

Tuesday, 13 April 1999

Committee Secretary
House of Representatives Standing Committee
Inquiry into Infrastructure and the Development of Australia's Regional Areas
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra 2600

E-mail: Primary.Industries.reps@aph.gov.au

Dear Committee Secretary,

Re: Inquiry into Infrastructure and the Development of Australia's Regional Areas

Melton Shire Council has in the past and continues to actively seek to attract industry and investment to the Toolern Employment Node in Ferris Road, Melton. As a result of this policy for economic development, the Council has invested a large amount of capital in the installation of service infrastructure to the Node. This investment has proven worthwhile with two industrial sites completed and an additional two sites under construction at the moment, representing an investment of over \$40 million and over 500 jobs. Scheduled to commence construction in June 1999 are a number of other organizations representing an additional \$50 million of investment and a further 664 jobs in the initial stages.

To date the Council has committed \$600,000 on water and sewerage, \$500,000 on gas and potentially \$1,000,000 on roads. Thus far the Council has received no financial support from any other funding bodies, State or Federal. The Council is aware of the Victorian Government's 'Partnerships for Growth Funding,' applicable to Councils in rural areas, that allows for 'dollar for dollar matching funding' for the provision of infrastructure relating to the attraction of business. Melton Council also understands that Melton is not classified as a "rural" Shire and is not eligible for funding under this program. This is disappointing given that the Shire is made up of predominantly farming properties and the majority of the municipality is serviced by septic tanks, with over 100 kilometres of unsealed roads.

The issue of water is a major problem for the municipality with some predicting that if residential and industrial growth continues in the area, there will not be enough water to supply the demand in 5 years. The current storage area needs to be augmented (Merrimu) at an envisaged cost of \$20 million.

Water consumption constraints within the Shire are not limited to drinkable water. Many parts of the Shire have no irrigation water, yet there is ample recycled water available, with the cost of transporting the water being the prohibitive factor.

Melton Shire Council will continue to actively work with Business Victoria and Invest Australia in meeting the needs of both overseas and Australian investors, providing exciting and new opportunities for economic growth and creating employment for Victorians and the residents of Melton. This can only be done with appropriate infrastructure.

Melton Shire Council is aware of other Councils that are experiencing similar difficulties. Councils such as Hume, Whittlesea, Wyndham, Mornington Peninsula, Yarra Ranges and Casey, are experiencing large amounts of both residential and industrial growth in areas where there is outdated or non-existent infrastructure. If this growth is to continue, a significant amount of planning and analysis of cost sharing needs to be undertaken.

Melton Shire Council has in the past reluctantly paid for the augmentation and installation of infrastructure that becomes another organization's asset. This is not a direction in which the Council wishes to continue. Melton Shire Council would welcome any efforts the Committee can undertake to improve the current situation and continue growth in the region.

Please do not hesitate to contact myself, on 03 9747 7393, if you require more information.

Yours sincerely

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