclusion issues;
- Ways to improve the efficiency, effectiveness and coordination of Commonwealth regional initiatives

2. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

2.1 Purpose of Consultation: Topic 1

The Government wants to improve collaboration between the three levels of government and ensure that consultative mechanisms assist regional communities with the identification of service and infrastructure requirements.

The Australian Government has tasked the 54 Area Consultative Committees to gather the views of regional stakeholders and provide the region's ideas on RDAs, and advise Government on its proposed role of RDAs. The Government itself is also consulting and liaising with State/Territory governments and local government agencies and bodies.

2.2 Summary of Consultation Strategy

A detailed consultation strategy produced by the MNCACC has been successfully implemented. In summary, the MNCACC has already in place a substantial regional network and has engaged with over 400 regional stakeholders via forums, meetings, email, personal interviews, as well as publicly advertising the exercise and calling for submissions via TV, radio and 8 newspapers.

2.3 Level of Response

Specific input from over 130 people was received, representing over 200 groups and individuals from a diverse background, including State government departments, the arts, community, industry, education and training, Aboriginal community, business services, economic development bodies, environmental groups, tourism, youth, health, 7 Councils and several previous Regional Partnerships funding applicants. Responses were received in a variety of formats including emails, faxes, letters and orally.

3. REGIONAL RESPONSE:

IMPROVING THE ENGAGEMENT OF REGIONAL COMMUNITIES WITH THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT

3.1 Future vision: RDAs will ensure that there is effective Australian Government engagement with communities to build partnerships that improve the coordination of regional development initiatives and facilitate solutions to key regional development priorities across all Australia's regions.

3.2 MNCACC – current role

Community Support:

- ACCs are already in place. Why is there a need to change anything?
- ACC Committees and staff (transitioning to RDAs) are based in, and derived from, their own community; are not tied to a political process or bureaucracy, and have an in-depth knowledge of their region, community and grant funding programs. ACCs are trusted and respected locally, engages well with people at a local/regional level and are perfectly equipped to provide both assistance to proponents and advice to the government on regional priorities and projects.
- ACCs make the process of dealing with government less threatening and confronting for applicants.
- Regional ACCs hold solid knowledge of regional communities, environment and programs to guide sound investment to bring about positive living standards for their regions.
- MNCACC was involved in developing a regional development strategy in consultation with all government stakeholders and from a broad range of community and industry stakeholders via surveying all regional businesses and industry manufacturers, scoping the needs of the region.
- The existing MNCACC already is involved with social inclusion issues through working closely with Indigenous and disadvantaged organisations within the region; both of the two groups identified rely on the leadership of RDA into the future to implement strategies that provide financial sustainability and support to achieve the goals to truly deliver social inclusion.

Community Concerns:

- Many stakeholders may not have fully understood what was accessible to them in the support the Federal Government provided through the ACC system.
- The ACCs were able to assist greatly in the development, prioritisation and application of/and for projects. This is one of the most vital functions of the existing ACC network and it has been removed.
- They implemented ways to improve the efficiency, effectiveness and coordination of Commonwealth regional initiatives however, they were let down by the previous government when it came to delivering Commonwealth initiatives. The existing ACC supported projects whole-heartedly only to find that their recommendations were either not listened to or sat, waiting for assessment for many, many months in Canberra. This, in effect, can make this organisation simply ‘another cog in the wheel’ or ‘middle man’.

3.3 RDAs: Proposed charter – role from 1 January 2009

The community generally supports the Government’s proposed role for RDAs; and value a local regional body as they are perceived as personal and helpful rather than an office in Canberra which would not be cognisant of, or responsive to, regional issues. RDAs can be a cost effective mechanism to implement the Government’s Regional Development Policy and the “one-stop” shop front for all Federal Government information. RDAs can assist in driving the Government’s Social Inclusion Agenda, improving environmental and social health outcomes and enhancing education, employment and economic growth across regional Australia.

RDAs should be owned by, and represent the region, not the Federal or State Government, and should provide an overarching forum for all regional processes and organisations within a particular region to identify common priorities and maintain regional communication.

