

# Winton Shire Council

BH:DM  
193:3623  
30<sup>th</sup> July 2002

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

House of representatives Standing Committee on  
Economics, Finance and Public Administration

Submission No: ..... 241 .....

Date Received: .....

Secretary: ..... *Bardell* .....

Dear Sir/Madam

## *Re: Inquiry into Local Government and Cost Shifting*

I refer to the above and thank you for the opportunity to comment on this matter. In general terms, I note that Winton is a small, remote Council in Outback Queensland and that Council is the last hope for our community. That is, if no-one else is interested and the community needs it, then Council has to do it. In general terms, Council does not believe that the present systems and processes work badly but does believe that there is opportunity for even better ways, although radical change may be required.

Council has a small rate base, a large area, long roads network and a small population. Council services a significant economic producer, that is, the grazing industry as well as a growing tourism industry. Council receives significant grant funding but this has been increasingly uncertain. There are really two types of funding – our FAGS and specific grants from various departments. These extra grants/subsidies are project based and require an application for funding. A good example is Regional Solutions. Very often, communities have real needs that aren't being met and tailor a service to meet funding criteria. This means that the outcome may be compromised to suit a funding program. Further, communities that have a good "application writer" have a better chance of receiving funding than a community without this resource. This can also work against real needs being met. I believe there are good grounds for more of the FAGS type funding and less of this other type as there is a better chance of community outcomes. Funding providers could have a greater reporting access or more specific expenditure requirements and should also have a needs prioritisation process but there has to be a fairer system than that presently in place.

The major expenditure problem Council has at present, which is perceived as an unfair cost shifting, is with stockroutes. Purely by chance of location and historic development, Winton is "blessed" with one of the largest Stockroute networks in Australia and these



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are actually regularly used by traveling stock. Stockroutes are an option for transporting stock, primarily cattle, rather than transporting by road and rail. Road and rail networks are the responsibility of state governments in a corporatised/community service obligation environment, for both infrastructure and maintenance. Local government, on the other hand, has full responsibility for the hands on maintenance of stock routes, even if our property owners/shire residents do not travel stock on the routes. The state has spent significant funds on upgrading infrastructure and funds a central oversight administration. However, it does not change the basic premise that there is a state/national infrastructure system, primarily addressing the transportation needs of the grazing industry, where local government is required to fund the ongoing maintenance.

Council also notes that there seems to be ongoing pressure for local government to become involved in health services such as hospitals and doctors in small remote communities such as ours. Council has not yet had to specifically allocate local government funds but believes "the writing is on the wall".

In general terms, Council agrees that very often, local government, especially in smaller Councils, is very much in touch with the community. Council is therefore very aware of real needs and in a position to offer solutions to those needs. However, this does not necessarily mean that services such as health and education should be devolved or otherwise passed on to local government to undertake. Rather, it means that there should be much wider (and deeper) use of local government in the decision-making processes for determining outcomes and use of resources. Specifically, local government elected members and officers should be accessed for real input in a consultation process by both state and federal departments.

Once again, thank you for the opportunity to comment on these matters.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bob Hoogland', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Bob Hoogland  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER