

INQUIRY INTO LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Organisation: The council of the Shire of Bourke
Date received: 13/07/2015

The Council of The Shire of Bourke

29 Mitchell St, Bourke, N.S.W 2840
P.O. Box 21, Bourke, N.S.W 2840
Telephone (02) 6830 8000 Fax (02) 6872 3030
Email: bourkeshire@bourke.nsw.gov.au
Web: <http://www.bourke.nsw.gov.au>



Please address all
communications to
the General Manager

13th July 2015

The Director
General Purpose Standing Committee No. 6
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Sir,

Re: Submission in respect of the Inquiry into Local Government in New South Wales

Detailed below is a brief submission in respect of the above enquiry.

The focus of Councils Submission is the need to ensure that "local" in Local Government remains both relevant and important which relates to 1(g) in the terms of reference

To set the context of the submission I detail information in relation to Bourke Shire Council.

Bourke Shire Council is located in North West New South Wales some 800 kilometres from Sydney. The Shire is the third largest in area in New South Wales covering an area of around 43000 square kilometres.

This is roughly the same size as Denmark

The Shire has a population of approximately 3000 people with the major centre of the Shire being the iconic town of Bourke.

The population of the Shire is approximately 30% indigenous

In addition to Bourke there are several other population centres within the shire including, Wanaaring, Louth, Enngonia and Byrock and all of which have facilities such as water supplies, halls cemeteries, airstrips (Louth and Wanaaring having night landing facilities) supplied by Council.

The need to service a number of centres places additional stress on a tight budget, but the services provided are a basic expectation of each of those communities and services that need to be provided to ensure residents access to basic amenities.

To service the vast area Council has a vast road network of some 2809 kilometres made up of Rural Local Roads 1883 kilometres (48km sealed and 1835km unsealed) Regional Roads 570 kilometres (108 kilometres sealed and 462 kilometres unsealed) and State Highways 356 kilometres (All sealed)

The tyranny of distance is one of the issues that the people of the shire accept and a trip to a medical specialist in Dubbo for a resident of Bourke is over 750 kilometres round trip, however, when residents from Wanaaring makes a similar trip you can add an additional 400 kilometres.

Bourke is a regional hub for a vast area and the availability of services and in particular medical services is critical if this wide expanse of this great state is adequately serviced.

Councils in the Western section of the state are involved in much more than "Roads, Rates and Rubbish" and in addition to being the provider of essential services they are also forced to provide services which have failed to be provided at a sufficient standard by the other tiers of government.

Councils in this part of the State are also required to undertake a much greater advocacy role on behalf of their communities, a role which often involves the seeking of improvements to services delivered by the other tiers of Government.

The Community Strategic Plans required to be produced by Councils incorporate the needs of the community involving services not regarded as traditional areas for Local Government, however, following the community consultation process are areas which have been identified as those the community expects the Council to proactively pursue on their behalf.

The lack of commercial alternatives often means that Councils undertake roles and responsibilities that would normally be the domain of the public sector in the more densely populated areas.

Councils undertake these services to try ensure that the quality of life for their residents is maintained and improved, with the reality that if Council does not become involved there would be some significant voids in service delivery and the residents of the area would be severely disadvantaged.

Local Government in the Western area of New South Wales in the main covers extremely large areas and it is important to these communities that the "local" in Local Government is not lost or diminished.

The importance of Councils from an economic perspective and from an advocacy role is extremely important to all communities and in particular rural and isolated communities.

Council would be happy to provide additional information should that deemed to be of benefit to the Standing Committee.

Ross Earl
General Manager