



GENERAL MANAGER'S SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT

14th March 2006

GM4 SUPP.	PROMOTING BETTER PRACTICE – FINAL REVIEW REPORT (FEBRUARY 2006) FILE: * GBS {Folio No. *} }
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SUMMARY:

Reporting on the release and tabling of the Department of Local Government Promoting Better Practice Review Report for Kempsey Shire Council which contains 31 recommendations.



DESCRIPTION:

On 12th September 2005 Kempsey Shire Council was advised by the Department of Local Government that Council would be subject to the Department's Local Government Reform Program – "Promoting Better Practice Review" and an on-site visit would take place on 31st October / 1st November 2005.

The Program objectives are designed to encourage improvement in the way councils conduct their activities and to ensure good governance.

The review assessed the effectiveness and efficiency of Council's operations, and examined Council's practices and compliance to relevant legislation, regulations, and guidelines. Council's framework for monitoring its own performance and its strategic management was also reviewed.

The Review Program also has a wider role in the development of local government practices across the State and identifying the need for future action or legislative change by the Department.

[\(Appendix B\)](#) provides a summary of the Program.

The Review has been completed and the final Review Report has been received. The Department requires the report to be tabled at the next available Council meeting and as such a copy of the Report will be tabled; placed on display at the Civic Centre and Library; and a copy provided to Councillors.

The Report has also been issued to the Minister for Local Government and the Director General of the Department of Local Government.

The Report examines Council's ambitions, priorities and future focus, and how well Council is delivering and achieving in relation to:

- governance
- regulatory function
- asset and financial management
- community, communications, and consultation
- workplace relations

The Report indicates what is working well in these areas and the challenges to improve. There are a number of recommendations provided in relation to addressing the challenges to improve.

Some noteworthy extracts from the Report are as follows –

"The organisation demonstrates its intent to drive improvement focused on the goals it sets. The enthusiasm of its staff to improve and surmount challenges was impressive".

"The council has set in place the foundations for a strong strategic approach to meeting the future needs of its community, and regularly monitors performance measures for all its principal activities".

"Council has a good governance framework in place".

"The Council has adopted strategies to efficiently deal with development applications through extensive use of delegated authority".

"It is evident that council holds extraordinary meetings to also conduct "workshops". This is applauded, as to hold a "workshop" at such a meeting opens the business up to the public who can see council in action".

"Council should be commended that it conducts a review of its committees at least annually".

"Strong information technology platform that ensures the integration of strategic direction and council operations".

I am of the opinion that the review and the Final Report confirms that Kempsey Shire Council has in place a very high level of best practice processes, and demonstrated compliance with statutory requirements.

The review was based on a checklist covering some 269 activities, and from these the Final Report makes only 31 recommendations. Of these recommendations a number relate to the review or enhancement of existing procedures / policies and some are of relatively less significance e.g. 3 recommendations relating to Companion Animals Management.

By way of comparison some of the other Councils subject to Promoting Better Practice reviews in 2005 had the following number of recommendations –

Dungog	-	37
Moree	-	36
Port Stephens	-	41
Maitland	-	20
Wyong	-	22

In regard to the recommendations, it is a requirement of the Department that an Action Plan be prepared by Council for the implementation of the recommendations contained in the Final Report.

The Action Plan is required to be submitted to the Department and Council is required to advise the Department on its progress with implementation within six (6) months of tabling of the Report.

Preparation of the Action Plan has substantially commenced and will be submitted to the April meeting of Council.

Summary

The Promoting Better Practice Review has been a positive process and has confirmed that Council currently has a high level of “best practice” management.

The recommendations of the Report are relevant to further improvement of Council’s performance.

The Action Plan will ensure that the recommendations contained in the Report are appropriately implemented.

REPORT IMPLICATIONS:

- ***Environmental***

Council's environmental management will be improved through implementations of the Report recommendations.

- *Social*

Adoption of the Review Report recommendations will enhance Council performance in providing value to the community towards ensuring a clean, safe, fair, and prosperous society.

- *Economic (Financial)*

There will be a need to commit resources to the implementation of the recommendations contained in the Report. An assessment of whether resources beyond existing budgetary allocations will be required will be included with the report on the Action Plan.

- *Policy or Statutory*

The review had a regulatory component whereby Council was required to provide evidence of compliance with its statutory and regulatory obligations.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. That the Department of Local Government Reform Program (Promoting Better Practice) – Review Report be received and noted.
2. That an Action Plan for implementation of recommendations identified in the final Review Report be prepared and submitted to the April Council meeting.

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G B Snape
ACTING GENERAL MANAGER