



all communication to
GENERAL MANAGER

our ref: GJH:VLC:EF09/2181

your ref:

contact: Mr Paul O'Sullivan

19 April 2011

Mr Michael Deegan
National Infrastructure Coordinator
Infrastructure Australia
GPO Box 594
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Via Email: mail@infrastructureaustralia.gov.au

Dear Mr Deegan

Regional Towns Water Quality and Security Review

Lismore City Council welcomes your invitation for feedback on the AECOM Report - Review of Regional Water Quality and Security, October 2010. Council considered this matter at its regular Council meeting on 12 April 2011 and resolved unanimously that it does not support the formation of a State owned regional water corporation.

This is a key local consideration in terms of this Council being able to determine its future land development strategies and priorities based on the Council's interpretation of its community's aspirations. Lismore City Council takes the issue of Water Reform very seriously and has previously made submissions and presentations to the Independent Inquiry into Secure and Sustainable Urban Water Supply and Sewerage Services for Non-metropolitan New South Wales. We are also working cooperatively with the Northern Rivers Regional Organisation of Councils (NOROC) to progress the development of a Regional Alliance. This Council has adopted a progressive attitude to reform of the water industry but is firm in its view that effective control and management of local water resources must remain local.

This Council recognises that reform of the NSW water industry could result in improved efficiencies in the provision of water and sewerage services to the region. However, Council believes that a model along the lines of a locally controlled Regional Water Authority will bring those benefits. At present we are a partner in a County Council responsible for providing bulk treated water (Rous Water) in the Richmond and Brunswick River valleys. Whilst this arrangement deals with just one aspect of the water cycle it is entirely feasible to restructure this relationship to incorporate the best features of a true Regional Water Authority serving the needs of a growing regional population of around 140,000. Aggregation to include the Tweed and Clarence valleys would swell the population base toward 250,000.

The cornerstone of support for such a model will always be local decision making. Currently the elected Council is directly accountable to the local community for decisions pertaining to service standards, service pricing and forward planning. There has been no beneficial justification ventured to alter this approach, therefore Council is in favour of a continuation of this governance structure. It is regarded as being highly transparent and in keeping with the expectations of the local community.

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There are a number of existing regulatory constructs to which this Council is accountable – NSW Department of Environment Climate Change and Water, NSW Office of Water and IPART. These channels address the issues of drinking water standards, skills shortage, Best Practice Management and pricing. Notwithstanding Council supports any national initiatives which improve:

- a) Conformance with National Drinking Water Standards,
- b) Development of a more highly skilled workforce,
- c) Best Practice Management Framework, and
- d) Improved water pricing.

I trust the views expressed in this submission on behalf of Lismore City Council will be recognised as a responsible and effective alternative to the reform model promoted in the discussion paper.

Yours faithfully



Paul G. O'Sullivan
General Manager

cc. The Executive Officer
NOROC
Via Email: kelly_s@bigpond.com