RDA activities must complement, and not duplicate, those of existing organisations involved in regional development. In the longer term, logically, to prevent lack of coordination and duplication of service delivery, and for cost effectiveness, (but depending on the new RDA expanded role), an agreement should be progressed with the States via COAG that RDAs join with State Regional

Development Boards and be co-funded by the States, both administratively and on an appropriate program basis.

Individual RDA's should be able to determine their own region's focus/priorities in line with the "bottom up", "one size does not fit all" approach to Regional Development. They should also not be dictated to by the central bureaucracy without appropriate consultation/input. The community does not expect RDA's to be an extension of any Government Department, yet recognizes the Federal Government's active role in regional development is vital. This is particularly so in NSW, where the existing regional development programs receive only nominal funding and may be an inadequate response to the unique needs of particular regions.

While supportive of the new role of RDAs, appropriately staffed, as the main contact point for regional communities to access Commonwealth funding, assistance, information and support, the community questions how RDAs could be a one-stop shop for all Federal Government Departments and keep abreast of all changes and updates right across the board, particularly in terms of resourcing and distraction from its key role on advising and actively developing the region.

There also exists the fear that RDAs, as with ACCs, may not have any "teeth".

RDA should be much more than a voice between Government and the community. Not to diminish the importance of its advisory role, an RDA must also provide a tangible service to the local community which achieves direct benefits, to at least the extent to which the ACC network has been able to in the past. Otherwise, there is a danger that it will become, at least in the eyes of the local community, simply an ineffectual outpost of bureaucracy.

A key message from the region is that it needs RDA to still be actively involved with Commonwealth Regional Funding Programs. This is particularly important for not for profit groups. The RDAs need to be able to demonstrate their authority in application processes, rather than being seen as a proxy for a distant Government bureaucracy. RDAs should provide locally based support with project planning and development, as well as have increased discretion in evaluation and prioritisation of projects. RDA also needs to be involved in the conduct, variation and reporting needs of successful projects to ensure that governments and taxpayers receive value for money. To minimise timeframes and process with Programme decisions, it is recommended that the RDA National Office or Departmental Regional Offices, as appropriate, have a \$100,000 approval authority (precedent already exists with ICC Regional Managers) and that some local infrastructure funding should go straight to Local Government, with RDAs providing advice and support for these projects and advice on (conflicting) regional priorities.

RDA Role	Community comment
Community infrastructure	Very important, as long as there is no conflict of interest and appropriate resources are allocated to allow the RDA to conduct the research in order to provide the best advice. To achieve these aims we need to have access to funds that are beyond the means of local government to maintain and improve local and regional infrastructure. RDAs should feed strategically into Infrastructure Australia.
Regional issues and opportunities	Very important; no one knows the regions better than those who live here. Regional organisations will invariably work to serve the interests of their particular regions, and need to be able to actively pursue a public advocacy role. Input into, and identify and champion opportunities for strategic direction of regional development. Regional organisations such as the (Federal) Area Consultative Committees and the (State) Regional Development

