



Australian Government

Department of Industry, Science and Resources

**Department of Infrastructure, Transport,
Regional Development, Communications and the Arts**

Growing Regions Program Round 2 – Program Guidelines

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Closing date and time:	05:00pm Australian Eastern Daylight Savings Time on 10 October 2024 (application) Please take account of time zone differences when submitting your application.
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1. Growing Regions Program processes

The Growing Regions Program is designed to achieve Australian Government objectives

This funding opportunity is part of the above funding program which contributes to the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts' (DITRDCA) Outcome 3: *Strengthening the sustainability, capacity and diversity of Australia's regions, including northern Australia, including through facilitating local partnerships between all levels of government and local communities; through investment in infrastructure and measures that stimulate economic growth; and providing funding and financial assistance.*



Program Opens

The Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government announces the program open and Program Guidelines are published on the DITRDCA website.



You complete and submit an application

You complete an application addressing all the eligibility and assessment criteria in order for your application to be considered.



All funding applications are assessed

Your application is assessed against eligibility criteria by the Department of Industry, Science and Resources (DISR). Eligible applications are assessed by DITRDCA and the multi-party Parliamentary panel against the assessment criteria, including an overall consideration of value for money and compared to other eligible applications.



Funding recommendations

DITRDCA provides the decision maker all eligible projects in order of merit and will make recommendations with regard to program funding available.



Funding decisions are made

The decision maker decides which applications are successful.



You are notified of the outcome

You are advised of the outcome of your application. Unsuccessful project proponents may not be advised until funding agreements have been executed with successful project proponents.



You enter into a funding agreement

As a successful project proponent, you will enter into a funding agreement. The funding agreement will be proportional to the risks involved.



Delivery of funding

You complete the funding activity as set out in your funding agreement.



Evaluation of the Growing Regions Program

DITRDCA will evaluate the specific funding activity and Growing Regions Program as a whole. The evaluation will be informed by information you provide from other various sources.

Introduction

These Program Guidelines (the guidelines) contain information for the Growing Regions Program. The Australian Government has announced a total of \$600 million over 4 years from 2023-24 to drive regional economic prosperity by providing access to funding for capital works for infrastructure across Australia's regional, rural and remote areas. Funding will be provided through two rounds. Successful projects under Round 1 were announced on 16 May 2024.

This document sets out:

- the purpose of the funding program
- the eligibility and assessment criteria
- how funding applications are considered and assessed
- how project proponents are notified of the outcome of their project applications
- the steps for successful applicants to enter into funding agreements with the relevant state or territory government agency
- how successful project performance is monitored and evaluated
- the responsibilities and expectations in relation to the funding opportunity.

This funding opportunity will be administered by three separate entities:

- DISR will support program delivery limited to the eligibility process and the notification process
- DITRDCA will assess all eligible applications, together with the multi-party Parliamentary panel (the panel), and recommend projects for funding to the decision maker
- the Australian Government intends for approved applications to be delivered through state and territory governments.

We have defined key terms used in these guidelines in the glossary at section 16.

You should read this document carefully before you fill out an application.

2. About the funding program

The Growing Regions Program (the program) will run over 4 years from 2023-24 to 2026-27. The program was announced as part of the October 2022 Budget.

The program aligns with the Australian Government's [Regional Investment Framework](#), specifically through investing in community infrastructure in places across regional Australia – delivering projects that improve liveability and respond to community needs and priorities.

The program will enhance our regions by supporting liveable and connected communities. It will provide investment in community-focused infrastructure which creates and enhances amenity, liveability and social cohesion throughout Australia's regions. The program is intended to support projects that fill an unmet need, respond to local priorities, are well developed with mature planning and development in place, and provide benefits to a broad cross section of people within communities.

The objectives of the program are:

- constructing or upgrading community infrastructure that fills an identified and immediate gap or unmet need for community infrastructure, particularly for communities that have experienced substantial growth
- contributing to achieving social outcomes and increased community cohesion, liveability and accessibility

- delivering increased amenity, liveability and community connectedness in line with the Investing in Places priority focus area of the Australian Government’s [Regional Investment Framework](#) to deliver targeted and place-based investment.

The intended outcomes of the program are:

- to enhance liveability and amenity in regional communities
- provision of multi-use infrastructure which benefits a broad cross section of the community by improving access, equity and social inclusion
- to contribute to the achievement of Government priorities supporting the resilience, adaptability, accessibility, sustainability and liveability of communities including in First Nations communities
- delivery of diverse project types and a balance of large and small projects
- supporting and encouraging projects from lesser-resourced project proponents and low rate-based councils (see Appendix E).

3. Funding available

The Australian Government has announced a total of \$600 million over 4 years for the program. For Round 2, \$393 million is available over 3 years.

- The minimum project funding amount is \$500,000.
- The maximum project funding amount is \$15 million.

You are required to contribute towards the project. Co-funding requirements are:

Co-funding group	Project circumstance	Total Commonwealth Government funding towards eligible project costs
Group 1	Projects run by First Nations Community Controlled Organisations (as defined in Section 16 Glossary) or Projects located in ‘very remote’ locations per the Australian Bureau of Statistics’ Remoteness Structure as detailed in the mapping tool	Up to 90 per cent of eligible project costs
Group 2	Projects located in ‘remote’ locations per the Australian Bureau of Statistics’ Remoteness Structure as detailed in the mapping tool or Projects run by ‘low rate-based’ councils, determined using the ratio of Financial Assistance Grant to Net Rate Income listed in Appendix E.	Up to 70 per cent of eligible project costs

Group 3	All remaining projects.	Up to 50 per cent of eligible project costs
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If you apply under co-funding Group 1 or 2 and you are found not eligible for the selected group, your application will be considered for eligibility under Group 3.

You are responsible for the remaining eligible and ineligible project costs.

Contributions to your project must be cash. In-kind contributions are not allowable as eligible expenditure and will not be considered towards the total of the co-funding contribution.

Other funding can come from any source including state, territory and local government funds.

You cannot use funding from other Commonwealth funds to fund the balance of project expenditure not covered by funding under the Growing Regions Program.

4. Eligibility criteria

We cannot consider your application if you do not satisfy all eligibility criteria.

