



EMERALD
Shire Council

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House of representatives Standing Committee on Economics, Finance and Public Administration	
Submission No:.....	291
Date Received:.....	2/10/02
Secretary:.....	<i>Sardell</i>

The Secretary
House of Representatives
Standing Committee on Economics, Finance and Public Administration
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Secretary

EMERALD SHIRE COUNCIL (QUEENSLAND) SUBMISSION
TO
INQUIRY INTO COST SHIFTING ONTO LOCAL GOVERNMENT

1. Preamble

This Council commends the opportunity to make comments to this inquiry, such inquiry being overdue. Figures/statistics have been provided by this Local Government to the QLGA for its submission so this submission will not try to emulate that of QLGA but focus more on the views of a rural Council, being qualitative rather than quantitative. Therefore, this submission will focus on some key issues which it is believed will complement the inquiry questions.

2. Introduction

Emerald Shire Council is located in the Central Highlands in Central Queensland and has a population of 14,249 with an area of 10,320 sq. kms. The town of Emerald with a population of 10,500 is the largest town in the Shire and the Central Highlands area.

The Shire was established in 1903 and has developed very strong and diverse primary, secondary and tertiary economies. The major primary industries are cattle, grain, sunflowers, cotton and horticulture. The secondary industries exist to support both the primary industries and the large coal mining industry in neighbouring shires.

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The strength of these industries comes not just from diversity and geography, but is substantially derived from the Fairbairn Dam which provides virtually a drought-proof supply of water for irrigation farms, coal mines and residents. Emerald is the region's economic centre and transport hub with excellent rail, road and air services.

The tertiary sector includes major Federal and State Government departments and a full range of the key professional and community services and support organisations including those in the areas of health care and education. Emerald is well serviced by banking institutions, retail and food outlets and an extensive range of accommodation in caravan parks, workers' units, hotels and motels. Tourism is an area with potential for growth and considerable efforts and expenditure are now being directed to develop this area.

The township of Emerald is the Regional Centre for the Central Highlands and thus is expected to be a provider of 'more' than the normal expectations of a local government.

Local Government does provide many services and it does it well. Queensland is responsible to provide Water and Sewerage services unlike some of the other States where the State Governments or other statutory authorities are responsible.

Local Government is certainly the level of Government that the people can directly react with readily and it is now timely that an effort be made to recognise it in a formal/constitutional way.

There are overlaps and duplications by all levels of Governments in some areas which it is hoped this enquiry will identify and strategically develop cost effective solutions.

3. Key Issues

3.1 Regional Role

The regional role of Emerald provides pressure on the Council to provide the infrastructure necessary to sustain such role.

Some of the infrastructure provided and/or supported by Council to satisfy regional requirements include:

- A modern airport capable of handling small jets. The main carrier at present is Dash 8 aircraft (QANTAS LINK). There are 18 flights per week to and from Brisbane.
- Hostel for itinerants and backpackers.
- Good and modern sporting facilities.
- Modern saleyards.
- Parthenium Washdown facilities.

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- Sustainable water supply and sewerage schemes.
- A well equipped State Emergency Service (SES).
- Student hostel for youth who have left home.
- Local Government/MRD Roads Alliance being formed in Queensland.
- Emerald Shire is part of the Central Highlands Regional Roads Partnership.
- Aged residential facility.
- Library.
- Art & Science Exhibitions Centre.

Council works very closely with its neighbouring local governments in resource sharing and is considering joint tendering and purchase arrangements. Council shares its Environmental Health Officer and Building Surveyor with a smaller, neighbouring shire, as well as providing advice as required in these areas to neighbouring shires.

As the Regional Centre, Council financially supports and coordinates a wide variety of seminars and workshops that involve neighbouring shires and other regional representatives, eg Workshop on "Native Title – Consider a Regional Approach".

Coordination is under way to consider resource/equipment sharing on GIS systems and a State Government Department may be involved.

