

# SEROC

South East Regional Organisation of Councils

File Ref: E10.4139

17 April 2013

Mr Brian Lloyd  
Secretary  
Select Committee on Regional Development  
ACT Legislative Assembly  
GPO Box 1020  
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Dear Mr Lloyd

## Re: Submission to Inquiry into Regional Development

SEROC welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Select Committee Inquiry into Regional Development. The Inquiry is timely having regard to the recent involvement of the ACT Government as a member of SEROC.

The terms of reference for the Inquiry are closely aligned to the objectives of SEROC which are as follows:

"SEROC as an organisation on behalf of its members will:

1. Advance the interest of the region covered by its members and promote a sense of "regional community".
2. Promote Regional Planning & Sustainability- Encourage and nurture suitable investment and development on a range of environmental, economic, social and infrastructure issues throughout the region.
3. Develop Regional Cooperation and Resource Sharing – Contribute to measurable improvement in service delivery and the operational efficiency and effectiveness of Members through facilitation of the sharing of knowledge, expertise and resources, promoting innovation and, where appropriate, the aggregation of demand and buying power."

The Inquiry also provides an opportunity to recognize the joint activity between all levels of Government that is currently taking place within the region.

## Opportunities and governance structures to coordinate economic development

### Current Joint Projects

There are currently a number of joint projects within the region that involve a number of organisations at each level of government. These include the Greater Capital Region Strategy which has involved an *analysis* of current strategic planning documents and studies to identify common issues and economic opportunities which can be enhanced through better cross border integration.




C/- Eurobodalla Shire Council  
PO Box 99 Moruya NSW 2537

Telephone: (02) 4474 1318

Fax: (02) 4474 1234

Email: seroc@eurocoast.nsw.gov.au

	A.C.T. LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE OFFICE
SUBMISSION NUMBER	11
DATE AUTH'D FOR PUBLICATION	

An action plan or joint regional economic development plans based on the findings of this analysis are currently being finalised. The final stage will be the implementation of the action plan(s) subject to available funding.

Regional involvement includes the ACT Government, NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet, Regional Development Australia (RDA)- Southern Inland, ACT and South Coast, Department of Regional Australia, Local Government, Arts & Sport and SEROC.

SEROC views this project as significant as it brings together many of the studies and proposals that have been developed independently and now provides an opportunity to develop a joint coordinated approach.

Some of the priority areas that have been identified include, a region wide Waste and Resource Recovery Strategy, developing a holistic approach to address skills and training gaps and the development of a regional marketing and branding strategy.

As a partner in this process SEROC has project funds which may be available to assist with agreed joint projects.

Another joint project is the South East Region of Renewable Energy Excellence (SERREE) which is collaborative networks of NSW and ACT Government agencies, RDA-Southern Inland, ACT and South Coast together with industry, education and community stakeholders.

The objective of SERREE is to boost growth and diversity in our regional economy, assist the region to move towards greater environmental sustainability, enhance the provision of jobs, and the liveability and sustainability of local regional towns.

These projects have been mentioned to highlight the existing collaborative arrangements that are in place which supports the ACT Governments commitment to regional cooperation.

#### *Regional Marketing and Promotion*

There are many opportunities for economic development within the region and individually each Local Government Community and Canberra promote the economic and tourism benefits and opportunities that exist within each area. This is to be commended and should be supported by a regional marketing approach which provides a greater focus on the region as a whole.

The South East region has three marketable sub regions, Capital Region, Snowy Region and the South Coast Region. They are all connected and can provide joint benefits by the effective marketing of regional tourism experiences and regional economic opportunities.

SEROC has started down this path with the development of a "Capital Living" website which aims to promote the benefits of the region as a whole and provide an opportunity for our regional towns and cities including Canberra to promote and market what they have to offer.

SEROC also made the point in its submission to the recent "Inquiry into Current and Potential Ecotourism in the ACT and Region" that a regional approach which can showcase our natural assets, build environmental awareness and promote ecological conservation will enhance the funding

opportunities at all levels of Government. This in turn will contribute to the Region's economy and provide incentives to protect and enhance our natural assets and attractions.

### *Regional Transport Links*

An Integrated Transport Strategy for South East NSW is one of the strategies being pursued by SEROC. Councils in the region were concerned that the South East Region of New South Wales appeared to be the only region in the State where there were no plans for the development of a Regional Transport Strategy.

Following representations to the NSW Minister for Transport and with the development of the NSW Long Term Transport Master Plan a regional transport strategy will now be developed for this region. SEROC has argued, however, that the development of this regional strategy must involve consultation with and participation by the ACT Government. This is vital in developing a whole of region approach.