	Boards can play a valuable role in ensuring that a region's unique challenges and opportunities are clearly defined (through research), and that proposed responses are both locally appropriate and likely to provide long-term meaningful solutions. The RDA's local knowledge, genuine interest, appreciation for the cultural differences and personalisation of relationships can allow trust and a way to move forward with the needs of Aboriginal people. Without a significant Federal Government presence in the region the prospects of developing comprehensive and effective region-specific solutions is diminished.
Local implementation of specific Commonwealth initiatives in the region, as requested	Very important; RDAs have central position between Whole of Government Department's and community. An informed regional body can ensure generic programs are matched to the specific and unique needs of regional communities. Areas of cultural and social inclusion may require some Federal Govt portfolio representation at a regional level in the same way in which Indigenous Co-ordination Centres operate.
Facilitating economic development planning and investment attraction	Very important, as long as there is no conflict of interest. Communities also need to have funds to help facilitate the growth and diversity of business within our local communities with a view to making local and regional communities more self sufficient and sustainable.
Identifying any unique local attributes that would favour the development of new and innovative industries	Very important providing RDAs have the resources to 'follow through' once identified. There are much greater opportunities for the RDA to engage with the Creative Industries and Innovation sectors across the Mid North Coast in terms of R&D, Infrastructure and Projects and specifically financial support. Would need to ensure RDA did not duplicate or undermine the role of LGA economic development practitioners in this area.
Promoting initiatives to retain and expand skills and local businesses and industries	Very important, subject to an appropriate level of resources being allocated. Effective and sustainable industry development requires regional planning, skills development, education and training and a "whole-of-community" approach that the RDA is well placed to facilitate. The RDA focus should be on supporting the creation of high value jobs, rather than increase casualised, low-skill, seasonal under-employment. The need for more business and industry development support to foster continuous improvement, best practice and professional development should be the core aim of RDA in the future.
Disseminating information about Commonwealth programs	Important, as regional organisations can play a vital role in ensuring that communities are aware of, understand and are able to access Government information and programs intended to realise community or industry development opportunities; other means such as media, using technology such as internet and call centres should be supplemented with on the ground support.
Undertaking ad hoc consultations on behalf of federal agencies where a	Important as long as it's not 'duplicating' existing networks and ad hoc consultations aren't held just for the sake of having them.

regional network is required	
Advising on adequacy of service delivery in regions	Very important so long as the advice offered by the RDA is listened to by the government. RDA should be proactive and have advisory input in a meaningful and mutually beneficial way into the direction whole of government is going in regional development.
Building networks and relationships with other levels of government and key stakeholders in the region	Important as long as it's not 'duplicating' existing networks. Regional organisations need to establish and sustain extensive links throughout their communities, and at all times work in collaborative partnership with other stakeholders. The RDA can engage with community and provide transformational leadership, as it collaborates widely and establishes a "whole-of-community" approach that has government, specific industry sectors, universities, training providers and the broader community working together towards a shared vision or agenda.
Social inclusion issues	Important as long as it's not 'duplicating' existing networks. We need to encourage the growth of balanced communities covering a broad range of socio-economic groups including ethnic diversity and diversity of all age groups. To progress the Federal Government's Social Inclusion agenda may require a set of different skills, knowledge and expertise than currently exists.
Ways to improve the efficiency, effectiveness and coordination of Commonwealth regional initiatives	Important providing the measure of efficiency, effectiveness and coordination can be 'actually' measured. Departmental programs should be discussed and then implemented through the RDA National Office to the RDA network. There must be a true two-way communication between various government departments to RDA and RDA to and from communities. RDA's should have the capacity to provide regular input into policy in their area as they would be receptors for collated data on regional performance and could then link to the Government on an annual basis providing analysis on overall trends.

3.4 **Committee structure and membership**

RDA members need to be local, independent, and broadly representative of their particular region. A one-size-fits-all approach to membership is not appropriate. RDAs should be structured to allow for respect and credibility in the community, independence and local "ownership" with no political affiliation in order to operate in an unbiased manner. There needs to be some recognition for the time and services these volunteers give to those operations.

Selection processes should be free from politics. All positions could be advertised and be recommended by an independent selection committee. Select Chairs the same way other boards go about it, with the committee voting in the most suitable person to be Chair. The Chair would, in close consultation with other committee members, select new suitable local RDA members, appropriate to workload and specific skill sets relevant to each region's needs.

The Committee needs to maintain a strong cross section of the region at grass roots level:

- geographical
- demographic

- business/community leaders
- appropriate skills and professionalism, e.g., strategic, sensitive to community sentiments, commitment
- sound working relationship/group dynamic
- able to see big picture
- altruistic, independent, free of conflicts of interest
- can dispassionately recognise the diverse and competing interests within their region
- ensure representation on Committee reflects new role and includes knowledge of cultural, social and environmental development

Key stakeholders should be encompassed within the RDA rather than being consulted by it. The Committee Members may include:

- Council representatives
- Chambers of Commerce
- Education/training providers
- Community based not for profit organisations providing complementary services
- Health, ageing and community service providers
- Environmental activists
- Representatives of key industries such as agriculture, tourism and manufacturing

