



AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

**SUBMISSION TO THE
COMMONWEALTH GRANTS COMMISSION'S
COMMISSION POSITION PAPER 2008/24:**

Public Safety

January 2009



Introduction

The 2010 Review has been run as an iterative process between the Commonwealth Grants Commission (the Commission) and the States and Territories (the States) over the course of the past four years. As part of this process the ACT has provided a number of submissions in response to the Staff and Commission Discussion Papers, incorporating subsequent multilateral and bilateral discussions with Commission staff and other States. These submissions outlined the ACT's position as to the validity of the conceptual case behind a number of assessments and the proposed assessment methodologies.

It is noted that in some instances the position adopted by the Commissioners, as detailed in the latest Commission Position Papers, is at odds to those of the ACT. In the interests of brevity the ACT has not sought to reiterate the entirety of its previously stated position unless new data or new thinking has been applied. In this light, a lack of objection does not imply support where such support has not been previously stated.

Broad Indicator

The Commission's proposal to use population as the broad indicator of public safety needs (i.e. Equal Per Capita) is supported. To date the ACT does not believe that any evidence has been presented that substantiates a claim that other non-policy effects create differential public safety needs.

Urban Complexity

The ACT notes the data presented on the cost of fire service delivery in Qld (Table 2 of the position paper), however, advises caution in interpreting any data based on a single jurisdiction.

Similarly, the claim that public safety service expenses are higher in high density urban environments is also unclear and unproven. The urban complexity argument put forward by Victoria has not detailed the rationale over how public safety expenses are higher in high density urban environments compared to lower density urban environments.

Anecdotal examples of higher levels of human suffering and damage to property does not necessarily equate to higher State expenditure – as State governments don't fund the reconstruction of private property. Furthermore, higher density urban areas tend to have a unique built environment which seeks to alleviate the impact of public safety risks, such as more stringent building standards on high rise buildings than rural houses, and better considered/historically tested geographical orientations which reduce the likelihood of natural disasters (e.g. Sydney and Melbourne are not situated on flood plains etc.).

Given the lack of clarity around the impact of urban complexity, the Commission view to not make a differential assessment is supported.

National Capital

The ACT does not support the Commission's decision to not assess national capital influences in this category. Please see the ACT's submission to Commission Position Paper 2008/13 *Disabilities Mainly Affecting the ACT - Cross-Border and National Capital* for further details.

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