Many conferences/workshops are held in Emerald as the Regional Centre, which has adequate accommodation and facilities.

3.2 Regional Organisations

Because of its location, Council is a member of various regional organisations such as CQROC, CQLGA, Western LGA, C.H. Development Corporation, C.H. Community Employment & Training Corporation, C.H. Pest Management Group, and the like. Council was recently the driver to form a "sub-ROC" CHROC to plan for Regional strategic issues.

This Council has found that Regional Cooperation has the potential to be very effective. "Roads to Recovery" is an excellent example of Regional cooperation and shows how Local Government can deliver without a 'middleman'.

3.3 Funding Stream Overlaps

Areas where there are funding stream overlaps between any two (2) of the three (3) spheres of Government:

- Housing
- Child Care

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- Youth Support
- Emergency Services
- Roads
- Health
- Welfare
- Recreation
- Culture
- Police
- Public Transport
- EPA
- Arts & Cultural Development
- Grants Distribution

3.4 Areas where Local Government can increase the Services it delivers

On a regional basis, this Council believes the following services could be provided by Local Government efficiently and effectively and studies are recommended in these areas:

- Health System including regional hospitals
- Emergency Services including Fire, Ambulance and Counter Disaster
- Sport & Recreation

Note: Local Government adequately and effectively provides water supply and sewerage services and waste management.

3.5 Areas where Local Government provide some Duplication of Services or Supplement Services

- Counter Disaster/Flood Mitigation
- Security Services (Policing)
- Rural Fire Services
- SES & Counter Disaster
- Roads
- Housing (hostels, aged, youth facilities)
- Health (immunisation, food safety)
- EPA – an area that needs careful consideration for the future
- Sport & Recreation
- Welfare
- Social
- Airports
- Stock Routes (maintenance and provision)/Weed Control
- Child Care
- Aged Care

The above areas are also those where there are increasing demands placed on local government by other spheres of government and residents.

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3.5 Federal Grants Distribution

At present, the State methodology in Queensland does not favour this Council and like Councils that provide regional infrastructure and services. Although it doesn't have a coal mine in the Shire, it provides accommodation, industry support and the like. Shires with mining towns which the mining companies provide and directly support financially, seem to obtain some substantial benefits under the present methodology.

The present methodology needs to be made totally transparent, understandable in layman's terms, and fair.

This Council does recognise the recently appointed Grants Commission in Queensland is carrying out an in-depth review of the methodology.

3.6 Local Government Performance

Local Government has an excellent record of program delivery and has demonstrated good partnership relationships.

This Council carries out an independent service delivery review to obtain the views of its citizens. The QLGA also carries out an independent review on local government service delivery.

3.7 Environmental Programs

There is a trend to approach broad, environmental issues through unrepresentative, specific-purpose organisations. Catchment Management Authorities and Natural Resource Management Authorities are some examples and there is a concern that these bodies do not have good representation of Local Government. Local Government is a proven service provider and without its help, such programs will be harder to develop and implement. This area needs close examination.

4. Summary

There are many areas where the three (3) levels of government have overlapping and/or interlinked responsibilities. However, there is an increasing number of areas that local governments have had to become involved with in recent years. It is an opportune time for an in-depth study and enquiry to be undertaken with a view to providing economic, efficient and effective solutions which will provide outcomes to support economy of scales.

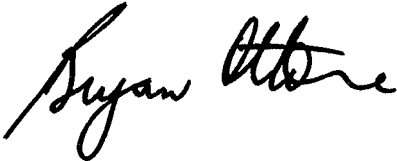
Local Government has proven it can provide quality services at affordable prices and this Council believes there is opportunity for it to provide increased services (Government) provided funding is made available.

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It is recommended that the Federal Government provide funding and resources necessary to progress this review to provide good strategic outcomes.

Thank you for providing an opportunity to Local Government to provide input into the enquiry.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bryan Ottone". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'B' and a long, sweeping tail.

Bryan Ottone
Chief Executive Officer