Local Government Association of Queensland Inc
111th Annual Conference

Hosted by Gold Coast City Council

Held at the Gold Coast Convention and Exhibition Centre,
Cnr Gold Coast Highway & TE Peters Drive, Broadbeach

Commenced at 8.30am
Tuesday 28 August 2007

With the Official Opening by

The Hon Jim Lloyd MP
Minister for Local Government, Territories and Roads
CONFERENCE PROGRAM

Sunday, 26 August 2007
12.00pm to 4.00pm  Registration
Delegates, Observers and Partners
Gold Coast Convention and Exhibition Centre
Cnr Gold Coast Highway & TE Peters Drive, Broadbeach

Monday, 27 August 2007
8.30am to 1.00pm  Executive Meeting
8.00am to 6.00pm  Registration
Delegates, Observers and Partners
Gold Coast Convention and Exhibition Centre
Cnr Gold Coast Highway & TE Peters Drive, Broadbeach

1.00pm to 1.30pm  Executive Lunch with LGMA State Branch
2.00pm - 3.30pm  Regional Roads Group Assembly
4.00pm - 4.30pm  Annual Conference Briefing for first time conference attendees
4.00pm - 4.30pm  Trade and Sponsor Briefing
5.30pm - 7.00pm  Welcoming Ceremony
Kurrawa Beach
Hosted by King & Company
Dress: (This is an outdoor function on the actual beach! - smart casual, flat shoes or thongs and a jacket - could be cool!)

5.30pm  Welcome to Country
5.35pm  Welcome to Gold Coast
Cr Ron Clarke MBE, Mayor, Gold Coast City Council
5.45pm  Response
Cr Paul Bell AM, President, LGAQ and ALGA
5.50pm  Sponsors Address
Mr Tim Fynes-Clinton, Managing Partner, King & Company
6.00pm  Surf Life Saving Presentation
7.00pm  Program concludes
FREE EVENING
Tuesday, 28 August 2007

8.00am Registration
Gold Coast Convention and Exhibition Centre
Cnr Gold Coast Highway & TE Peters Drive, Broadbeach

8.30am Call to Order by President

9.00am Official Opening by
The Hon Jim Lloyd MP
Minister for Local Government, Territories and Roads

9.30am Presidential Address
Cr Paul Bell AM
President, LGAQ and ALGA

10.00am Keynote Address: “Providing Best Value in Local Government”
Sir Peter Gershon, CBE FREng
Chairman of Premier Farnell plc and Symbian; London, Great Britain

10.45am Debate

11.45am Address: “Asset Management”
Mr Roger Byrne
International Manager, GHD Asset Management Group

12.15pm Lunch
Hosted by Telstra Country Wide

1.30pm Debate

1.50pm Address: “Housing Affordability - An Elephant in the Room”
Mr Chris Richardson
Director
Access Economics Pty Ltd

2.30pm Debate

3.30pm Address: “The Best I Can Be”
Ms Allana Corbin
The first woman to circumnavigate the mainland of Australia, solo in a helicopter

4.15pm Adjournment

6.30pm for 7.00pm Gala Dinner
Hosted by Hastings Deering
(Dress: Coat and tie)
Long Service Certificate Presentations

11.30pm Program concludes
Wednesday, 29 August 2007

8.40am Conference Resumes - Housekeeping

8.45am Address: “Virtual Local Government - Shared Services the Way Forward”
Professor Percy Allan AM
Research Director, Review Today Pty Ltd

9.20am Address: “State Local Government and Planning Update”
Hon Andrew Fraser MP
Minister for Local Government, Planning and Sport

10.00am Debate

10.30am Address: “LG Infrastructure Services Update”
Mr Graham Matthew
Chief Executive, LG Infrastructure Services

11.00am Address: “Federal Opposition Local Government Update”
Senator Kate Lundy
Shadow Minister for Local Government

11.30am Debate

12.00pm Launch of M-Series Grader by Hastings Deering

12.15pm Lunch
Hosted by Ergon Energy and Technology One

1.30pm Local Government Reform: Implementation Panel Session - Open Forum

3.00pm Address: “Community Attitude Survey Report Back”
Ms Melissa Doyle,
Channel 7, Sunrise Host

