



MAYOR'S REPORT

15 November 2005

MM1	LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE
	FILE: * JACH

SUMMARY:

To inform Council of the proceedings of the Local Government Association Conference held in Mudgee.



The Local Government Association Conference was held in Mudgee from Sunday, 23 October to Wednesday 26 October and was attended by Cllr Jim Gribbin, The General Manager, Allan Burgess and myself.

Conference was addressed by:

- The Minister for Local Government, The Hon. Kerry Hickey, MP
- The Minister for Lands, The Hon. Tony Kelly, MLC
- Cllr Paul Bell, Australian Local Government Association President
- The Minister for Roads, The Hon. Joe Tripodi, MP
- The Leader of The Opposition, The Hon. Peter Debnam, MP
- The Federal Minister for Local Government, The Hon. Jim Lloyd, MLA

The Minister for Planning, The Hon. Frank Sartor, MP was scheduled to address Conference but apologised at the last moment.

The Minister for Local Government outlined his expectations for Local Government to provide high level services to our communities. He reiterated that both Councillors and the General Manager's roles are separate - that is Councillors are to be involved in strategic planning and policy development while the General Manager was to provide advice and implement Council decisions. Neither party should interfere in the others role. Rate pegging is to continue and applications for large Special Rate increases are unacceptable. Unless Councils have their plans and strategies in place where they are maximising other income potential Special Rate increases will be unlikely.

Councillor Bell outlined ALGA's attempts to end Cost Shifting and to gain 1% of taxation revenue for Local Government which would result in an additional \$400 million in Federal Funding.

The Minister for Roads explained the State Governments reluctance to sign the Auslink agreement as it resulted in NSW having to contribute an additional \$298 million to roads as the Commonwealth Government has reallocated its road responsibilities.

The Leader of The Opposition came over as a strong advocate of providing the basic services that the community want. He wants to reduce the bureaucracy through natural attrition, he is reviewing his own party's policies, he wishes to review The Local Government Act and if he wins government, Special Rate increases are to be determined by a panel not the Minister.

The Federal Minister for Local Government strongly criticised Minister for Roads Tripodi for his comments about NSW being short changed for road funding and asserted that NSW had in fact received a substantial increase and that an offer to bring forward \$30 million in funding for the Pacific Highway at Coffs Harbour and for the provision of safety bollards at Coffs Harbour had not been responded to. As a result Conference has moved to investigate the Road Funding offers made and the responsibilities agreed to between the Federal and State Governments.

Council had one motion before Conference: -

"That The Minister for Lands, The Hon. Tony Kelly, MLC be requested to approve an amendment to Section 106 Crown Lands Act 1989 No. 6 to allow for approved surplus funds from the operation of caravan parks (under the control of Council) to be expended on: -

- a) Infrastructure on Crown Land which is under the control and management or lease by Council or*
- b) Specific Council capital infrastructure with the prior approval of The Minister for Lands."*

The motion was adopted by Conference.

Other motions adopted that would be of interest to Council were: -

"That a working party be established jointly with the Shires Association of NSW to explore the options identified in the paper titled, 'Options for One Local Government Association of NSW May 2005'. with a view to formulating an agreed proposal for the consideration of all Councils. Membership of the Working Party will be negotiated by the two Presidents."

"That the Local Government Association of NSW oppose the proposed package of reforms to Australian Workplace Relations announced by the

Federal Government and write to the Prime Minister expressing its opposition."

"That the Local Government Association support the endeavours of the Pacific Highway Taskforce in seeking the completion of the Pacific Highway from Hexham to Tweed at the earliest possible time."

"That the Local Government Association supports amendments to legislation governing all elections to ensure the transparency of donations made to candidates for election to Local, State and Federal Office."

"That there be appropriate public funding for Local Government election campaigns."

"The Department of Local Government be strongly requested to review the Model Code of Conduct with a view to its practicalities. It is suggested that this review should involve practical input from the LGSA and LGMA, including Councillors from a wide range of Councils."

"It is also requested that consideration should also be given to the equity between the Model Code of Conduct that applies to Councils and the Code of Conduct that is applicable to Members of State Parliament."

"That the LGSA prepare submissions to the State and Federal Governments seeking additional resources for NSW Councils affected by demands associated with the rapid growth in population and tourism."

"That the premier of New South Wales be requested to honour any agreement where the State Government agreed to make subsidies for Country Towns Water Supply and Sewerage (CRWS&S) Program."

The Local Government and Shires Associations have appointed and funded an Independent Inquiry into the Financial sustainability of Local Government. The panel to conduct the inquiry comprises Professor Percy, Allan AM (Chair) Libby Darlison and Diana Gibbs. The aims of the Inquiry are:

- To assess the current financial position and performance of the NSW Local Government sector.
- To assess the adequacy of existing NSW Local Government physical infrastructure and service delivery in terms of (i) its statutory obligations and (ii) community and state government expectations of its role and functions and (iii) challenges imposed by changing demographic, economic, social, environmental, technical and governance trends.
- To assess the financial capacity of Local Government to meet its statutory obligations, expected functions and emerging challenges and
- To identify possible financial (including alternative financing mechanisms), administrative, governance and intergovernmental reforms that could address any shortcomings and gaps uncovered by the above research.

The panel will need to research different categories of Councils in a detailed fashion. I see this as an excellent opportunity for Council to receive consultancy advice and I have volunteered Kempsey shire Council to be part of the program. We will be advised at a later date whether we have been successful.

REPORT IMPLICATIONS:

- *Environmental*

Nil

- *Social*

Nil

- *Economic (Financial)*

Nil

- *Policy or Statutory*

Nil

- *General Manager's Review*

Nil

RECOMMENDATION:

- 1) That the information be noted.
- 2) That Council endorse the nomination of Council to participate in the Financial Sustainability of Local Government Inquiry.

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J A C Hayes
MAYOR