4.1. Who is eligible to apply for funding?

To be eligible you must:

- be an incorporated not-for-profit organisation

A not-for-profit organisation must demonstrate not-for-profit status through one of the following:

- current Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC) registration; or
- state or territory incorporated association status; or Constitutional documents and/or Articles of Association that demonstrate the not-for-profit character of the organisation.

or

- be a local government agency¹ or body

and

- have an Australian Business Number (ABN) or ORIC registration
- deliver the project in an eligible location
- declare the project will be shovel ready at the time of signing a funding agreement
- own the land/infrastructure being upgraded or built upon, or have the landowner's permission to use the land/infrastructure.

For the purposes of the program, we also consider the following organisations to be local government bodies:

Organisation legal name	ABN
Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara	77 261 612 162
Maralinga Tjarutja	90 178 229 972
Gerard Community Council Aboriginal Corporation	99 725 510 595
Nipapanha Community Aboriginal Corporation	97 841 764 643

¹ See Glossary for definition.

Organisation legal name	ABN
Yalata Community Council Incorporated	93 356 134 967
Cocos (Keeling) Islands Shire Council	12 325 522 841
Lord Howe Island Board	33 280 968 043
Norfolk Island Regional Council	60 103 855 713
Outback Communities Authority	46 594 368 490
Shire of Christmas Island	94 494 925 146
Silverton Village Committee Incorporated	94 820 037 891
Alpine Resorts Victoria	33 432 219 067
Tibooburra Village Committee Incorporated	58 160 430 241

If you are applying as a Trustee on behalf of a Trust², the Trustee must have an eligible entity type as listed above.

Joint applications are acceptable, provided you have a lead organisation who is the main driver of the project and is eligible to apply. For further information on joint applications, refer to section 7.2.

4.2. Additional eligibility requirements

We can only accept applications where you provide:

- evidence of both incorporation and not-for-profit status
- evidence to demonstrate eligibility of your entity type
- evidence to support eligibility for Group 1 co-funding where the Commonwealth is funding up to 90 per cent.

If applying as a very remote location, the project site address must be listed as 'very remote' on the mapping tool. If applying as a First Nations Community Controlled Organisation you must provide: an Indigenous Corporation Number (ICN) or evidence of ORIC registration, or a declaration that you are a Traditional Owner or that the organisation is at least 51 per cent owned or controlled by Indigenous persons or the Indigenous Enterprise has 50 per cent Indigenous ownership (using the template on business.gov.au)

- evidence of a cash contribution from another source (for example state government). The source must provide you with formal documentation confirming the cash contribution so you can attach it to your application (see section 7.1)
- evidence that you either own the land/infrastructure being built/upgraded upon, or that you have the landowner's permission to use the land/infrastructure using the letter template on business.gov.au.

We cannot waive the eligibility criteria under any circumstances.

² Trusts are not legal entities in their own right – to be eligible, only the Trustee for the Trust can apply by providing the signed Trust Deed and any subsequent variations with the application form. Trustees must be an eligible entity type as stated in section 4.1. Both the Trust's and Trustee's details will be collected in the application form.

Evidence to support your eligibility must be attached with your application otherwise it cannot be accepted.

4.3. Who is not eligible to apply for funding?

You are not eligible to apply if you are:

- an organisation, or your project partner is an organisation, included on the [National Redress Scheme's website](#) on the list of 'Institutions that have not joined or signified their intent to join the Scheme'
- an employer of 100 or more employees that has not complied with the Workplace Gender Equality Act (2012)
- an individual
- a partnership
- a Regional Development Australia Committee
- an unincorporated association
- any organisation not included in section 4.1
- a trust (however, an incorporated trustee may apply on behalf of a trust)
- a Commonwealth, state or territory government body
- a non-corporate Commonwealth entity
- a non-corporate state or territory entity
- a non-corporate state or territory statutory authority
- an international entity
- sole trader
- a for-profit organisation
- university, technical college, school, hospital or aged care
- in an ineligible location as detailed in section 5.3.

5. What the funding can be used for

5.1. Eligible funding activities

To be eligible your project must:

- construct new community infrastructure or expand or upgrade existing infrastructure for wider community benefit
- not be standard capital works of other Commonwealth, state, territory or local government bodies including, but not limited to, roads, housing and essential service provision
- not have commenced construction
- not have received Commonwealth funding to undertake the same funding activities
- have a minimum eligible expenditure of at least \$555,556 (group 1), \$714,286 (group 2) or \$1,000,000 (group 3) depending on co-funding requirements as outlined in section 3.

Eligible activities must directly relate to the project and must include at least one of the following:

- constructing new community infrastructure.
- expanding or upgrading existing infrastructure for wider community benefit

The types of projects that would deliver on the objectives and intended outcomes of the program include:

- multi-purpose community hubs, youth centres, community sheds and gardens
- libraries and cultural facilities such as creative centres
- sports and recreational facilities
- town centre revitalisation, bike or walking paths, play spaces and green spaces
- multi-use centres that a large part of the community can use to access a number of different activities or services such as a centre that provides childcare, a pharmacy, library and a shared meeting space.

All activities must be strategically aligned to regional priorities and benefit a broad section of the community. This will need to be addressed through the assessment criteria.

We may also approve other activities.

A list of eligible funding activities can be found at Appendix A.

5.2. Projects that are out of scope

The program is not intended to fund infrastructure projects that are not widely accessible to the broader local community, or are primarily designed to:

- deliver single-function services to the community that generally fall under the remit of state or territory government, local government or other Commonwealth departments such as standalone health care, aged care, disability, housing, and primary, secondary and tertiary education.
- for solely commercial purposes
- solely for commercial development

Examples of the types of projects that are out of scope include:

- new or upgraded infrastructure for a hospital or medical centre, an aged care centre, rehabilitation or disability services centre, universities and schools
- infrastructure for housing or accommodation, building of new roads or transport links
- infrastructure related to waste, sewage, water, environmental and energy facilities, or telecommunications.

A list of eligible and ineligible funding activities can be found at Appendix A and B, respectively.

Project proponents can submit no more than two applications per ABN. Only the first two applications per ABN submitted in order of time and date will be accepted.

5.3. Eligible locations

Your project must be delivered in an eligible location. All eligible locations must be outside of the Greater Capital City Statistical Areas (GCCSAs) as defined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

The department recommends entering the exact project location into the [mapping tool](#) to determine project eligibility..

5.3.1 Ineligible locations

The following are ineligible locations:

- Greater Capital City Statistical Area - Greater Sydney

- Greater Capital City Statistical Area - Greater Melbourne
- Greater Capital City Statistical Area - Greater Perth
- Greater Capital City Statistical Area - Greater Adelaide
- Greater Capital City Statistical Area - Greater Brisbane
- Greater Capital City Statistical Area - Greater Darwin
- Greater Capital City Statistical Area - Greater Hobart
- All of ACT.

5.4. Eligible expenditure

You can only spend the funds on eligible expenditure you have incurred on an agreed project as defined in your funding agreement.

- For guidance on eligible expenditure, refer to Appendix C
- For guidance on ineligible expenditure, refer to Appendix D.

The guidance on eligible and ineligible expenditure may be updated from time to time. If your application is successful, the version in place when you submitted your application applies to your project.

Not all expenditure on your project may be eligible for funding. The Program Delegate (who is a manager within DITRDCA with responsibility for administering the program) makes the final decision on what is eligible expenditure and may give additional guidance on eligible expenditure if required.

To be eligible, expenditure must:

- be a direct cost of the project
- be incurred by you for required project audit activities.

You must incur the project expenditure between the execution of your funding agreement and the end date for it to be eligible, unless stated otherwise.

You must not commence your project until you have an executed funding agreement with the relevant state and territory government in which your project is located.

6. The assessment criteria

DITRDCA will initially assess and score eligible projects against the three merit criteria detailed at 6.1 to 6.3. DITRDCA will then provide their initial assessment, scores and a total overall score resulting in a rating of highly suitable, suitable or unsuitable, and a summary of all eligible applications to the multi-party Parliamentary panel (the panel). The panel will consider the information provided by DITRDCA and also assess eligible projects against the three merit criteria.

The application form asks questions that relate to the assessment criteria below. The amount of detail and supporting evidence in your application should be relative to the project size, complexity and funding amount requested. You should provide evidence to support your answers. The application form displays character limits for each response.

Only applications that score at least 60 per cent against each assessment criteria will be considered for funding.

6.1. Assessment criterion 1

Contribution to social and community inclusion (40 points)

Social and community inclusion may cover improving community connections and providing opportunities for learning and knowledge creation.

You should demonstrate this through identifying:

- a. the extent to which your project meets the needs of the community
- b. the benefits that your project will deliver for the community and/or region during and beyond the term of funding in relation to liveability and enhanced amenity
- c. the social benefits that your project will deliver for the community and/or region during and beyond the term of funding.

Examples of how your project could deliver social and community benefits may include but is not limited to:

- increasing access to community services and infrastructure
- supporting or protecting local heritage and culture
- increasing community volunteering
- increasing the number or value of jobs, new businesses or the production of goods and services in the region (this includes direct and indirect opportunities created through the project)
- delivering infrastructure where and when it is needed.

6.2. Assessment criterion 2

Alignment with Government and regional strategic priorities (20 points).

You should demonstrate this through identifying:

- a. the extent to which your proposal aligns with social, economic and environmental priorities in your region, including alignment with any local, regional or federal plans or policies
- b. the extent to which your proposal increases the availability of multi-use infrastructure which benefits a broad section of the community by improving access, equity and social inclusion
- c. the extent to which your proposal contributes to, or helps manage, the growth of local economies and enhances amenity and liveability
- d. the extent to which your proposal aligns with the Australian Government's [Regional Investment Framework](#), specifically the 'Investing in Places' focus area and any interconnected focus areas including: meeting the needs of, and providing opportunities for, First Nations people, supporting the transformation to a net zero economy and decarbonisation, and achieving gender equality.
- e. how your proposal has considered environmental impacts and the potential role of environmentally sustainable design, including nature-based solutions and circular economy principles
- f. the extent of community support for the project, including outcomes from any consultation undertaken with the local community, such as First Nations groups and diverse socio-economic and cultural groups.

The evidence you provide to support this may include, but is not limited to:

- alignment with your Regional Development Australia (RDA) regional plan, if applicable, your local government plan, or Regional Australia Institute research
- modelling of environmental impacts and/or mitigation.

6.3. Assessment criterion 3

Capacity, capability and resources to deliver and sustain the project. (40 points).

You should demonstrate this through identifying:

- a. your track record managing similar projects and access to personnel and/or partners with the right skills and experience
- b. sound project planning to manage and monitor the project, which addresses scope, implementation methodology, timeframes, budget, community consultation, and risk management
- c. how you will operate and maintain the infrastructure and benefits of the project into the future
- d. your readiness to commence the project, including access, noting the project needs to be 'shovel ready' at the time of entering into a funding agreement. You should describe the steps you have taken to get your project investment ready including:
 - the status of required regulatory and/or development approvals
 - project designs and costings
 - authority from the land or infrastructure owner to undertake the project at the nominated site(s)
 - funding contributions from all sources.

The evidence you provide to support this must include, but is not limited to:

- a clear business case for the proposal, including project plans, budget and relevant approvals, timelines and procurement processes
- a cost benefit analysis commensurate with the size and scale of the project
- a risk management plan, which identifies risks and mitigations
- copies of all relevant approvals

7. How to apply

Before applying you should read and understand these guidelines, and the sample application form found on the [DITRDCA](#) and the [business.gov.au](#) websites.

Project proponents should read all eligibility and assessment criteria closely and attach detailed evidence that supports the assessment criteria.

You will need to set up an account to access our online [portal](#).

Only two applications per ABN are allowed. Only the first two applications per ABN submitted in order of time and date will be accepted.

It is therefore recommended you focus on submitting applications only for those projects most strongly aligned with the program objectives and able to meet the eligibility criteria.

When submitting an application you must:

- provide all the information requested
- address all eligibility and assessment criteria

- include all necessary attachments and information requested.

You are responsible for making sure your application is complete and accurate. Giving false or misleading information is a serious offence under the [Criminal Code Act 1995](#). Your application may not progress if you are considered to have provided false or misleading information. After submission, we will not contact you for clarification on any aspect of your application, including any suspected errors, missing information, or lack of evidence that supports your eligibility/merit.

