



Shire of Quairading

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12th September 2019

Mr Mark Warner
Committee Clerk
Select Committee in Local Government
Legislative Council
Parliament House
4 Harvest Terrace
WEST PERTH WA 6005

Dear Mr Warner

SUBMISSION TO THE SELECT COMMITTEE INTO LOCAL GOVERNMENT

The Shire of Quairading welcomes the opportunity to present this submission to the Select Committee into Local Government.

Council advises that it strongly supports the Submission prepared and submitted by the WA Local Government Association to the Select Committee, however Council provides the following additional submission detailing a local perspective to the matters being inquired into by the Select Committee.

Today, Local Government is constituted and primarily regulated by the *Local Government Act 1995*, but there are over 200 legislative instruments which impact the way local governments operate in their diverse array of activities and in their diverse communities.

Councils have well-established relationships with the communities they serve and represent, which also includes local businesses, industries and organisations as well as providing a conduit to the other two spheres of government.

Local Government Services and Funding

Services provided by the 139 local governments in Western Australia have substantially broadened from roads and waste collection through to recreation and culture, youth services, public health, recycling, economic development, planning, tourism, law & order, emergency management and other human services, including childcare and medical services.

Often, Council takes on new or expanded roles in service delivery or advocacy as a result of gaps left by other spheres of government reducing, transferring or abdicating their service delivery or due to community pressure for Council to step into a particular space to fill the void or to meet the ever increasing Community expectations.

For example, the Shire of Quairading has owned and operated the Quairading Medical Practice for the past two decades since the then Private Medical Practitioner was unable to continue due to ill health and the Council stepped into this area as the community were demanding that GP and Emergency Medical Services continued within the district. The cost to Council and the community to continue to provide financial and logistical support to the GP Medical Service is in the order of \$200,000 per annum, which equates to 10% of Council's Annual Rate Revenue Stream.

Likewise, Council undertook the management and operation of the Child Care Centre once the volunteer based Management Committee were unable to operate due to increasing regulation in the Early Childhood Education space and also due to community volunteer fatigue.

Council continues to strive to provide a high quality of services across an ever increasing range of activities whilst being constantly challenged with “doing more with less” from a community and society in general having higher expectations of Council.

Council respectfully requests that the Select Committee consider all aspects of the financial imbalance that has occurred over many years where Grant revenue from Federal and State levels of Government to Local Government has been eroded (i.e. State / Local Government Road Funding Agreement and also the Financial Assistance Grants Scheme which has eroded from 1.0% of total taxation to the current 0.55%).

Council also respectfully suggests that the Committee investigate and recommend an appropriate funding level and a workable funding formula going forward, that gives local governments the resources to attempt to meet the ever increasing expectations of both the local and broader community in Western Australia.

The Department of Local Government:

Council concurs with WALGA's Submission that the Department of Local Government needs to be significantly better resourced to properly carry out its role. The supportive role that the Department once had, has been diminished in favour of an increased focus on compliance and the broader State Government / Department priorities as the Department has been amalgamated with other Departments under the “Machinery of Government” measures.

WALGA has had to significantly increase their Governance and Advice Service to fill the void once provided for and funded by State Government through the Department of Local Government.

It is considered by Council that there should be a better balance between State Government Department and the industry peak body (WALGA) in providing support and advice to and oversight of the local governments.

Resource Sharing

Local government in general and this Council in particular, has been proactive wherever practicable, to review its Service Delivery to assess and utilise any efficiencies that can be gained from Resource Sharing between neighbouring or like Councils or the use of Specialist Contractors.

For example, Council is the Host Council under a Memorandum of Understanding with the Department of Fire and Emergency Services and the four Shires of Cunderdin, Kellerberrin, Tammin and Quairading, for the employment of a Community Emergency Services Manager to assist the communities and their volunteers to better Prepare, Plan and Respond to Emergencies.

Council also utilises the Contract / Shared Services of Waste Management, Civil Engineering, Town Planning, Health & Building and Ranger Services.

Council and its Administration will continue to explore all opportunities to provide these basic but necessary services to the community whilst complying with the ever increasing legislative requirements.

Major Capital Projects

Council through sound Strategic Planning and prudent long term financial discipline and leveraging of Grant Funding whenever possible, has successfully delivered the following projects in the past decade :-

- Construction of the Quairading Community Resource and Community Arts Centre;
- Redevelopment of the Quairading Caravan Park;
- Redevelopment of the Quairading Memorial Swimming Pool;
- Refurbishment and Upgrade of the Town Hall Kitchen and Audio Visual Facilities; and
- Installation of 3 Park Cottages (currently in progress).

All of these projects were undertaken to renew ageing or worn out Community facilities and required long term saving by Council to achieve these Capital projects. Many of the abovementioned Renewal

Projects were able to be proceeded with funding under the "Royalties for Regions Program" or the "CSRFF Program".

Council's capacity (and local governments' in general) to fund major Capital Infrastructure projects has been significantly restricted following changes to the State Government Funding programs where previous funding was directed to the Councils in the Regions and is now in many cases directed to State Government Core Services or has been redirected to Projects in the Perth Metropolitan Area and larger Regional Communities.

Council respectfully suggests that the Select Committee enquire into the State Government Regional Funding Programs to ensure that Regional and Remote Councils are offered financial assistance / support to be able to renew/ refurbish essential community infrastructure when required and when justified.

Relationship with State Government Agencies and Departments:

Council and its Administration have noted with concern in recent years, increased delays and protracted timeframes occurring for many dealings / approvals with State Government agencies and departments (including Planning, Lands, Environment and Public Transport Authority).

This has resulted in frustration being experienced both by Council and in the community as projects and proposals are appearing to be "unduly delayed" due to the low priority given to local government issues by the State Government Departments and agencies.

These delays may be as a direct result of the reduction of staffing resources in these departments and agencies (particularly in the regions) or by the increasing level of "Red Tape" overburdening the Public Service and Local Government.

Council staff are having to repeatedly follow things up to ensure that matters are progressed and hopefully finalised by State Government Departments and Agencies.

Role of Councillors and CEO's / Staff:

It is considered that the current review of the *Local Government Act 1995* provides adequate opportunity, if further clarification of the roles and responsibilities of the Elected Members in regard to Community Engagement, Strategic Planning, Policy Setting, Finance and Governance oversight is required. The recent introduction of the Election Candidate Induction Course prior to nominating for Council and secondly, the requirement for Universal Training in five Core Units in the first 12 months of a Councillor being elected onto Council, are seen as important measures to improve the awareness and training of those community members wishing to stand for Council or those who have been successful in being elected to Council.

Council considers that within the Act and the proposed Review amendments that there is clear definition of the role of Council, and that of the CEO and the Administration / Staff without further legislative burden.

On behalf of Council, I thank the Select Committee in anticipation, for considering this submission.

Yours faithfully



Graeme A Fardon
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER