Regional Development Australia
BRISBANE INC

20 August 2010

Dr Ian Holland
Committee Secretary
Select Committee on the Reform of the Australian Federation
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Dr Holland

SUBMISSION TO THE INQUIRY BY THE SENATE SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE REFORM OF THE AUSTRALIAN FEDERATION

On behalf of Regional Development Australia (RDA) Brisbane Inc, I welcome the opportunity to submit our views in terms of the above Inquiry. These views are directed to the following sections of the Inquiry:

(a) inquire into key issues and priorities for reform of relations between the three levels of government within the Australian federation

Regional Development Australia (RDA) – an initiative of the Australian Government - is a partnership bringing together Australian, state, territory and local governments to develop and strengthen regional communities, and to be an effective conduit between governments and local communities. There are 55 RDA committees across Australia whose members are committed volunteers drawn from community, business and local government. The five key roles of RDA committees are:

1. Consultation and engagement with the community
2. Informed regional planning
3. Whole-of-government activities
4. Promotion of government programs
5. Community and economic development.

RDA committees are therefore well placed to be formally tasked as the connecting point for the reform of relations between the three levels of government. Further information on the RDA national network is at www.rda.gov.au

(b) explore a possible agenda for national reform and to consider ways it can best be implemented in relation to, but not exclusively, the following matters:

(v) strategies for strengthening Australia's regions and the delivery of services through regional development committees and regional grant programs.

While RDA Brisbane is mindful that this section of the Inquiry pertains to identifying strategies to implement for regional Australia as opposed to metropolitan/capital city areas, we wish to point out that the Australian Government recognises metropolitan/capital city regions as playing a key role in regional development, and as such RDA Committees were established in metropolitan areas as well as rural and remote areas as part of the Government's Regional Development Australia framework.

Brisbane City is an integral part of the South East Queensland region where one in seven Australians resides. South East Queensland (SEQ) is Australia's fastest growing metropolitan region – from 2006 to 2031, its population is expected to increase from 2.8 million to 4.4 million people. According to the State of Australian Cities Report 2010, 'the city and the bush' have a high level of interdependence with, among other things, cities (through gains in trade) helping to advance the regional standard of living and marketing the regions to the rest of Australia and the world.

Brisbane in particular has a significant interrelationship with its surrounding communities within SEQ and there is a high level of interdependence that doesn't always exist between other regions. For instance, future growth will see major population development areas occurring outside the Brisbane Local Government boundaries, while employment nodes within Brisbane will continue to grow, so there is a need for enhanced transport infrastructure both within and outside Brisbane to provide the connectivity between this growth and future workforce demand.

We therefore consider it important that metropolitan regions – while having a different range and complexity of issues to rural and remote regions – are not omitted in government strategies to strengthen regions; and further, that metropolitan regions should have access to regional grant programs for community based social, economic and environmental projects, which can be facilitated by the RDA committees.

For any queries in relation to this submission, please contact Margaret Blade, Executive Officer of Regional Development Australia (RDA) Brisbane on email: margaret.blade@rdabrisbane.org.au

Yours sincerely

for and on behalf of:
John Shepley
Chair