

**Submission
No 16**

**INQUIRY INTO ABILITY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS TO
FUND INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES**

Organisation: Narromine Shire Council

Date Received: 24 April 2024

While our region is known for its rich agricultural heritage, the community faces many challenges when it comes to maintaining and improving our infrastructure. One of the main issues we encounter is the limited financial resources available to the council to fund crucial projects that support the growth and development of our community. Our small, rural community has a limited rate base, which is further constrained by rate-pegging regulations. This, combined with recent labour and material cost increases, makes it difficult for the council to adequately fund the maintenance and expansion of essential infrastructure including our extensive road network. Narromine Council's road network spans over 1600km and plays a crucial role in supporting the local agricultural industry.

The geographical challenge of providing services over a large area with a dispersed population, coupled with environmental factors like droughts and floods, adds to the financial strain on the council. The age and condition of existing infrastructure also require ongoing maintenance and upgrades to meet community expectations and regulatory requirements, placing a significant burden on the council. Financial constraints make it challenging to meet these expectations while maximizing the value of every dollar spent.

In addition to financial challenges, the community faces unique infrastructure issues like water supply concerns due to drought conditions and road network disruptions from flooding events. The council must seek innovative solutions and strategic planning to address these issues and ensure the sustainability and viability of essential services.

Collaboration between local councils and higher levels of government in funding and delivery partnerships is crucial for maintaining and upgrading infrastructure and providing essential services to rural communities. External funding support is essential for sustaining connectivity and facilitating economic growth in the region.

Council, with its local knowledge, contacts, and committed staff, is best positioned to deliver critical services to the community, ensuring best value for money and appropriate solutions for specific issues. The inquiry must consider regional communities separately from inner-city areas and recognize the importance of maintaining critical infrastructure for ongoing prosperity and agricultural production in the region.

It is vital to invest in infrastructure to support the prosperity and sustainability of the community and its agricultural industry, benefiting the country as a whole. Maintaining critical infrastructure is essential for ensuring the ongoing success and economic growth of our region.