

# Government puts call out after cash freeze

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THE remaining rounds of the Federal Government's Regional Development Australia Fund have been announced earlier than expected, after a freeze was placed on the money last month.

The news has been labelled a welcome surprise by RDA Great Southern executive officer Simon Lyas, who expressed concerns last month about the future of the RDAF after Regional Development Minister Simon Crean announced a delay in the program for a "stocktake".

Rounds three and four of the program will be rolled out simultaneously and will deliver \$225 million to regional projects Australia-wide.

In a first for the program, round three of the fund, worth \$50 million, will be targeted

towards smaller regional projects, similar to WA's Royalties for Regions program.

Mr Lyas said past funding rounds had been aimed exclusively at large infrastructure projects and welcomed the extension of the program to small regional towns.

"It appears to be a two-tiered funding stream, which is great," he said.

"It does appear that they've listened in Canberra, they've heard that what myself and others in the RDAF network had been saying."

The Great Southern was left disappointed in July after none of the three major projects short-listed for RDA round-two money were successful, despite expectations one would gain support.

They included major sporting precinct upgrades by the City of Albany and the Shire of Plantag-

enet, worth an estimated \$15 million and \$9 million respectively, and an Upper Great Southern Regional Entertainment Centre in Katanning.

Mr Crean strongly encouraged projects unsuccessful in past rounds to apply again.

"More than half of the 46 projects successful in the second round missed out in the first round, but they persisted and got their project up," he said.

An expression of interest period for rounds three and four was expected to open yesterday, and is due to close on December 6.

Mr Lyas said public information sessions would be scheduled in the coming weeks to update Great Southern communities on the funding options.

Mr Crean said the program was funded by Federal Government's Minerals Resource Rent Tax.