7.1. Attachments to the application

You must provide the following documents with your application:

- evidence of both incorporation and not-for-profit status
- evidence to demonstrate eligibility of your entity type
- evidence to support eligibility for Group 1 co-funding where the Commonwealth is funding up to 90 per cent as detailed in section 4.2 (if applicable)
- formal documentation providing confirmation of a cash contribution from another source (for example state government)
- evidence that you either own the land/infrastructure being built/upgraded upon, or that you have the landowner's permission to use the land/infrastructure using the letter template on business.gov.au
- a business case which must include a detailed project budget that shows income sources, and eligible expenditure items, a project plan, project risk assessment plans and a cost benefit analysis
- evidence the project is ready to commence including approved development applications, project designs and timelines, noting the project needs to be 'shovel ready' at the time of entering into a funding agreement
- attach detailed evidence that supports assessment criteria responses as detailed in section 6 (where applicable)
- recent costings/quotes for major costs as part of your application
- accountant declaration (published online)
- evidence of funding strategy e.g. financial statements, loan agreements, cash flow documents
- a letter of support from each project partner.

You must attach supporting documentation to the application form in line with the instructions provided within the form. You should only attach requested documents. Individual file sizes cannot be greater than 2MB, while the total of all attachments cannot exceed 20MB. We will not consider information in attachments that we do not request.

We will not accept links to supporting documents held in cloud storage applications such as Dropbox or WeTransfer or on applicant private servers. We are not responsible if links to documents on public websites have been provided incorrectly, are broken or do not open. We will not contact you if documents supplied in these ways cannot be accessed during the assessment.

7.2. Joint (consortia) applications

We recognise that some organisations may want to join together as a group to deliver a project. In these circumstances, you must appoint a lead organisation. Only the lead organisation can submit the application form and enter into the funding agreement with the Commonwealth. The application must identify all other members of the proposed group and include a letter of support from each of the project partners. Each letter of support should include:

- details of the project partner
- an overview of how the project partner will work with the lead organisation and any other project partners in the group to successfully complete the project
- an outline of the relevant experience and/or expertise the project partner will bring to the group
- the roles/responsibilities the project partner will undertake, and the resources it will contribute (if any)
- details of a nominated management level contact officer.

You must have a formal arrangement in place with all parties prior to execution of the funding agreement.

7.3. Timing of funding opportunity processes

You can only submit an application between the published opening and closing dates.

If you are successful, you must commence your project as soon as a funding agreement is executed.

8. The funding selection process

8.1. Assessment of funding applications

DISR first review your application against the eligibility criteria.

If your application meets eligibility criteria, your application will be assessed against the assessment criteria. Any ineligible proposals will not proceed and are excluded from funding consideration.

DITRDCA will undertake further review of eligible funding activities and eligible expenditure at merit assessment and funding stages. The Program Delegate may exclude ineligible applications at any stage of the assessment and funding process.

You will need to submit the documentation outlined in section 7.1 to support your eligibility responses. Noting that if you are subsequently assessed as ineligible during the application process, your application will not be further assessed, and you will be advised of your ineligibility.

You will be notified of the outcome of the eligibility process.

The application form asks questions that relate to the assessment criteria. The amount of detail and supporting evidence you provide in your application should be relative to the project size, complexity and funding amount requested. You should provide evidence to support your answers. The application form displays character limits for each response.

Projects will be initially assessed against all three criteria by DITRDCA who will summarise all eligible applications for assessment by the panel. The panel will consider the information provided by DITRDCA and also assess eligible projects against the three merit criteria. The panel will undertake a fair and transparent assessment of all eligible applications and apply their expertise in representing the interests of regional and rural communities to assess and recommend projects that meet the merit criteria, and are strongly aligned with and can deliver on the objectives, intended outcomes and broader Government and regional strategic priorities identified in these guidelines and as defined in the glossary.

DITRDCA will initially assess and score eligible projects against the three merit criteria detailed at 6.1 to 6.3. DITRDCA will then provide their initial assessment, scores and a total overall score resulting in a rating of highly suitable, suitable or unsuitable, and a summary of all eligible

applications to the multi-party Parliamentary panel (the panel). The panel will consider the information provided by DITRDCA and also assess eligible projects against the three merit criteria.

An external probity advisor will be appointed by DITRDCA to provide probity advice, briefings and support to the panel.

The panel will consist of six members, including the Chair of the panel, who will be responsible for chairing panel meetings, leading the moderation of assessments, ensuring the operation of the panel and supporting the established standards of probity, including declarations of conflicts of interest. Panel members will participate in probity briefings and be required to declare any conflicts of interests.

Prior to the briefings and where applicable, DITRDCA will provide the panel with a background reading pack, probity plans and documents and an assessment pack, including the assessment framework and scoring sheet.

All panel members must sign and return the DITRDCA Conflict of Interest declaration forms provided by the external probity advisor at the initial probity briefing, and read all relevant pre-reading prior to the assessment of the full applications.

Panel members will not be provided applications for proposed projects within their own electorates. The panel Chair will have a casting vote on any matters where the panel members are equally divided. Following review of applications, panel members will convene and deliberate their recommendations to reach consensus before providing their recommendations to DITRDCA.

The panel will assess applications against all merit criteria and score applications against the below criteria.

Your application will be considered on its merits, based on:

- how well it meets the criteria
- how it compares to other applications
- whether it provides value with relevant money

When assessing the extent to which the application represents value with relevant money, the following will be considered:

- the overall objectives of the funding program
- the evidence provided to demonstrate how your project contributes to meeting those objectives
- the relative value of the funding sought
- the extent to which the evidence in the application demonstrates that it will contribute to meeting the outcomes/objectives of the Growing Regions Program
- risks, financial, fraud and other, that the project proponent or project poses for DITRDCA
- risks that the project proponent or project poses for the Commonwealth.

As part of the briefing to accompany the assessment pack provided to the decision-maker, DITRDCA will provide the projects in order of merit and make recommendations with regard to the total program funding available.

8.2. Who will approve funding?

The Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government (the decision maker) decides which projects to approve, taking into account the application merit assessment, DITRDCA's recommendations, and the availability of funds.

The Minister's decision is final in all matters, including:

- the funding approval
- the funding to be awarded
- any conditions attached to the offer of funding.

The Minister will not approve funding if there is insufficient program funds available across relevant financial years for the program.

9. Notification of application outcomes

You will be advised of the outcome of your application in writing. If you are successful, we advise you of any specific conditions attached to the funding.

9.1. Feedback on your application

If you are unsuccessful, you will have the opportunity to discuss the outcome of your application with DITRDCA.

10. Successful funding applications

10.1 The funding agreement

It is intended that applicants will enter into a legally binding funding agreement with the relevant state or territory government agency responsible for administering the program funding in your area. The Australian Government and the relevant state or territory government agency are not responsible for any expenditure you incur, and cannot make any payments, until a funding agreement is executed. The approval of your funding may have specific conditions determined by the assessment process or other considerations made by the Program Delegate or Minister. We will identify these in our communication to you. If you do not enter into the funding agreement within two months of relevant correspondence, the Australian Government may withdraw its support for your project. Under certain circumstances, we may extend this period. The funding agreement will set out the relevant project milestones, compliance requirements and reporting responsibilities, as well as relevant contact information for the period of the funding agreement.

If you enter into an agreement under the Growing Regions Program, you cannot receive other funding for the same activities from other Commonwealth funding programs.

10.2 Specific legislation, policies and industry standards

It is a condition of the funding that you comply with all relevant laws, regulations and Australian Government sanctions in undertaking your project. You must also comply with the specific legislation/policies/industry standards in your state or territory for the expenditure of public money and the procurement of good and services. It is anticipated that compliance will be managed through a funding agreement with your relevant state and territory government agency. In particular, you will be required to comply with State/Territory legislation in relation to working with children.

11. How we pay the funding

The funding agreement will set out the funding arrangements and the maximum amount payable for your project. The Australian Government will not exceed the maximum funding amount. If you incur extra costs, you must meet them yourself. You will be asked to report on:

- the proportion of eligible expenditure covered by the funding agreement (funding percentage)

- any financial contribution provided by you or a third party.

Payment will be subject to satisfactory progress on the project, based on the achievement of set milestones as detailed in the funding agreement. Conditional to your funding, you will be asked to provide a satisfactory end of project report demonstrating you have completed outstanding obligations for the project.

11.1 Funding Payments and GST

If you are registered for the Goods and Services Tax (GST), where applicable GST will be added to your funding payment. GST does not apply to funding payments to government related entities³. Funding is assessable income for taxation purposes, unless exempted by a taxation law. We recommend you seek independent professional advice on your taxation obligations or seek assistance from the Australian Taxation Office. We do not provide advice on tax.

12. Announcement of funding

Information about our funding commitment to your project may be provided through public media events. This information may include:

- name of your organisation
- title of the project and its aims
- amount of funding awarded
- your Australian Business Number
- your business location
- your organisation's industry sector.

13. Reporting requirements

Reporting requirements will be detailed in your funding agreement.

14. Acknowledgement

If you make a public statement about a project funded under the program, including in a brochure or publication, you must acknowledge the funding by using the following:

'This project received funding from the Australian Government.'

If you erect signage in relation to the project, the signage must contain an acknowledgement of the funding and adhere to the [Australian Government's Building Australia Signage Guidelines](#).

The Australian Government's Building Australia Signage Guidelines will apply to all projects funded via the Schedules. States should ensure that funding agreements with proponents include a clause that confirms that the Signage Guidelines will apply to the funded project.

15. Probity

DITRDCA will make sure that the funding program process is fair, according to the published Program Guidelines, and incorporates appropriate safeguards against fraud, unlawful activities and other inappropriate conduct.

³ See Australian Taxation Office ruling GSTR 2012/2 available at ato.gov.au

An external probity advisor will be appointed by DITRDCA to provide probity advice, briefings and support to the panel. Panel members will participate in probity briefings and be required to declare any conflicts of interest. The panel will be provided with a background reading pack including probity plans and any required templates.

All panel members must sign and return the DITRDCA Conflict of Interest Declaration form, provided by the external probity advisor at the initial probity briefing, and read all relevant pre-reading prior to the review of DITRDCA's merit assessment.

These Program Guidelines may be changed from time-to-time. When this happens, the revised Program Guidelines will be published online.

15.1. Enquiries and feedback

For further information or clarification on the application process, you can contact DISR on 13 28 46 or by [web chat](#) or through our [online enquiry form](#) on business.gov.au.

DISR's [Customer Service Charter](#) is available at business.gov.au. We use customer satisfaction surveys to improve our business operations and service.

For further information and clarification on application assessments, application outcomes and timing, contact DITRDCA via the Growing Regions Program inbox at GrowingRegions@infrastructure.gov.au.

DITRDCA may publish answers to your questions on our website as Frequently Asked Questions.

If you have a complaint, contact DITRDCA at GrowingRegions@infrastructure.gov.au. We will refer your complaint to the appropriate manager.

If you are not satisfied with the way we handle your complaint, you can contact:

Assistant Secretary

Regional Programs Branch

Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts

GPO Box 594

CANBERRA ACT 2601

You can also contact the [Commonwealth Ombudsman](#) with your complaint (call 1300 362 072). There is no fee for making a complaint, and the Ombudsman may conduct an independent investigation.

15.2. Conflicts of interest

Any conflicts of interest could affect the performance of the program. There may be a conflict of interest, or perceived conflict of interest, if our staff, any member of a Panel or advisor and/or you or any of your personnel:

- has a professional, commercial or personal relationship with a party who is able to influence the application selection process, such as an Australian Government officer or member of an external panel
- has a relationship with or interest in, an organisation, which is likely to interfere with or restrict the project proponents from carrying out the proposed activities fairly and independently or
- has a relationship with, or interest in, an organisation from which they will receive personal gain because the organisation receives funding under the funding program/funding opportunity.

As part of your application, we will ask you to declare any perceived or existing conflicts of interests or confirm that, to the best of your knowledge, there is no conflict of interest.

If you later identify an actual, apparent, or perceived conflict of interest, you must inform us in writing immediately.

Conflicts of interest for Australian Government staff are handled as set out in the Australian [Public Service Code of Conduct \(Section 13\(7\)\)](#) of the [Public Service Act 1999](#). Conflicts of interest for state and territory government staff are set out in relevant jurisdictional policies. Committee members and other officials including the decision maker must also declare any conflicts of interest.

