



REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AUSTRALIA - WORKING WITH MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT

September 2009

Regional Development Australia is a partnership between the Australian, state, territory and local governments to develop and strengthen the regional communities of Australia. RDA committees will be strong advocates for their region and drivers of change, and will have a pivotal role in ensuring the long-term sustainability of Australia's regions. RDA committees will work with all sectors of the community to develop and strengthen the regions, including women, young people, Indigenous Australians and people from a variety of cultures.

A key focus of Regional Development Australia will be on the economic, social and environmental issues affecting communities. Regional Development Australia will be an important contributor to and driver of:

- regional business growth plans and strategies, which will help support economic development, the creation of new jobs, skills development and business investment;
- environmental solutions, which will support ongoing sustainability and the management climate change (including the impact of drought, flood or bushfires); and
- social inclusion strategies, which will bring together and support all members of the community.

Communicating with Federal Members of Parliament and Senators

RDA committee Chairs, Deputy Chairs, members and employees should seek to work cooperatively with local Members of the Federal Parliament (Members of the House of Representatives and Senators). RDA will be an effective conduit between governments and regional communities, and will provide advice to governments about the strengths and weaknesses of regional Australia.

Attendance at Meetings

The RDA Chair should invite local MPs or Senators to attend an RDA meeting each year. Local MPs and Senators will, however, only have observer status when attending the RDA meeting. In some cases, RDA committee business may need to be considered privately and, in such cases, the Chair should request any observers or guests to absent themselves from the meeting.

MPs and Senators do not have an active role in the decision making processes of the Committee and must not attempt to influence proceedings. MPs and Senators should not seek to give, and nor should RDA committees take, direction on matters relating to the committee's work.

RDA Chairs should note that conflict of Interest procedures for MPs and Senators are to be observed. MPs and Senators are required to declare any personal or professional conflict with any item on the agenda. In cases where a conflict is identified, the MP or Senator will not receive papers or background information on that item nor participate in the discussion on that item.

Advice on Outcomes of Consultations

It would be reasonable for the RDA Chair to meet annually with its local MP or Senator to update them on the Committee's work. This meeting could also provide an opportunity for the Committee to present a copy of its Regional Plan, Annual Report or other public document. Advice and information provided to MPs and Senators should be in writing and refer only to publicly available material.