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General Manager

July 26, 2002

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

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: INQUIRY INTO LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND COST SHIFTING

Introduction

Lismore is the regional capital of New South Wales' Northern Rivers region, the thriving far north coast. The city extends from North Woodburn in the south to Nimbin in the north and from Clunes in the east to just west of Goolmangar covering a total area of 1,267 square kilometres. The city comprises a population of 41,900 but services a regional population of some 135,000.

Lismore has a proud rural tradition based on forestry and dairying and more recently macadamia nuts, tea tree plantations, tropical fruits and bush foods. The main campus of the Southern Cross University, together with the base hospital, a large private hospital and the Norco Dairy Co-operative are all situated within the city.

Council is aware of a submission by NOROC and generally support the contents of that document and respectfully request that this be noted. I do not intend to duplicate the information provided, however detailed below is one issue that was not addressed in the above submission and request that this be taken into consideration by the inquiry.

Current Funding Arrangements - Library Services

The Richmond Tweed Regional Library provides a very cost effective library service for the member council's being Lismore, Tweed, Ballina and Byron. This regional partnership of some thirty years has been successful due to the ongoing goodwill of the constituent members.

The major area of concern in relation the provision of library services to our residents is the ever-increasing burden on local government to fund the major share of costs. This has been brought about by the diminishing contribution in real terms by the state government. This problem is exacerbated in NSW, by the lower per capita contribution, in comparison to neighbouring states, made by the NSW government.

Between 1980 and 1998/99, the NSW state government's proportion of total public library funding has dropped from 24% to less than 9%, yet in the same period registered library membership increased from 35% of population to 49%. **This is a major cost shift to local government.**

Comparative State Government Funding for 1999/2000

- NSW - **\$2.80** gross per capita (including capital grant funds).
- Victoria - **\$5.03** per capita.
- Queensland – **over \$5** per capita.

Apart from the quantum of funding from the state government, there is no recognition of the very significant additional costs that rural councils and their libraries face compared to metropolitan councils.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input into this important inquiry.

Yours truly,

Col Cooper,
Acting General Manager.