

Planning body talks turkey with minister

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THE Great Southern body likely to be responsible for dishing out millions of dollars of Federal funding has met with Regional Development Minister Simon Crean for the first time to discuss the region's priorities.

More than \$570 million has been earmarked for distribution by the 55 committees that make up the Regional Development Australia network from as early as July next year.

The network's Great Southern chief executive Simon Lyas and chairman Milton Evans attended the meeting with Mr Crean, which was attended by representatives from all network committees in the South-West regional land division, in Perth on Friday.

Mr Lyas said Albany's upcoming Anzac Centenary celebrations and the recent opening of the Albany Entertainment Centre had been high on the agenda when they addressed the Minister.



Simon Lyas

Mr Lyas said the pressing need for transport infrastructure in the region, including road, rail and port infrastructure upgrades, was also discussed.

"It was quite a positive meeting," he said. "We discussed our regional plans, working towards priorities for our region and existing Federal funding opportunities for our regions.

"(Mr Crean) is not in a position to deliver good news about funding at this stage because it's just early days."

Mr Lyas said the amount of

funding to be distributed by the network was subject to revenue generated by the Minerals Resource Rent Tax.

The committee's Great Southern regional plan, developed from information gathered during a number of forums, is expected to be released early next year.

Mr Crean said the meeting with the Great Southern RDA and other regional committees had been progressive.

He said a strong working relationship with the WA Government was developing and he had held extensive talks with State Regional Development Minister Brendon Grylls.

"It was a productive meeting and one of the key themes was the regional committees working collectively across boundaries," he said.

"We are building a strong foundation for being able to support regional development in the State and the Great Southern region."

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