

Our Ref: O37051  
Your Ref:  
Enquiries: Rob Stewart

12 May 2014

Public Submissions  
Economic Regulation Authority of WA  
PO Box 8469  
PERTH BC WA 6849

#### **Shire of Plantagenet Submission - Economic Regulation Authority Regulations**

When the Shire of Plantagenet embarked on a program of infrastructure renewal some 15 years ago, it was prepared to do the hard yards alone if necessary and seek external funding wherever possible.

The first project was a joint venture with the City of Albany to construct new cattle saleyards on a site within the Shire of Plantagenet. The result was not only a modern and effective sale facility, but also the creation of jobs locally and an economic stimulus for the whole region. Just a few years later, the Shire bought out the City's 50% share. With debt relief from the State Government, the facilities now break even and are not a burden on the ratepayers of Plantagenet.

The next project involved the undergrounding of power in the Town of Mount Barker's main street. Brick paving, street trees, banners, angle parking and free wi-fi soon followed, creating a friendly and welcoming place. The Council's main reason in spending large sums of money was to provide not only beautification but also an economic stimulus for local contractors and retail outlets.

A new administration building and Medical Centre soon followed. The new combined high school and primary school was a state project but fully supported by the Council.

However, the Council has always acknowledged that the town and the Shire fell down in the areas of recreation. Although it had the willingness to undertake projects to improve recreation facilities, the Councillors nevertheless felt that in an era of financial prudence, it was unlikely that funds would be found for the new facilities that were needed. So, although much of our planning had been completed, those plans languished.

Then came Royalties for Regions.

The first year saw a number of comparatively minor projects undertaken.

When more funds were subsequently made available, the Council knew it was now possible to bring together its recreation dreams.

Nearly \$5.5 million was made available from three years' of Country Local Government Funds, Action Agenda Funds and Regional Country Local Government Funds. These are huge amounts of money in anybody's language and simply would have been beyond the means of a medium sized Local Government Authority. That infrastructure would never have been constructed without Royalties for Regions.

The town now boasts new recreation facilities that we expect will increase recreation participation rates and assist local sporting groups to become self funding in their own right. This investment in the Shire's future has come about solely through the creation of the Royalties for Regions scheme. Although the council had the willingness to take on the big jobs, if funding had not become available through Royalties for Regions, the project would have languished in the planning phase.

Royalties for Regions is a mechanism that allows rural and remote areas to provide infrastructure that is taken for granted in the cities. The funds come from a percentage of mining royalties. It should be retained for the future of our State and the rural areas that produce so much of our wealth.'

**Rob Stewart**  
**CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER**