Department of Local Government and Regional Development
Government of Western Australia

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Committee

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Legislative Assembly
Parliament House
PERTH WA 6000

Dear Dr Gordon

SUBMISSION TO THE INQUIRY INTO COLLABORATIVE APPROACHES IN GOVERNMENT

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission to the Inquiry into Collaborative approaches in Government. The Department of Local Government and Regional Development is pleased to provide the following information.

Wiluna Development Project
The Wiluna Development Project (WDP) commenced in 2004 following the collapse in 2003 of the Wiluna Council. The Wiluna Shire had a history of instability with the Minister for Local Government appointing a Commissioner to run the Shire on four occasions in the last 20 years.

The WDP adopts a localised development approach to address inferior capital infrastructure and systemic issues which hinder civic participation and economic independence within a predominantly indigenous town. The Department, as the lead State Agency, and Shire are pursuing a localised development model which focuses on building the capacity of local governance and participation of the community. The State Government has committed $1.9 million over four years (2006/07 – 2009/10) to providing strategic support to the Wiluna Shire and the project management fund is used to enable the Shire to recruit suitable expertise, undertake capacity building initiatives and socio economic and demographic analysis.

The flexibility to adapt to local circumstance and to create a coordinated whole of Government approach at the community level, as opposed to a more centralised, imposed and frequently uncoordinated approach to decision making and service delivery has been integral to Wiluna's success to date.

Focus to date has largely been on addressing capital infrastructure investment. The WA Government has committed $18 million in capital infrastructure and the

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Shire has played a strategic leadership role in reshaping Wiluna's capital infrastructure base including construction of a swimming pool and government support for a housing construction and repair program, installation of an authorised sewerage and water scheme program and a new school and proposed training facility.

There is a marked attitudinal change to local government and community participation with six of the seven local councillors being indigenous.

The next phase of WDP will focus more on social capital development and the capacity of the community to generate wealth through employment enterprises, improved education and training. Increased focus will also be made on the further development of integrated partnerships between the community, Shire, State and Commonwealth Governments and mining industry and negotiation of a long term investment package that addresses the needs and aspirations of the Wiluna community.

The WDP is an attempt at "Joined-Up Government" driven at the local level. The main barriers and inhibitors to this approach have included:

- Inconsistencies in administrative boundaries which inhibit cross agency communication, collaboration and seamless service delivery and duplicate the work of the local coordinating entity. Depending on the State government agency, responsibility for services in Wiluna could lie with a regional office in Kalgoorlie, Geraldton or Meekatharra. As an example, in relation to education and training, responsibility for training lies with the Geraldton regional office whereas education services are the responsibility of the Kalgoorlie office.
- Problems in aligning agency budget and resource allocations for jointly funded initiatives.
- Lack of flexibility with respect to service and program funding and delivery.
- Short term resourcing for programs requiring long term commitment.
- Complexity and multiplicity of funding, reporting and acquittal requirements for ongoing programs.
- Prevalence of short-term and ad-hoc responses to community needs and problems requiring long term responses.

Western Australian Leadership Program
The State Government has allocated $250,000 to the WA Leadership Program each year to provide existing and potential community leaders with opportunities to expand and develop their skills.

This program is based on the fact that any projects are more likely to succeed if there is a strong community leader to champion them.

There are three components to this program.

Two of these components include funding initiatives provided by the Department for regional leaders to participate in leadership programs run by Leadership WA and Australian Rural Leadership Foundation.

Leadership WA has seen five regional leaders benefit from being involved in a program that enables them to go back to their communities and participate at a different level. Additionally, metropolitan participants have been exposed to regional development issues.

The Australian Rural Leadership Foundation runs an 18 month program to prepare leaders to develop sustainable, competitive and profitable industries and develop sustainable communities. The Department has sponsored seven Indigenous people living in regional Western Australia to participate in the program since 2003/04. The recipients have gained more confidence, more patience and more empathy when engaging with local issues.

The success of these two components is due to the reputable nature of the companies who provide the programs. Both companies provide current information and deal with relevant issues. Feedback is obtained from participants to ensure continued relevance.

The third component of this program is a grants scheme run by the Department since 2003/04 which enables young people, especially indigenous youth, living in regional Western Australia to participate in a local government traineeship.

A critical success factor for this program is that the local governments involved have been champions of its success, and consequently indigenous people have been able to gain on the job training and experience and go on to obtain employment.

Regional Collocation Scheme

The Regional Collocation Scheme (RCS) is a $7.3 million capital works grant program that aims to assist regional communities develop multi-function facilities for the collocation of government and non government organisations involved in regional or community economic development. Established in 2000/2001, incorporated community groups and local governments are eligible to apply for funding to help meet a proportion of the capital costs associated with the construction of a new facility, refurbishment of an existing building, or fixtures that are normally an integral part of a building (air-conditioning, floor coverings, security systems etc).

