

Council happenings . . .

with Mayor
Glenn Wall

Productivity Commission Report on Local Government Revenue-Raising Capacity

The Productivity Commission Report, released on April 17, presents 29 findings about the capacity of local governments to raise own-source revenue.

One of the most telling findings in the PC Report is that whilst many local governments may have a theoretical capacity to increase their own-source revenue raising, the report explicitly points out that this does not imply that local governments should increase the revenue they raise.

Council welcomes this important distinction, noting that whether a local council can raise additional own-source revenue depends on issues including the preferences and expectations of the local community, the extent and nature of economic activity in the local council's area, the demographic and geographic attributes of the local community, and of course, the community's willingness to pay for services provided by local governments.

The PC Report acknowledges that the local government sector is characterized by a high degree of diversity in terms of its functions, characteristics and revenue sources, and that this diversity exists both within and across jurisdictions. The report also confirms the NSW Government has more control over local government revenue-raising due to rate – pegging, than any other state government in Australia. NSW had the lowest average rates per person - \$384 in 2005-06 – compared with the national average of \$441. Another point of interest is the commission's finding that a case exists to review the provision of Federal Government general purpose grants to local government.

The PC Report highlights awareness that no two councils are exactly the same, just as no two local communities are exactly the same. In this respect, the PC Report should make a positive contribution to fostering better understanding by all Australians of the uniqueness of local government. The PC Report can be viewed at www.pc.gov.au:80/study/localgovernment/docs/finalreport

Hunter Water Draft H250 Plan

Hunter Water is seeking comment regarding the Draft H250 Plan which outlines how Hunter Water proposes to meet the water supply needs of the Lower Hunter over the next 50 years.

H250 plan is the first revision of their Integrated Water Resource Plan released in 2003. The plan includes the Tillegra Dam proposal and it is feasible the document will form part of the Environmental Assessment Report for the dam.

To this end I would urge all those residents with genuine interest to view the document and offer comment. The Plan is on Public Exhibition with submissions being accepted until completion of Business on the 16 May 2008.

The complete Draft H250 Plan is available for viewing and downloading from the Hunter Water website www.hunterwater.com.au END