

Supplementary questions

Country Mayors Association

- What changes would you like to see made to the Stronger Country Communities Fund to make it more accessible to smaller councils?

All Country Councils in particular smaller councils are financially stressed. It is only with funding from programs like the one forementioned that local government areas can invest in infrastructure that provides a range of activities that keep young children and youth in general occupied. Without many of these facilities being constructed and managed in today's world we find that a lot of young people are not looking for what we used to as kids but tend to find the peer pressure that is around today leading them into mischief activities. More often than not this can lead to petty crime and an enweaving of the social fabric of the younger generation. Many of these children do find their way out of these circles of influence but those that don't end up becoming offenders in one way or another and more often than not repeat offenders which leads to a downward spiral in their activities.

In essence new funding or refurbishment of funding similar to Stronger Country Communities would offer a lot of LGAs a part solution to the growing problems we are facing. I should point out that this is only one of a sweet of solutions that will need to be applied to address the issues that we are today facing.

- What criteria would you propose for the 'community safety' project category? Are there any examples of the type of programs that it might include?

There are many programs we could consider but most of them are related to providing assistance to the authorities to the track down unwanted behaviour. One of the solutions that has been widely accepted and successful is a funding program for CCTVs. On another note some of these community safety programs could involve evening activities ie. midnight basketball or activity nights at community facilities. These have worked well in the past and tend to keep the children off the street and give them something to do and at the same time provide them with some food.

We know that after some of these events some of these children will return to dysfunctional homes but after some of these activities will be tired but will have been fed.

Community safety project categories should include:

-Education programs that focus on increasing literacy skills and communications skills. Delivered differently to conventional school based practices- they must engage. Poverty, Housing and education deficiencies all lead to disengaged youth who cannot see a future. Education and literacy is a critical skill.

-Pathways based programs that build confidence and skills commensurate to young people gaining independence and employment into the future. Eg; Backtracks type programs

- What benefits did the Community Safety Fund have and are these covered by the Stronger Country Communities Fund?

As above

- We heard that service providers in some communities are well-funded but operate independently, creating gaps in wraparound service provision. Are you aware of this issue, and how do you think it could be addressed?

-Experience shows that Most service providers operate independently. Often they provide similar services but neither are aware of their counterparts efforts or shared clients. Tamworth experienced this through an ICE summit conducted by the Local member where youth input was sought, and NSW Police were charged with collating that data. ALL youth service providers refused to share details with Police claiming they could not share details. The summit subsequently failed to progress.

-In essence the success of the service providers is based on the data they collect and clients they assist. To share that information would potentially limit or damage further grant and funding applications.

-Service providers should be required to share information under certain circumstance and be accountable for their success – this can only be a function of a government body.

-Moree for example has over 72 service providers under government funding and grants. A massive amount of money, acknowledging that these service provider NGO's provide significant employment in these towns, clearly it is not working in terms of outcomes.

Imagine what local government could provide if that money was available to them.

If all the funds available could be managed by a more central group at state level I believe there is a chance we could get a better result for our community

Not one size will fit all but a couple of models could be adapted to suit most of the needs.

This will be no small task but something has to change.

Russell Webb

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Representative of Country Mayors Association