The provision of safe and efficient transport is vital to the social and economic wellbeing of our communities with associated flow on effects to future employment. The strategy must address:

- end to end transport solutions for business, industry and our communities.
- road safety and social equity as well as key economic drivers (eg freight, tourism)
- places this region in the strongest possible position to successfully bid for funding from Infrastructure Australia
- links to and/or influences key State and regional planning decisions to take advantage of the capacity of existing infrastructure and the opportunities for the future prosperity of the region.
- optimises the use and integration of different transport modes including road, rail , air, ports and public transport.
- ensures the efficient expenditure of available funding on infrastructure to optimize outcomes

There are significant highways that link the ACT and the South East Region, such as the Federal, Barton, Monaro and Kings Highway. There is an opportunity for the ACT Government and Councils to work together and lobby State and Federal Governments for the ongoing improvement and upgrade of these vital link highways and assist in achieving a regional transport strategy that meets the needs of the whole region.

The continued development of Canberra airport is also of great value to the region. In particular, its development as an International airport would open up new markets including the exporting of fresh produce from the region, together with inbound tourism.

### **Coordination of service planning and service delivery**

#### *Shared Services*

Local Government in NSW is currently under the microscope with the Independent Local Government Review Panel looking at ways to strengthen the effectiveness of Councils in NSW.

The Independent Review is considering the possibility that different models may be applied to different councils within the State, depending on their circumstances and the needs of their communities. In the past, one single solution or model has been applied to every council in NSW.

The Panel has been receiving submissions and consulting with Councils and their communities to develop new structures and models.

SEROC in its submission to the Panel highlighted the potential for joint activity between the ACT Government and Councils within the region, particularly those Councils that adjoin or are in close proximity to the ACT. Logically, this could include sharing ownership and management of major facilities (especially infrastructure), cross border service delivery, eg roads maintenance, waste management, water supply, etc and coordinating regulatory and other practices.

The Panel was invited to recommend to the NSW State Government to consider legislative provisions that would provide a suitable vehicle for the ownership and management of shared facilities and cross border service provision.

SEROC's submission to the Independent Review Panel is provided as a separate attachment for the Committee's information.

#### *Land Use Planning*

Population growth in the ACT will continue to put pressures on affordable housing. Councils within easy commute distance can ease this pressure by providing a diverse range of affordable housing and lifestyle options.

One of the priority actions identified in the ACT and NSW MOU for Regional Collaboration is collaborative strategic land use and growth related infrastructure planning. This is being progressed through the development of an ACT-NSW Land Use and Infrastructure Plan. The project area for the Plan includes Canberra and those surrounding Councils which have an approximate one hour commute.

This plan provides an ideal opportunity for a shared vision on service planning and delivery

#### **Opportunities for collaborative procurement**

SEROC Councils have undertaken a number of collaborative procurement arrangements in the past 18 months which have resulted in substantial savings to the participating Councils. At this stage the procurements have focussed on Information Technology products, however, it is proposed to broaden the scope.

Should processes be established to allow the ACT Government to join with the SEROC Councils in joint procurement arrangements the benefits should be substantial for both the ACT Government and the Councils.

It is proposed that a joint working party be established, comprising senior officers responsible for procurements functions within the ACT Government and SEROC Councils. This working party could

work through available opportunities and administrative processes to facilitate this potential initiative.

**Further cooperation at local government level on environmental and conservation matters and building community resilience to natural disasters**

Prior to recent legislative changes in regard to Local Government reporting requirements, Councils in the South East Region were engaged with the ACT Office of the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment in developing and producing Regional State of the Environment Reports. Councils are now required to report on the environmental objectives contained in their Community Strategic Plans as part of the new Integrated Planning and Reporting (IPR) framework.

In view of the importance of maintaining a regional perspective in regard to environmental measures and sharing of data, a SEROC State of the Environment Working Group has been established. This working group has been reviewing common data requirements and opportunities for collaboration on data acquisition across the region. One of the tasks is to develop a list of summary indicators that are relevant to most Councils in the South East.

The ACT Office of the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment participate in this working group to assist in developing a consistent approach across the region.

**Other relevant matters**

Another matter that will be significant to the South East region is the roll out of National Broadband Network (NBN). Whilst roll out work has commenced or about to commence in the ACT and Queanbeyan it may be many years before the rest of the South East region has access to the NBN.

The digital economy has the potential for enormous positive social change in the South East region, bringing communities closer together through improved communication, contact and economic opportunity. These include a particular focus on health and education, as well as business and community take-up to facilitate improved accessibility to goods, information and services.

SEROC is keen to press for an earlier commencement date for the rest of the region and would appreciate any assistance the ACT Government can provide for this process.

In conclusion, SEROC is committed to pursuing opportunities to promote and enhance regional development opportunities that can benefit all communities in the South East Region. SEROC also looks forward to working with the ACT Government in collaborative arrangements that can provide financial and governance benefits.

Yours faithfully



Don Cooper  
Executive Officer

