

INQUIRY INTO LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Organisation: Brisbane City Council

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1 July 2015

8 JUL 2015

The Honourable Paul Green, MLC
General Purpose Standing Committee No. 6
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Mr Green

Thank you for your letter dated 4 June 2015 in which you requested I make a submission to the NSW Legislative Council's Inquiry into Local Government in New South Wales.

As you may be aware, 20 local Councils were amalgamated in 1925 to form the 'greater' Brisbane City Council (BCC). The BCC Local Government Area is 1,367 km² in size, has a current population of 1.13M and is home to 115,472 businesses.

Council recently passed a \$2.6Bn budget for the 15/16 Financial Year. The average annual rates bill for residential owner occupiers in FY 15/16 will be \$1,322. This is among the lowest in South East Queensland and compares favourably with other Council's across Australia.

I believe that time has shown the BCC model to be a success, bringing significant benefits for the residents of Brisbane. Key reasons for this view are provided below.

- BCC's size and the resultant economies of scale have ensured a long history of financial stability and security for the residents of Brisbane. Despite an extremely ambitious infrastructure spending program in recent years, BCC continues to enjoy a 'Strong' credit rating from the Queensland Treasury Corporation, the equal highest rating in the State.
- BCC's size and economic strength allows it to fund projects and services for the betterment of residents not matched by any other local government. Examples are provided below.
 - BCC can fund major infrastructure projects that otherwise would not get done. Council's contribution of \$760M and \$1Bn for the Clem Jones and Legacy Way tunnels respectively are examples of this.

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- BCC provides major financial support for bus and ferry operations within Brisbane. In the coming financial year alone, Council's subsidy for public transport will exceed \$110m.
- BCC can deliver major city wide environmental projects such as the recent planting of two million trees across Brisbane in only four years.
- BCC's size is good for businesses.
 - Council can drive a coordinated and well-resourced economic development plan for the benefit of businesses across the whole city, not just the CBD.
 - Businesses get a unique level of certainty – within a 20 km radius of the CBD, there is one Council and one set of rules.

As Lord Mayor of Brisbane, I am also Chair of the South East Queensland Council of Mayors (COMSEQ). This organisation is made up of 12 Councils which represent one in seven Australians. It presents a united and strong regional voice for ratepayers as well as being a useful single point of contact for other levels of government when dealing with local government matters of a regional nature. I believe that COMSEQ's success is built on a consensus model enabled by a relatively small number of participating Councils which collectively represent a significant number of residents.

I have enclosed a summary document of BCC's 15/16 budget that may be useful in showing the scale and scope of Council's activities. I have also enclosed a copy of the city's current economic development plan, *Brisbane 2022*, for your information.

I would be very happy to provide further specific information to assist your inquiry should it be required. I would also provide a warm welcome to members of the Standing Committee should a visit to Brisbane be considered.

I wish you and your Committee every success with this important inquiry.

Yours sincerely

Graham Quirk
LORD MAYOR

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Att: