



DELEGATE'S REPORT

11th December 2007

DR2	AUSTRALIAN LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE FILE: 165 CC: 381 CLR JACH {Folio No. *}
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SUMMARY:

To inform Council of the discussions held and motions debated at the conference.

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DESCRIPTION:

The General Manager and I attended the Regional Co-operation and Development Forum and the National General Assembly of Local Government in Darwin from 26th to 29th November.

Both forums concentrated on Climate Change as the most important issue facing the world and the role of Local Government in ensuring a reduction in CO² emissions.

The Regional Forum was addressed by Dr Peter Christoff from the University of Melbourne whilst the Assembly was addressed by Nick Rowley, a Director of Kinesis, an Australian based consultancy working with business and Government on sustainability and climate change. There were also a number of conference workshops held on climate change.

In respect to climate change, we are in a worse state than we think. CO² concentrations are increasing dramatically with human activities leading to global warming. If temperatures are allowed to rise by 2°C the effects will be catastrophic. Already there are changes to water temperature, there are extreme events, health problems and lack of productivity.

Climate change is a problem with no boundaries and it's a problem that we can't get wrong. A global response is needed that

- must be focussed on both the cause and effect of the problem
- involves a fundamental shift in the dynamics behind economic growth (decarbonise)
- engages the public and
- that needs a global treaty

Several examples of Local Government involvement in decreasing emissions were presented by Mount Alexander Council, ICLEI (Local Government for Sustainability) and the Australian Greenhouse Office.

Futurist Richard Neville spoke on the need to leave the industrial era and to enter the age of ecology. Local Government needs to identify trends and understand their impact. Failures occur because organisations and people fail to predict the future correctly. People will tolerate bad practice but they do wake up and demand change.

On the last day of the conference Professor Tim Flannery 2007 Australian of the year wrapped up the climate change discussions with a presentation on air pollutions and its effect on the earth. Although the oceans are important and have been polluted they are 500 times larger than the atmosphere. Pollution rises into the air and then falls to earth with subsequent damage. The earth has experienced acid rain, the hole in the ozone layer and greenhouse gases.

Professor Cheryl Saunders from Melbourne University Law School spoke on constitutional recognition of Local Government. She emphasised that Local Government needed to be very sure to identify what it wants from constitutional recognition i.e. whether it wished Local Government to be maintained in the constitution, whether it wanted symbolic recognition or whether it wanted a protective / empowering focus.

Conference adopted the following motion:

"That the National General Assembly reiterate its long standing call for amendments to the Australian Constitution to recognise the roles and responsibilities of Local Government and calls on all political parties to adopt this as a formal policy position during 2007. That this 2007 National General Assembly call on all political parties to agree to hold a National Constitutional Convention to resolve the long outstanding issues of constitutional recognition roles and responsibilities and appropriate funding arrangements for Local Government in Australia."

Sir Roger Douglas former Minister for Finance in New Zealand presented a scenario that Local Government should identify the provision of private goods versus the provision of public goods. Local Government should divest itself from the provision of private goods such as water and sewerage and garbage services. It should contract out construction and professional services and those services where user charges apply as the private sector is better equipped to provide those services and is more efficient.

The 2007 / 08 State of the Regions Report was tabled and presented. The report covers;

- climate change CO² abatement strategies and the impact on Australia's regions
- water security costs and total climate change costs
- case study: Local Government and Climate Change
- Local Government and health in a climate of change
- Climate Change: What could Local Government be liable for?
- Telecommunications update
- Regional indicators

A copy of the State of the Regions Report will be tabled at the Council meeting for Councillors perusal.

Council submitted four motions to the conference;

"1. Flood Mitigation Funding

That the Australian Local Government Association lobby the Federal Government on the importance of maintaining flood mitigation in those areas subject to regular flood particularly in rural areas where the population shifts associated with Seachange are impacting.

2. Oral Health

That the Australian Local Government Association make representations to the Commonwealth Government to adequately address Oral Health Services by the provision of the required resources as a matter of urgency.

3. Climate Change

That the Australian Local Government Association make application to the Commonwealth Government for funding to hold Climate Change workshops throughout the country.

4. Flood Mitigation Funding

That the Australian Local Government Association lobby for the re-introduction of the 2.2.1 finding formula for funding of flood mitigation projects by Federal, State and Local Government."

Motion 2 was carried as a composite motion with Clarence Valley Council as follows;

"In order to enhance the role of Local Government in protecting public health the National General Assembly call on the Federal Government to improve the resourcing of dental health services across Australia, including the re-introduction of a national public dental program to ensure that disadvantaged groups also have access to basic oral health services and to reduce the adverse impacts on Local Government budgets."

Motion 1 was carried as a composite motion with Blacktown City Council as follows;

"That the National General Assembly call upon the Federal Government to increase in real terms the level of funding for flood mitigation initiatives."

Motions 3 and 4 were carried as printed.

This year's conference was very informative with good keynote speakers and workshops with topics that were relevant to Local Government.

REPORT IMPLICATIONS:

- **Environmental**

Local Government has a responsibility to assist in the protection of the environment. Council could become legally liable if they do not take into account relevant statutory requirements. ESD Principles such as the precautionary principle will need to be applied.

- *Social*

Nil

- *Economic (Financial)*

Nil

- *Policy or Statutory*

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RECOMMENDATION:

That Council investigate the viability and feasibility of wind generators as a source of energy for both commercial and industrial use.

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COUNCILLOR J A C HAYES