RCS is aimed at regional communities that have limited access to services and infrastructure with priority given to projects in remote or otherwise isolated areas that can demonstrate exceptional need. Triggered by the need to upgrade infrastructure and attract and retain local services, the RCS works to consolidate resources in local communities/governments.

A key role of the Department is to facilitate funding opportunities for local government and community projects. Funding partners have generally included Lotterywest, the Regional Partnerships Program, local government, the Australian National Training Authority, the Department for Communities, the Department of Culture and the Arts, mining companies and local industry. Examples of successful funding applicants include:
- Wingellina (Ngaanyatjarra Media Inc.)

- o Construction of a new building to collocate Ngaanyatjarra Media Inc, Wingellina Telecentre, community library, training room, office space for visiting professionals, meeting and videoconference facilities.

- Shire of Williams
  - o Construction of a new building to house the Telecentre, library, community meeting and training room, videoconference facility, agricultural and Landcare services, community newspaper, employment services, community cinema and children's activity area.

- Frankland (Shire of Cranbrook)
  - o Construction of a new building to accommodate health services, Telecentre, library, Shire services, bank agency, serviced office space for rental, training and employment services, multi-purpose meeting and seminar room with videoconferencing, community newspaper, crèche and playgroup, tourist information and community display space. The building is alongside the existing community hall that is also undergoing refurbishment and will accommodate a range of indoor recreational and cultural activities, creating a community service precinct in the town.

The success of RCS has seen approximately $4 million approved towards projects in 40 regional and remote communities and there are approximately 29 communities interested in future involvement. To date, all projects funded continue to operate effectively and, in addition, there have been cost savings on an operational and capital level as the consolidation of infrastructure also captures scales of economy (i.e. one building can provide many essential services).

The success of individual projects within RCS relies on the willingness and capacity of local government and the community to undertake planning and continue to drive the project. A committed local coordinator who communicates well and engages community, service providers and funding bodies from the beginning is also a critical success factor.

Collocated buildings in small, remote communities are usually reliant on some form of ongoing operational funding to help staff the building which may be from a combination of sources such as the local Telecentre, local government or the private sector. This can cause some issues as government funding programs can change over time and there are limits to the operational capacity of these buildings unless they are supported long term.

Closure of Wittenoom
The Department has the responsibility for implementing the State Government's policy to progress the closure of Wittenoom. This includes the provision of executive support to the Wittenoom Steering Committee; progressing the voluntary acquisition of property in Wittenoom; and liaison with, and

coordination of, government agencies to assist in implementing the State Government's policy.

The Department is continuing to progress the closure of Wittenoom, with key activities benchmarked against a comprehensive task framework and timeline. Staff have facilitated inter-agency collaboration, communication and coordination which has been fundamental in progressing key activities and targets in the closure of Wittenoom. Some examples include:

- Shire of Ashburton meeting to negotiate the resumption of vacant lots with unpaid rates. The Department worked with the Shire of Ashburton, Landgate and the Department of Planning and Infrastructure and the outcome of the meeting saw the Shire of Ashburton agree to resume lots with three plus years of outstanding rates (to be vested in the crown) and the State Government consenting to pay outstanding fees/rates.

- The removal of town-site status. The Department was notified in June 2007 by the Department of Planning and Infrastructure that the status of town-site had been removed that that the placename had been abolished in the State Law Publisher in March 2007.

- Listing of former town-site and mine sites as contaminated sites (175 lots in total). After arranging for an independent auditor to audit the initial GHD report the Department consulted with State Solicitors Office and Landgate to determine which lots to include in the application to the Department of Environment and Conservation. DEC sought comment from the Department of Health to review the application and provide their recommendations before proceeding to classify the site "Contaminated - Remediation Required".

However, despite many achievements in progressing the closure of Wittenoom, the Department has, at this stage, been unable to successfully relocate the remaining residents. The Department worked with the Department of Treasury and Finance and the Department of Housing and Works on offering a Shared Equity Scheme to assist residents to purchase property up to the value of $365,000. Despite successful liaison between the Department, DTF and residents, strong community resistance saw no acceptance of the offer.

The lack of community support, has, in this instance, been a significant obstacle in progressing the closure of Wittenoom.

Regional, Remote and Rural Women's Network
The Regional, Remote and Rural Women's Network's role is to bring together women from rural, remote and regional Western Australia to recognise, promote and expand the contribution they make to their communities. It aims to provide a mechanism for women to disseminate and share information on topics of interest to women and relevant to the development of regional communities.

The Network was launched in August 1996 and is jointly sponsored by the Department and the Department of Agriculture and Food. It is supported by a 14 member Reference Group which is jointly appointed by the two Ministers.

The Network has a web site, a quarterly magazine and holds regular on line discussion groups on a wide range of topics.

