

A/General Manager

05/0256

8 August 2002

The Secretary
House of Representatives on Economics
Finance & Public Administration Committee
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Dear Sir

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY INTO COST SHIFTING TO LOCAL GOVERNMENT. SUBMISSION OF KU-RING-GAI COUNCIL

Ku-ring-gai Council received notification from the Local Government and Shires Association dated 21 June 2002, advising of the Parliamentary Inquiry into Cost Shifting to Local Government.

Subsequently, Council has provided relevant input into a regional submission from the Northern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils (NSROC) which was forwarded to the inquiry recently.

Prior to the submission deadline on 26 July 2002, Council contacted the Committee Secretary of your office and explained that it would consider the submission of a supplementary paper at the ordinary meeting held on Tuesday, 6 August 2002. Accordingly, an extension was granted until 8 August 2002.

Council has formally resolved to forward this supplementary paper to the inquiry. The paper outlines 21 issues of cost shifting to Local Government detailed as follows:

1. Planning Matters

Any additional changes under the EPA Legislation that has required Councils to increase its resources or use Consultants to do the work i.e. SEPP5 and SEPP53 issues and requirements for Residential Strategies.

2. Crime Prevention

Increased cost of crime related matters such as Crime Prevention workshops and costs associated with clean up of graffiti and increases in street light provisions to assist local police.

- 3. Emergency Services Levies and Fees**
Increase in Fire Brigade levy and funding Rural Fire Service and assistance to State Emergency Services. Provision of a command centre and resources for Local Emergency Management Committee.
- 4. Increased Infrastructure Costs**
Increased infrastructure costs not adequately recognised by Financial Assistance Grants such as increased traffic on local roads because of saturation of State Roads. This leads to deterioration of local roads not constructed originally to cope with increased traffic and also the need to provide traffic calming to address residents' concerns.
- 5. Insufficient funding for Regional Road Maintenance**
Insufficient funding by State Government for maintenance of Regional Road network as demonstrated by Pavement Management Systems.
- 6. Insufficient Funding for Traffic Facilities**
Insufficient funding for Traffic Facilities, maintenance of signs and linemarking.
- 7. Maintenance of Commuter Carparks**
Councils are required in some locations to undertake maintenance of commuter carparks around railway stations.
- 8. Traffic Management Plans for Temporary Road Closures**
The need to implement Traffic Management Plans for all forms of road closures including community events for councils to submit to the RTA.
- 9. Increased Public Liability Costs**
Increased public liability and other insurance premiums not adequately recognised by rate pegging.
- 10. Stormwater Management**
EPA requirements for stormwater management including part funding for measures to prevent pollution and the role of policing the legislation.
- 11. Waste Disposal Fees**
Increased costs associated with reducing waste to landfill and increased disposal costs for engineering waste and street cleaning waste including street sweeping of arterial roads.
- 12. Emergency Management**
Issues of Bushfire Planning and Prevention, hazard reduction certification on private land (newly transferred responsibility and no fee allowed to be charged), section 66 notification, significant role in disaster management prevention strategies, risk management, significant upfront commitment of resources (like ready made tankers, vehicles, trained personnel, etc.)

13. Land Management

Issues such as direct management of Crown lands without financial support, in fact paying 15% of funds to State Government for the privilege, significant resource commitment, satisfying land management requirements for space on a regional basis with local funds only, significant technical resources, community management, provision of infrastructure, conservation agreements land acquisition, “tied Grants” processes, protection of national parks, threatened species, Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (C’lth) Act 1999, etc.

14. Education

Council to add Environmental education, water safety, road safety programmes etc.

15. Environment

Various legislation, protection of national parks, co-operative (or otherwise) agreements for broader goals like impacts from Sydney Harbour agreements etc., but also the specifics of programs that we undertake to protect the environment such as nursery for protection of local endemic values, green credits for travel through various means etc.

16. Social Planning Regulations 1998

Legislative requirement to produce social plans with mandated target groups every five years. This involves significant resources devoted to research, consultation, report writing and demographic analysis. This process raises community expectation with implementation costs primarily the responsibility of Council.

17. Access and Equity

Reporting annually to the Department of Local Government of what activities Council has undertaken to meet the cultural and linguistically diverse needs of its community. The expectation is that Council undertakes additional activities to meet those responsibilities within the existing funding base. Also, funding required to comply with AS1428 for footpaths and access ramps, provision of disabled parking spaces and Council Buildings.

18. Processing Changes To Child Care Benefits

Commonwealth initiated administrative changes to child care benefits have resulted in requiring additional staff hours to be utilised in processing payments and answering enquiries from parents and carers. This has increased the administrative workload by an estimated 35%.

19. Children Services

Withdrawal of operational subsidies and capital assistance funding by Commonwealth and State governments has resulted in additional pressures on local government to subsidise child care services through subsidised rental, service management, financial assistance grants, building and playground maintenance etc. Discontinuation of child care planning on a regional or metropolitan wide basis has resulted in local government taking a greater role in that area including the co-ordination and support of local services.

20. Community Safety and Crime Prevention

Councils are increasingly asked and encouraged to participate in such measures including:

- Establishment and/or support of local crime prevention and community safety committees.
- Carrying out safety audits and associated implementation costs.
- Support of neighbourhood watch committees through provision of meeting space and subsidised printing.
- Carrying out crime or safety research including the publication and distribution of information
- Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design: Planning NSW has encouraged local government through the production of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design Guidelines to assess safety issues related to major developments including establishment of consultation protocols with local area police and development control plans for safety. This also involves development assessment and other related staff undertaking specific training in this area with costs borne by local government.

The recent Police and Community Team (PACT) guidelines released by the Minister for Police have nominated the position of Mayor of each Council to be invited to become a member of each Team.

21. Home and Community Care Services (HACC)

The failure of the Commonwealth Government to fund the SACS Award increases has placed increasing pressure on local government to support local non-profit community organisations. Organisations that cannot meet the new award salary increases from existing funds are facing the prospect of either reducing services, increasing fees or seeking funds from other sources to balance their budgets. Local government is first option for some services through requests for financial assistance, rental subsidies, equipment or in-kind contributions.

On behalf of Council, I would like to thank the Minister for Regional Services, Territories and Local Government for initiating the inquiry, conducted by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Economics, Finance and Public Administration.

Should you require any additional information on any aspect of this paper, please contact Council's Acting General Manager, Mr John McKee (Phone: 02 9424 0701).

Yours sincerely

John McKee
ACTING GENERAL MANAGER