The RDA must also have a physical presence:

- High Profile of Committee Members
- Cross representation of employees and members in Regional Development
- State and Local members
- Needs a “face” – higher profile
- Available and approachable
- Raise the profile of Regional Development Australia
- Useful Website
- Shop front – office prominent

To a significant degree regional organisations can overcome the parochial, short-term, polarised (conservation/growth dichotomy), small scale, limited expertise and lack of vision that can sometimes hamper Local Government. Whilst RDAs need to work in association with local government and other stakeholders in our own regions they also need to be independent of them so that they don't become parochial in their outlook.

Each local RDA could devolve individual aspects of their contract to individual organisations according to their expertise; a simplified example is an advisory body, such as an existing ACC, working in partnership with a service provider, such as an organisation providing business support.

3.5 **Governance – management and administrative arrangements**

The 54 Area Consultative Committees collectively drafted a proposed model for the future structure and role of Regional Development Australia. Follows is the response to this model from the region:

The community broadly supports the intent of this model and that RDAs remain as not-for-profit organisations with existing constitutional structure with volunteer boards to minimise costs and maintain independence. The community also supports the view that there should be an RDA National Board and the RDA Network should democratically elect the National Board members. The RDA National Board (through its RDA network) would be the key source of advice / input for COAG, Ministers and Departments; and on specific local issues such as infrastructure priorities for Infrastructure Australia.

For the RDA National Board to have a strategic input and impact at the national level, RDA should have positions on significant and relevant national committees such as the independent “Skills Australia” advisory body being established under the “Skilling Australia” banner. Local Boards should feed to the RDA National Board to provide a broad picture. The RDA National Board will facilitate co-operative Federalism.

MOU's should be signed by the RDA National Office with all Government agencies to formally recognise and implement RDAs "whole of Government" role. Funding for RDA operational costs should be spread across all of the Government Departments that should be using RDAs to implement regional policy.

3.6 Boundaries

It is widely accepted that regions, positioned between Local and State Governments in scope, are a useful and administratively manageable entity for grouping together communities that broadly share the same needs and that require tailored solutions. Too many boundaries exist – e.g., Local Government, Police, Tribal, State Government, Health, Regional Development Boards, electorates.

LGA borders appear most logical, and the Mid North Coast region of 8 LGAs is still appropriate. A larger area such as Great Lakes to the Queensland border is just too big to adequately serve and traverse. It is important, though, to have strong relationships with bordering ACCs and other regional organisations, as often there are similar needs and objectives in neighbouring regions.

It will be for the interim RDA National Board and Government to look at the urban issue. If “urban” is also on the agenda of RDA, then the charter needs to define Regional Australia as urban, rural and remote, not continually talk about Regional Australia - which by most people’s definition is non urban.

3.7 Reporting requirements

Regional RDAs should report to the National RDA Board, which in turn should be responsible for managing the flow of information between RDAs and the Minister.

Federal Government programs should be discussed at national level and then implemented through the RDA network. The RDA National Office should actively review/assist local RDA Boards to achieve increased effectiveness in their strategic role and in implementing Government policy.

RDAs need to be adequately funded to carry out the tasks that the government and the community require of them. The capacity is needed to value-add and leverage further funding for RDA activities over and above their contractual requirements to the Government. Specific operational funding should be based on agreed performance-based (preferably 5 year) contracts to be negotiated, as appropriate and regionally relevant, with the various portfolios based on the real cost of doing business well, not an imposed figure.

3.8 Priorities for ways to improve communication between the Australian Government and the region; Rationale/explanation for these priorities

RDA must be outcomes/performance focused. RDA can play a major role in regional development and communication for the region to the Government, but only if they are resourced accordingly and given the appropriate tools to operate.

To really play a strategic role and communicate well you need genuine (equal) partnerships and good information. Organizations can do things unilaterally, but realistically they will never really amount to much without millions of dollars invested.

To maximize leverage using finite resources, we need to influence and mobilize all of the stakeholders, including State, Local, industry and the community. Sometimes it is not a question of money but coordination of effort and a shared vision. This is an opportunity to better integrate State and Federal consultative and coordination mechanisms and we should not miss it.

Currently most ACC'S have very close engagement with Local Government, however, this should be formalised by RDA local Chairs/EOs sitting on Regional Mayor / GM meetings and members' involvement with LGA economic development boards. The regional council network could have input into funding allocations and priorities.

There is scope to enhance the RDA network through a complementary model involving a partnership of locally based organisations which are already key players in regional development – a “Regional Development Cluster”.

By developing relationships with regionally based Australian universities the RDA would have an additional means of engaging with regional communities. Look at the capabilities in other States such as Queensland and Victoria to identify successful collaborative models.

ACC's should be re-branded as Regional Development Australia via an extensive national and local marketing campaign, with individual RDA offices being provided one-off funding for this re-branding exercise. This would be the only extra cost associated with the transition of ACCs to RDA offices in the initial stages.

It is excellent to see there maybe a genuine effort by the three levels of Government to come together, and listen to the community, to overcome some of the duplication of services, and provide genuine empowerment to Australian regions. All three levels of Government must establish and identify their proper roles and priorities to eliminate any conflict or duplicity and unnecessary costs, and be strategically inter-connected. For example, NSW has a State plan. From that, regional plans have been drafted. Local government has been party to the development of those plans and they have, in turn, been used to inform local government. The end result needs to be one where all levels of government agree on the infrastructure requirements as part of an overall strategy.

The community, however, retains fears that the government may choose not to listen to the advice given by the regions. If this were to happen, RDAs would not be, or deliver, what regional Australia needs.

MINISTER
Parliamentary Secretary
- National Policy Direction

Draft structure diagram
RDA Australia

Infrastructure Australia

- National Local Government Bodies
- National Industry
- National Community Networks

- Other Federal & State Dept's
- Promote programmes
 - Help/delivery point for programmes
 - Assist with Ministerial visits
 - Provide on-ground support
 - Central Regional contact point
 - Other relevant State agencies

- Community / Industry
- Links/liaison industry
 - Support for non-profit groups
 - Social Inclusion initiatives
 - Community capacity building

RDA NATIONAL BOARD
(Chair independently appointed by Minister)
(RDA National Office)
CEO - Appointed by Board

- Accountable to Board
- Collation of advice to Minister
- Strategic regional development policy advice
- Facilitate Co-operative Federalism

RDA NATIONAL NETWORK
54 RDA Committees
(RDA Offices - shop-front for Australian Govt)
(Independent incorporated entities)

- Strategic Regional Plans
- Priority regional issues
- Advice on policy impacts
- National inquiries input
- Research input
- Industry/Local Gov link
- Social Agenda input
- Assist in developing funding app's
- Solution based body

- Dept of I, T, RD & LG
- Secretariat for Board
 - Secretary on Board
 - Advice on Regional Policy
 - Funding agreements
 - Grants programmes

- Local Councils (700+)
- Formal link through RDA Committees to National Policy
 - Partner with local RDA on research & priorities

RDA ROLE

Regional	National
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide independent, impartial advice across all levels of government. The 'honest' broker. • Provide regional leadership. • Interpret regional data and provide 'intelligence'. • Identify and advise on regional priorities. • Identify and comment on effectiveness of government spending. • Deliver programs through a national network that is embedded in the community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Represent the voice and viewpoint of Australia's regions. • Provide direct advice to Minister. • Identify emerging issues or gaps in policy. • Provide advice back to the 54 regional entities from this discussion. • Be independent from the Federal bureaucracy. • Act as a peak body.

FOCUS

Regional	National
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate a co-operative federalism that takes a whole of government approach. • Disseminate regional knowledge • Influence regional decision-making. • Develop a strategic regional plan that underpins activities. • Communicate broadly with stakeholders and the community. • Facilitate project development and manage a pool of funding. • Facilitate closer ties, with particularly, local government. • Facilitate regional responses to whole of government issues. • Facilitate change and action around these issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage directly with the Minister in the development of policy related to the regions. • Read the political climate and advise regional bodies accordingly. • Improve the economic capability of the community. • Draw best practice from the international context on issues aligned with the national agenda, for example climate change. • Suggest change around blockages that occur due to the three levels of government. • Assess the effectiveness of government programs • Provide the Minister with an overview of RDA operations and delivery. • Act as a national board that sets standards for solution based organisations in the regions.

STRUCTURE

Regional	National
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministerial appointment of Chairs only • Five-year contract for RDAs and Chair appointment aligned with this term. • Board numbers at the discretion of the Chair depending on regional needs. • Incorporated bodies that report to the peak body through the statutory authority board. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statutory authority, governed by a Board with Chair appointed by Minister. • Independent advisory -body with a funded secretariat. • National Board representatives chosen, by election, from RDA Chairs. • State and local government represented. • Unaligned with a government department. • Metropolitan and regional representation.

*** Detailed descriptions are also available

<i>Appendix 4.3:</i>				
<i>Written responses to consultation</i>				
	<i>Organisation</i>	<i>Spokesperson</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Area of Interest</i>
1	Arts Mid North Coast	Richard Holloway	EO	Arts/community
2	Arts Northern Rivers	Melitta Firth	EO	Arts
3	Bellingen Shire Council	Jenny Chase,	Grants Officer	Local Govt
4	Glenreagh Mountain Railway	Peter Dixon-Smith	Volunteer	SR applicant/tourism
5	Gloucester Shire Council	Geoff Marshall	Economic Development Mgr	Local Govt/economic development/RP applicant
6	Kempsey Shire Council	David Frederick,	Youth Development Officer	Local Govt/Youth
7	Lake Cathie Medical	Sam Smiles; Paul Ward		RP applicant/medical
8	Macleay Vocational College	Jann Eason	Principal	RP applicant/Educational
9	MNC Regional Development Board	Mark Livermore	Chairman	Economic development/SR applicant
10	Port Macquarie Hastings Council	Wendy Hee	Cultural Officer	Local Govt/cultural
11	Regional Coordination Management Group (Senior Officers)	Combined response coordinated by Ange Anderson	Assistant Project Officer, Dept. Premier & Cabinet	State Govt agencies
12	Rotary	Bill Freeman		RP applicant/community
13	Southern Cross University	Jan Strom	Acting Head, Office of Regional Engagement	Education/SR applicant/RP applicant
14	Ngurrala Aboriginal Corp	Terrence Hudson	Manager	Aboriginal/environment/RP applicant
15	Wauchope-Bonny Hills SLSC	Jan & Dale Clingeffer	Administration Director	RP applicant/community
16		Ziggy Konigseder		Community
17		Siobhan Holmes		Community
18	Chamber of Commerce	John Chong		Business Services

	Dorrigo			
19		Sue Ashley		Community
20		Bill Dennis		Community
21	Australian Labor Party	Margaret Moran		Political
22	Southern Cross University	Prof Jerry Vanclay		Education
23	Nambucca Shire Council	Wayne Lowe	Economic Development Mgr	Local Govt/economic development/SR applicant
24	Greater Taree City Council	Chris Ryan	Economic Development Mgr	Local Govt/economic development/RP applicant
25	Regional Chamber of Commerce	Ray Taggart	Chairman	Business services
26	Hawks Nest Wharf Working Group	Hugo Elstermann		Community
27	Coffs Harbour City Council	Greg Powter		Local Govt
28	Holmes and Holmes P/L	Bill Holmes		Community/business
29	Coffs Harbour City Council	Jenny Oloman	Economic Development Mgr	Local Govt/economic development
30	Nambucca Valley Neighbourhood Centre			Community
31	Kempsey Chamber of Commerce	David Fry		Business services
32	Crowdy Harrington Royal Volunteer Coastal Patrol	Keith Richardson	Volunteer	Volunteer organisation/RP applicant
33	Metgasco Ltd	Kevin Dixon	Marketing Manager	SR applicant/energy/business
34	TAFE – North Coast Institute	Combined Executive response coordinated by Marie Aloise	Relieving Institute Director	Education/training/State Government