Information regarding conflicts of interest for DISR is found through the [conflict of interest policy](#)⁴ on DISR's website. The Commonwealth policy entity also publishes a conflict of interest policy on its website.

15.3. Privacy

Unless the information you provide is:

- confidential information as per below, or
- personal information as per below.

The information may be shared with other government agencies, including state and territory government agencies, for a relevant Commonwealth purpose such as:

- to administer funding through the relevant jurisdiction in which your approved project is situated
- to improve the effective administration, monitoring and evaluation of Australian Government programs
- for research
- to announce the awarding of funding.

Your personal information is handled in accordance with the Australian Privacy Principles (APPs) and the *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth). This includes letting you know:

- what personal information we collect
- why we collect your personal information
- to whom we give your personal information.

Collected personal information from you may be given to employees and contractors of the panel, Commonwealth and state and territory jurisdictional employees and contractors, so we can:

- manage the program, including administer funding to you
- research, assess, monitor and analyse our programs and activities.

The Minister, may:

- announce the names of successful projects to the public
- publish personal information on the DITRDCA and state and territory government websites.

You may read the DISR [Privacy Policy](#)⁵ for more information on:

- what is personal information
- how we collect, use, disclose and store your personal information

⁴ https://www.industry.gov.au/sites/default/files/July%202018/document/pdf/conflict-of-interest-and-insider-trading-policy.pdf?acsf_files_redirect

⁵ <https://www.industry.gov.au/data-and-publications/privacy-policy>

- how you can access and correct your personal information.

15.4. Confidential information

Other than information available in the public domain, you agree not to disclose to any person, other than DITRDCA, DISR or your funding delivery entity, any confidential information relating to the funding application and/or agreement, without our prior written approval. The obligation will not be breached where you are required by law, Parliament or a stock exchange to disclose the relevant information or where the relevant information is publicly available (other than through breach of a confidentiality or non-disclosure obligation).

At any time, require you to arrange for you; or your employees, agents or subcontractors to give a written undertaking relating to nondisclosure of our confidential information in a form we consider acceptable.

We will treat the information you give us as sensitive and therefore confidential if it meets all of the following conditions:

- you clearly identify the information as confidential and explain why we should treat it as confidential
- the information is commercially sensitive
- disclosing the information would cause unreasonable harm to you or someone else
- you provide the information with an understanding that it will stay confidential.

Confidential information may be disclosed:

- to the Panel and our Commonwealth and state and territory employees and contractors, to help us manage the program effectively
- to the Auditor-General, Ombudsman or Privacy Commissioner
- to the responsible Minister or Assistant Minister
- to a House or a Committee of the Australian Parliament.

We may also disclose confidential information if:

- we are required or authorised by law to disclose it
- you agree to the information being disclosed, or
- someone other than us has made the confidential information public.

15.5. Freedom of information

All documents in the possession of the Australian Government, including those about the program, are subject to the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (Cth) (FOI Act).

The purpose of the FOI Act is to give members of the public rights of access to information held by the Australian Government and its entities. Under the FOI Act, members of the public can seek access to documents held by the Australian Government. This right of access is limited only by the exceptions and exemptions necessary to protect essential public interests and private business affairs of persons in respect of whom the information relates.

If someone requests a document under the FOI Act, we will release it (though we may need to consult with you and/or other parties first) unless it meets one of the exemptions set out in the FOI Act

16. Glossary

Term	Definition
application form	The document issued by the Program Delegate that project proponents use to apply for funding under the program.
Australian local government body or agency	A local governing body as defined under the Local Government (Financial Assistance) Act 1995 (Cth) as a local governing body established by or under a law of a State.
assessment criteria	The specified principles or standards, against which applications will be judged. These criteria are also used to assess the merits of proposals and, in the case of a competitive funding opportunity, to determine application ranking.
completion date	The expected date that the funding activity must be completed and the funding spent by.
date of effect	Can be the date on which a funding agreement is signed or a specified starting date. Where there is no funding agreement, entities must publish information on individual funding as soon as practicable.
decision maker	Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government.
DITRDCA	The Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts, also known as the Commonwealth policy entity for this funding program.
eligible activities	The activities undertaken by a project proponent in relation to a project that are eligible for funding support as set out in section 5.1.
eligible application	An application or proposal for funding under the program that the Program Delegate has determined is eligible for assessment in accordance with these Program Guidelines.
eligibility criteria	Refers to the mandatory criteria which must be met to qualify for a funding. Assessment criteria may apply in addition to eligibility criteria.
eligible expenditure	The expenditure incurred by a project proponent on a project and which is eligible for funding support as set out in Appendix C.

Term	Definition
First Nations community-controlled organisations	These organisations are an Indigenous Australians Organisation or enterprise and have an Indigenous Corporation Number (ICN) or can declare that they are a Traditional Owner or that their organisation is at least 51 per cent owned or controlled by Indigenous persons or the Indigenous Enterprise has 50 per cent Indigenous ownership.
funding activity/activities	Refers to the project/tasks/services that the project proponent is required to undertake.
funding agreement	A legally binding contract that sets out the relationship between the funding agency and a project proponent for the project funding and specifies the details of the funding.
funding delivery entity	The entity with which successful project proponents enter into a funding agreement and from which funding is received by successful project proponents.
funding opportunity	Refers to the specific funding round or process where Commonwealth funding is made available to potential project proponents. Funding opportunities may be open or targeted and will reflect the relevant funding selection process.
funding program	A 'program' carries its natural meaning and is intended to cover a potentially wide range of related activities aimed at achieving government policy outcomes. A funding program is a group of one or more funding opportunities under a single DITRDCA Portfolio Budget Statement Program.
ineligible activities	Ineligible activities are project activities which are not consistent with the program objectives as set out in 5.2
Minister	Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government.
multi-party Parliamentary panel (the panel)	The multi-party Parliamentary panel established to review the outcome of the DITRDCA merit assessment . The panel will provide a final recommendation of meritorious applications to DITRDCA.
Program Delegate	The Assistant Secretary within DITRDCA with delegated policy responsibility for the program.
Program Guidelines	Guidelines that the Minister releases to provide the framework for the administration of the program, as in force from time to time.
project proponent	An entity making an application for funding through the program, whether they be successful or unsuccessful in securing funding.

