



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ECONOMICS COMMITTEE

## Inquiry into Local Government Funding

**MEDIA ALERT**

Issued: 7 March 2003

**Att: Queensland media & Local Government reporters**

# Local government funding crisis: Qld regional local governments have their say on options at roundtables in Noosa, Longreach & Townsville

A provocative discussion paper on options for local government financing released by the House of Representatives Economics Committee will be the subject of three days of face-to-face discussions next week with local governments from all over regional Queensland.

Public 'roundtables' involving the Committee and local government representatives will be held in **Noosa** (Tuesday), **Longreach** (Wednesday) and **Townsville** (Thursday), with representatives from all over regional Queensland attending to have their say (people/councils attending the hearings are listed below/over).

The Economics Committee is examining the financial position of local government, in particular the impact of cost-shifting. It is looking at local government's current roles and responsibilities; current and alternative funding arrangements; and the scope for achieving a rationalisation of roles and responsibilities between the levels of government.

The 35-page discussion paper, titled '*At the crossroads*', identifies key issues presented to the inquiry so far, and outlines a range of options which the committee says could help address what the councils say is a funding 'crisis'.

Evidence received by the House Economics Committee to date indicates that the growth in local government's functions has outstripped its financial capacity to discharge all those functions adequately.

"This is especially true in rural and remote regions where councils are small and have a very limited revenue base," the committee's discussion paper says. It warns that local government services could be significantly curtailed, especially in rural and remote areas, unless local government finances are improved.

Options to be looked at include council amalgamations, as are ways of strengthening and formalising regional cooperation.

On future funding, the paper says the financial viability of local government—especially smaller rural councils—requires further consideration by the Commonwealth and states. One option suggested is to include local government in negotiations for the next Commonwealth-State financial agreement, so that local government could make its case for an increase in financial assistance grants or a share of the GST revenue.

The discussion paper also raises the scope for local government to increase its revenue from existing resources. For example, a substantial number of councils in several states have already introduced special levies for environmental management or infrastructure provision, in many cases with community support.

The discussion paper is available at the inquiry website: [www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/efpa/localgovt/index.htm](http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/efpa/localgovt/index.htm) or from the committee on (02) 6277 4587.

The Committee is encouraging feedback via an **online questionnaire**, or by the normal submission process.

**The full program for each day appears below/over.**

**For media comment: House Economics Committee Chair, Mr David Hawker, tel: (03) 5572 1100**

**For further information:** Susan Cardell, Inquiry Secretary on telephone: 02 6277 2022, mobile: 0411 440 490, or visit the inquiry website at [www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/efpa/fiparep.htm](http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/efpa/fiparep.htm)

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**LOCAL GOVERNMENT ROUNDTABLE - Tuesday 11 March 2003 - NOOSA**

**WHERE: Noosa Shire Council, 9 Pelican Street, Tewantin**

**WHEN: 9am – 1pm**

**Roundtable participants:**

- Local Government Association of Queensland (Cr Noel Playford, President; Greg Hallam, Executive Director)
- Noosa Shire Council (Cr Bob Abbot, Mayor)
- Local Government Managers Australia (Queensland Division)(Mr Gary Stevenson, Divisional Councillor (also Chief Executive Officer, Rockhampton City Council)
- Gold Coast City Council (Mr Dale Dickson, Director City Governance)
- Ipswich City Council (Cr Paul Tully)
- Maroochy Shire Council (Ms Pam Jenkins, General Manager Corporate and Community Strategy)
- Redcliffe City Council (Mr Robert Holmes, Chief Executive Officer )
- Caboolture Shire Council (Mr Peter Scott, Manager Financial Services)
- Gatton Shire Council (Cr James McDonald, Mayor; Mr Lester Schumacher, Chief Executive Officer)

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT ROUNDTABLE - Wednesday 12 March 2003 – LONGREACH**

**WHERE: Longreach Shire Council, 95A Eagle Street**

**WHEN: 10.15am – 1pm**

**Roundtable participants:**

- Longreach Shire Council (Mr Bob O'Brien, Chief Executive Officer)
- Isisford Shire Council
- Diamantina Shire Council (Mr John Perry, Chief Executive Officer)
- Aramac Shire Council (Cr Gary Peoples, Mayor)
- Ilfracombe Shire Council
- Barcaldine Shire Council (Mr Mark Crawley, Chief Executive Officer)
- Tambo Shire Council (Cr Dougal Davidson, Mayor)
- Winton Shire Council (Cr John East, Deputy Mayor)
- Flinders Shire Council (Cr Brendan MacNamara, Mayor)
- Richmond Shire Council

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT ROUNDTABLE - Thursday 13 March 2003 – TOWNSVILLE**

**WHERE: Townsville Council, 103 Walker Street**

**WHEN: 9am – 12noon**

**Roundtable participants:**

- Townsville City Council Townsville City Council (Cr Tony Mooney, Mayor)
- Thuringowa Shire Council (Ms Lyn Russell, Chief Executive Officer)
- Cardwell Shire Council (Mr Malcolm Mallyon, Chief Executive Officer)
- Cairns City Council (Cr Kevin Byrne, Mayor)
- Mackay City Council (Cr Julie Boyd, Mayor; Mr Ken Gouldthorp, Chief Executive Officer)
- Shire of Dalrymple (Mr James Gott, Chief Executive Officer)