

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

Name: Dr John Davies

Date Received: 6 May 2024

Re Inquiry into Local Government.

Many thanks for accepting this late submission. So to be brief, in point form -

1 It must be acknowledged that Local Government plays a significant role in the function of this country in that councillors are more readily contactable and known than their federal or state counterparts and that local government is concerned with the micro issues.

2 The Local Government Act is the main document that describes the function of local government. Therefore all councillors and intending councillors need to indicate that at least they have read the act as it lays out the responsibilities of councils.

3 But there are grey areas within the Act so the responsibilities need to be prioritised. For instance, does surface drainage come before or after building sculptures?

4 For me, the main function and responsibility of the council is to ensure the area is safe to live in at a micro level.

4a Local utilities such as water and sewage need to be functioning safely. This includes controlling the demand. Thus new developments cannot be considered if they overload the existing resources.

4b The same applies to local roads which were built to handle a certain level of traffic. The effect of expanded traffic use must be considered in new developments.

4c Surface drainage is a difficult issue but a council responsibility. Locally (Byron Shire, Mullumbimby) had attention been paid to keeping existing surface drains clear, so allowing flood water to move more quickly away, it is probable that those many homes who were flooded by 10cm of water or less would have been saved.

5 There needs to be a better understanding of the decision responsibilities of development applications. Currently, the local council (Byron Shire) spends an inordinate amount of money on legal fees in the Land and Environment Court. If the responsibility of making decisions on DAs over a certain value belongs to the State, then the DA should be submitted directly to the State with Local Government having an advisory role.

6 Somehow there needs to be a check function performed by the State to oversee 'adventures'. Areas that are not Council responsibility should not take up valuable staff time and funds - locally, Byron has been involved with power generation through a methane capture programme at the local composting facility, a solar farm and social housing. Power generation and housing are State responsibilities. Local rumour is that Byron is committed to \$12 million for a solar farm!! Such ventures may appeal to a certain ideology but are totally irresponsible when the basic responsibilities of Council are not being addressed.

7 Councils need to be seen as 'doing'! There are infestations of weeds to be controlled, Council responsibility according to the Act, drains and culverts to be cleared of blockages, fallen timber to be cleared from creeks so they don't form dams during floods, roads to be lined and repaired. None of which is very romantic but essential if we are to live locally, safely.

My thanks for your consideration.

Yours sincerely

Dr John Davies