Term	Definition
personal information	<p>Has the same meaning as in the <i>Privacy Act 1988</i> (Cth) which is:</p> <p>Information or an opinion about an identified individual, or an individual who is reasonably identifiable:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. whether the information or opinion is true or not; and b. whether the information or opinion is recorded in a material form or not.
program funding or program funds	The funding made available by the Commonwealth for the program.
project	A project described in an application for funding under the program.
Regional Investment Framework	<p>The Regional Investment Framework outlines the Australian Government’s approach to regional investment, incorporating coordinated investment in regional people, places, services, and industries and local economies. The Regional Investment Framework is available at the following website:</p> <p>https://www.infrastructure.gov.au/territories-regions-cities/regional-australia/regional-investment-framework</p>
regional priorities	These are priorities identified in local or regional plans such as RDA plans, council plans and state plans.
selection criteria	Comprises the eligibility criteria and assessment criteria.
shovel ready	Where project planning is advanced enough that – with sufficient funding – construction can begin within a very short timeframe on execution of a funding agreement.
value with money	<p>Value with money in this document refers to ‘value with relevant money’ which is a judgement based on the funding proposal representing an efficient, effective, economical and ethical use of public resources and determined from a variety of considerations.</p> <p>When administering a funding opportunity, an official should consider the relevant financial and non-financial costs and benefits of each proposal including, but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the quality of the project proposal and activities; • fitness for purpose of the proposal in contributing to government objectives; • that the absence of funding is likely to prevent the project proponent’s and government’s outcomes being achieved; and • the potential project proponent’s relevant experience and performance history.

Appendix A. Eligible Project Activities

The following is a list of examples of eligible activities that align to place-based priorities and support community liveability.

The Program Delegate may impose limitations or exclude eligible project activities, and/or eligible expenditure, or further include some eligible project activities listed in these guidelines, in a funding agreement, or otherwise by notice to you.

- Arts and cultural services and facilities (including museums, collections and displays)
- Animal services
- Streetscapes, parks and area beautification
- Libraries
- Multi-purpose community facilities and services, such as community hubs, youth centres, community sheds and gardens
- Multi-use sports and recreation facilities and services
- Pools
- Foreshore/Beach infrastructure
- Town centre revitalisation, such as bike or walking paths, play spaces and green spaces
- Local government airport facilities.

Appendix B. Ineligible Project Activities

The following is a list of examples of ineligible activities that do not align to the intended outcomes of the program.

This list is not exhaustive and applies only to the expenditure of the funds. Other costs may be ineligible where the Program Delegate determines they do not directly support the achievement of the planned outcomes for the project, or that they are contrary to the objectives of the program.

- Aged care facilities
- Disability services
- Housing or accommodation
- Infrastructure related to waste, sewage, water, environmental and energy facilities and telecommunications
- New or upgraded infrastructure for health services such as hospitals or medical centres
- Rehabilitation services
- Roads or transport
- Schools
- Universities
- Vehicle services
- Facilities that are primarily for a commercial purpose (would not preclude a café, shop or other small business being within the facility, but this should not be the main purpose).

Appendix C. Guidance on Eligible expenditure

This section provides guidance on the eligibility of expenditure. This guidance may be updated from time to time; check online that you are referring to the most current version before preparing your application.

The Program Delegate makes the final decision on what is eligible expenditure and may give additional guidance on eligible expenditure if required.

To be eligible, expenditure must:

- be incurred by you within the project period
- be a direct cost of the project
- be incurred by you to undertake required project audit activities (where applicable)
- meet the eligible expenditure guidelines.

Verifying eligible expenditure

If your application is successful, you may be asked to verify the project budget that you provided in your application when you negotiate your funding agreement with your relevant funding agreement agency. You may need to provide evidence such as current quotes for major costs.

The funding agreement will include details of the evidence you may need to provide when you achieve certain milestones in your project. This may include evidence related to eligible expenditure.

If requested, you will need to provide the agreed evidence along with your progress reports.

You must keep payment records of all eligible expenditure and be able to explain how the costs relate to the agreed project activities. At any time, you may be asked to provide records of the expenditure you have paid. If you do not provide these records when requested, the expense may not qualify as eligible expenditure.

At the end of the project, you will be required to provide an independent financial audit of all eligible expenditure from the project.

Materials for construction

Costs of acquiring materials for the construction of infrastructure are considered eligible expenditure. Where possible and suitable for your project, you should use locally procured and sustainable, recycled or repurposed building materials. For example applications of sustainable, recycled or repurposed building materials and to find potential suppliers see the [sustainable and recycled products](#) page on the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water website.

You must list material costs as a separate item within your project budget in the application form and in the expenditure table in your progress reports.

Any payments to you for any expenditure you have incurred will not be paid prior to the execution of your funding agreement.

Examples of eligible material costs can include:

- building materials
- ICT cabling
- fit out of the infrastructure, such as window dressings

- fixed furniture (e.g., kitchen fit outs as part of the construction of a building)
- landscaping.

You may show expenditure on materials by providing evidence of:

- purchase price
- payments (e.g., tax invoices and receipts from suppliers confirming payment)
- commitment to pay for the materials (e.g., supplier contract, purchase order or executed lease agreement)
- receipt of materials (e.g., supplier or freight documents)
- associated costs such as freight and installation (e.g., supplier documents)
- photographs of the infrastructure on your premises.

If you claim expenditure for materials, we limit this to:

- the costs of materials
- freight costs.

Hired/leased plant

You may lease plant and equipment to support your project, and where possible, you should use local suppliers.

You must calculate eligible expenditure for hired, rented, or leased plant by the number of payment periods where you use the plant for the project multiplied by the period hiring fee. If you purchase plant under a hire purchase agreement, or you use a lease to finance the purchase of the plant, the cost of the item of plant, excluding interest, is capitalised, and then depreciated.

Running costs for hired or leased plant are eligible expenditure but you must be able to verify them. They may include items such as rent, light and power, and repairs and maintenance.

Contract expenditure

Eligible contract expenditure is the cost of work undertaken on any agreed eligible project activities that you contract others to do. This can include contracting:

- another organisation
- an individual who is not an employee, but engaged under a separate contract.

This does not include existing employees that you pay a salary or a wage.

Where possible, you should engage local contractors/operators. All contractors must have a written contract prior to starting any project work—for example, a formal agreement, letter or purchase order which specifies:

- the nature of the work they perform
- the applicable fees, charges and other costs payable.

Invoices from contractors must contain:

- a detailed description of the nature of the work
- the hours and hourly rates involved
- any specific plant expenses paid.

Invoices must directly relate to the agreed project, and the work must qualify as an eligible expense. The costs must also be reasonable and appropriate for the activities performed.

Evidence will be required regarding contractor expenditure that may include:

- an exchange of letters (including email) setting out the terms and conditions of the proposed contract work
- purchase orders
- supply agreements
- invoices and payment documents.

You must ensure all project contractors keep a record of the costs of their work on the project. You may be required to provide a contractor's records of their costs of doing project work. If you cannot provide these records, the relevant contract expense may not qualify as eligible expenditure.

External labour hire and external consulting expenditure

Eligible external labour and external consulting expenditure for the funding covers the cost of contracting others on the core elements of the project related to construction. Where possible, you should engage local labour and services.

Eligible external labour hire and external consulting expenditure may include:

- Architect services
- Design services
- Project management
- Quantity surveying
- Building services.

Costs for pre-construction activities including architect services, design, surveying, planning, environmental or other regulatory approvals (A.5 and A.6), are limited to 20 per cent of the total amount of eligible project expenditure claimed. These costs are only eligible if the activities occur during the project period as defined in your funding agreement.

Other eligible expenditure

Other eligible expenditure for the project may include:

- financial auditing of project expenditure
- costs you incur in order to obtain planning, environmental or other regulatory approvals during the project period. However, associated fees paid to the Commonwealth, state, territory and local governments are not eligible.

Other specific expenditures may be eligible as determined by the Program Delegate in accordance with Government practice.

Evidence you need to supply can include but is not limited to supplier contracts, purchase orders, invoices and supplier confirmation of payment.

Appendix D. Guidance on Ineligible expenditure

This section provides guidance on what we consider ineligible expenditure. We may update this guidance from time to time; check online that you are referring to the most current version before preparing your application.

The Program Delegate may impose limitations or exclude expenditure, or further include some ineligible expenditure listed in these guidelines in a funding agreement or otherwise by notice to you.

Examples of ineligible expenditure include:

- purchase of land or existing infrastructure and essential services, including the costs associated with sub-division of land
- repair or replacement of existing infrastructure where there is no demonstrated significant increase in benefit
- costs associated with existing staff of your organisation including wages or employee on-costs such as superannuation, holiday loading and overheads
- consumables such as paper, printer cartridges, office supplies, brochures and other marketing materials, kitchen supplies or food and beverages or catering, unless an exemption is sought and approved in the case of very remote locations
- retrospective costs
- temporary relocation costs
- ongoing upgrades, updates and maintenance of existing ICT systems, the cost of ongoing subscription-based software, and IT support memberships and warranties for purchases
- domestic or overseas travel
- funding to develop or deliver ongoing training or educational courses
- funding to undertake studies, including feasibility studies or investigations
- funding for the development of private or commercial ventures
- funding to purchase items that will not remain the property of the organisation including items to be given away
- projects primarily designed to deliver single-function services to the community that generally fall under the remit of state or territory government, local government or other Commonwealth departments such as standalone health care, aged care, disability, housing and primary, secondary and tertiary education.
- projects that are primarily for commercial purposes
- purchase and installation of manufacturing equipment
- subsidy of general ongoing administration of an organisation such as electricity, phone and rent
- payment of salaries for the project proponent's employees
- project overhead items including office equipment, vehicles or mobile capital equipment. Examples include trucks and earthmoving equipment and the project proponent's internal plant operating costs
- costs incurred in the preparation of a funding application or related documentation for example business case development and feasibility studies
- costs related to registered training organisation training activities

- routine operational expenses, including communications, accommodation, printing and stationery, postage, legal and accounting fees and bank charges
- making donations, gifts and sponsorships
- pre-construction activities, including but not limited to, architect services, design, surveying, planning, environmental or other regulatory approvals (A.5 and A.6), that exceed 20 per cent of the total eligible project expenditure
- costs incurred prior to the execution of a funding agreement
- fees paid to the Commonwealth, state, territory and local governments to obtain planning, environmental or other regulatory approvals

Additional examples of ineligible expenditure specific to investment ready projects include:

- purchase of unfixed furniture, such as desks and fridges
- ICT equipment, including software or hardware that is not an integral part of the funded infrastructure project
- office computing facilities.

This list is not exhaustive and applies only to the expenditure of the funds. Other costs may be ineligible where the Program Delegate determines they do not directly support the achievement of the planned outcomes for the project or, that they are contrary to the objectives of the program.

You must ensure you have adequate funds to meet the costs of any ineligible expenditure associated with the project.

Appendix E. Low rate-based councils

Low rate-based councils	
State	Council
New South Wales	Hay Shire Council
	Coolamon Shire Council
	Lockhart Shire Council
	Balranald Shire Council
	Weddin Shire Council
	Walcha Council
	Uralla Shire Council
	Temora Shire Council
	Junee Shire Council
	Oberon Council
	Murrumbidgee Council
	Tenterfield Shire Council
	Narrandera Shire Council
	Gilgandra Council
	Berrigan Shire Council
	Wentworth Shire Council
	Narromine Shire Council
	Bland Shire Council
	Cowra Shire Council
	Edward River Council
	Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council
Forbes Shire Council	
Lachlan Council	
Warrumbungle Shire Council	
Federation Council	
Murray River Council	
Queensland	Yarrabah Aboriginal Shire Council
	Cherbourg Aboriginal Shire Council
South Australia	District Council of Orroroo Carrieton
	District Council of Peterborough
	District Council of Karoonda East Murray
	The Flinders Ranges Council
Tasmania	Central Highlands Council
	Southern Midlands Council
Victoria	West Wimmera Shire Council
	Loddon Shire Council
Western Australia	Shire of Woodanilling
	Shire of Tammin
	Shire of Cuballing
	Shire of Wyalkatchem
	Shire of Wickepin

	Shire of Dowerin
	Shire of Nannup
	Shire of Cunderdin
	Shire of Kellerberrin
	Shire of Quairading
	Shire of Wongan-Ballidu