The success of the Network is a result of the Reference Group continuing to ensure that the information is relevant to rural women. There are now over 6,000 members who receive the magazine and regularly visit the web site.

Local Laws Working Group
The Local Laws Working Group (LLWG) was formed in 2002 to enhance communication between key stakeholders that have involvement with local government local laws. The LLWG consists of representatives from the Department of Local Government and Regional Development, the Parliament's Joint Standing Committee on Delegated Legislation, Local Government Managers Australia WA Division Inc, the Western Australian Local Government Association and the Department of Health.

The LLWG harnesses its success from a keen desire from members to see a higher standard of local government local laws. The good working relationship between group members has resulted in the provision of improved advice to local governments and a better understanding of the roles of stakeholders. This has resulted in a considerable overall improvement in the standard of local government local laws.

The Department has produced publications such as the Local Laws Guidelines to assist local governments in undertaking the local law making process. Another initiative has been the Local Law Workshops that were conducted in late 2005 around the State. More than 250 people from 100 local governments attended these workshops. Suggestions and feedback from the working group members have been very important in progressing these endeavours.

WA Telecentre Network
The Western Australian Telecentre Network is a cooperative network of over 100 community owned and operated Telecentres located across the State from Wyndham to Walpole, providing rural and remote communities with local public access to:
- Computer technology;
- High-speed Internet access;
- Two-way 128kb videoconferencing facilities;
- Printing and photocopying services;
- Fax machines;
- Teaching and training facilities; and
- Government, community and business information and referral services.

The location of Telecentres has evolved through community demand rather than Government design, with the majority being established in small rural and remote communities with populations of fewer than 2000 and further than 50Km from an existing Telecentre. There are currently 104 Telecentres in WA with 12 located in Indigenous communities and a further 10 approved for establishment.

The Department provides financial assistance to each Telecentre through an administration grant of $20,000 p.a. as well as access to a Telecentre Project Fund that provides grants to support specific projects undertaken by Telecentres such as community development projects, staff training and development, marketing and equipment purchases. The Department of Education and Training contributes $620,000 to this funding, however, this is not guaranteed in future years.

The Department also provides executive support to the Telecentre Advisory Council (TAC), which has responsibility for providing strategic advice to the Minister for Regional Development. Members of the TAC include representatives from the 9 WA Regional Development Areas, WALGA, Regional Development Council, Office of e-Government, the Department and an Indigenous Representative.

Since 2000, the Department's Regional Collocation Scheme has provided 41 Telecentres with funding that has enabled them to collocate with Government and/or other community service providers involved in community development. This has resulted in the reduction of operating costs such as rent, office equipment, promotional activities, joint advertising and, in some instances staffing, as well as providing the Telecentres with exposure to a broader client base.

A critical success factor has been the capacity for Telecentres to flexibly shape their growth around local needs by continually adapting to the changing economic and social climate of the communities they service. They have been able to provide opportunities for government and the private sector to effectively target the delivery of a wide range of information, programs and services that would otherwise not be available in many of the communities. This includes:
- Centrelink Services;
- Medicare Easyclaim;
- Australian Taxation Office information and referral services;
- In store banking facilities; and
- Department of Community Development information and referral services.

Active Ageing at the Local Level
Developed as part of the State Government's Active Ageing Strategy, the Department is coordinating a $1.35 million initiative to encourage older and ageing people to play a more active role in community life. Incorporated organisations, including local governments, community and industry/business organisations, volunteer organisations, educational institutions and philanthropic foundations, can apply for financial assistance to conduct a range of activities and programs to encourage active ageing.

The grant program has been successful because of a clear, well structured application process. Information was distributed by a range of mechanisms (mailing lists, brochures, press adverts and radio interviews) designed to capture a target audience. This was then followed up by extensive phone

consultation to provide further information and assist people in the application process.

The result of this initiative saw grant funding of $450,000 allocated in each of the 3 rounds of funding over 3 years. Projects to receive funding include;

- City of Fremantle- SMS (Sensational Mobile Seniors)
  - A comprehensive program for ageing and older people including lifelong learning opportunities, intergenerational activities, across organisation partnership initiatives and information provision through a newsletter.

- City of Subiaco- Arts, Culture and Life-long education program for older community members
  - A pilot arts, culture and lifelong learning education program in collaboration with other organisations including Trinity Seniors' College, the Mature Age Learning Association and the University of the Third Age.

- Albany Lions Community Care Centre- Book Club for Seniors in Albany
  - The development of book clubs for ageing and older people in the Great Southern Health Region. Participants will also learn facilitation skills, promoting independence, improving access to the community and developing ownership and be able to contribute to the development and management of the clubs.

The above information is very brief and the Department has a range of other programs not listed. Should you require any further examples or greater detail about any of the projects listed, please contact

Yours sincerely

6 May 2008