3.30pm Address: “Opposition Perspective”
Mr Howard Hobbs MP
Shadow Minister for Local Government and Planning

4.00pm Address: “Fat, Forty and Fired”
Mr Nigel Marsh
Chief Executive Officer, Leo Burnett Australia
And Author

4.40pm Workshop Briefing

4.45pm Debate

5.15pm Adjournment

7.00pm International Dinner - Movie World
Hosted by Jardine Lloyd Thompson

11.30pm Program Concludes
Thursday, 30 August 2007

8.45am  Workshops  
Session 1: 8.45 - 10:15  
Session 2: 10:30 - 11.45am

12.00pm  Consideration of:  
(a) Executive Report  
(b) President’s Annual Address  
(c) Hon Treasurer’s Report

12.30pm  Address: “Beaconsfield Mining Rescue”  
Mr Paul Featherstone

1.05pm  Closing Ceremony

1.15pm  Lunch  
Hosted by Powerlink

2.00pm  Local Government Reform - Local Transition Committee Workshop *

4.30pm  Workshop Concludes

6.00pm  Farewell Dinner - Draculas  
Hooker Blvd, Broadbeach Waters Queensland  
A live horror-comedy show - can be a bit risqué!

11.00pm  Program concludes
“A” MOTIONS

Association Matters

NO.1 EXECUTIVE

RECEPTION OF PRESIDENT’S ANNUAL ADDRESS
MOVER: Cr R Buchan (Balonne)  SECONDER: Cr D Edwards (Quilpie)

The President’s Annual Address will be read on Tuesday morning 28th August 2007 and needs to be formally received prior to consideration later in the Conference.

“That the President’s Annual Address for 2006-2007 be received.”

CARRIED

NO.1A EXECUTIVE

ADOPTION OF PRESIDENT’S ANNUAL ADDRESS
MOVER: Cr M Brunker (Bowen)  SECONDER: Cr K McDuff (Bundaberg)

The President’s Annual Address remains before the Conference during proceedings and is considered on Thursday 30th August 2007.

“That the President’s Annual Address for 2006-2007 be adopted”.

CARRIED

NO.2 EXECUTIVE

RECEPTION OF THE 111TH ANNUAL REPORT BY THE EXECUTIVE
MOVER: Cr K McDuff (Bundaberg)  SECONDER: Cr T Gleeson (Monto)

The Annual Report of the Executive needs to be formally received prior to consideration latter in the Conference.

“That the Annual Report of the Executive for 2006-2007 be received.”

CARRIED

NO.2A EXECUTIVE

ADOPTION OF THE EXECUTIVE REPORT
MOVER: Cr G Churchill (Banana)  SECONDER: Cr J Chapman (Atherton)

The Executive’s Annual Report remains before the Conference during proceedings and is considered on Thursday 30th August 2006.


CARRIED
NO. 3 EXECUTIVE

RECEPTION OF THE ANNUAL FINANCIAL STATEMENTS AND AUDITOR’S REPORT
MOVER: Cr B McNamara (Flinders)  
SECONDER: Cr J Galeano (Cardwell)

The Annual Financial Statements and Auditor’s Report need to be formally received prior to consideration latter in the Conference.

“That the Annual Financial Statements for the year ended 31 May 2007 and Auditor’s Report be received.”

CARRIED

NO. 3A EXECUTIVE

ADOPTION OF THE ANNUAL FINANCIAL STATEMENTS AND AUDITOR’S REPORT
MOVER: Cr B McNamara (Flinders)  
SECONDER: Cr D Edwards (Quilpie)

The Annual Financial Statements and Auditor’s Report remain before the Conference during proceedings and are considered on Thursday 30th August 2007.

“That the Annual Financial Statements for the year ended 31 May 2007 and Auditor’s Report be adopted”.

CARRIED

Governance

NO. 4 LOGAN

REGISTER OF INTERESTS - SPONSORED HOSPITALITY DISCLOSURE REQUIREMENTS TO BE AMENDED IN LINE WITH STATE PARLIAMENTARY REQUIREMENTS
MOVER: Cr P Pidgeon (Logan)  
SECONDER: Cr R Duffy (Burnett)

“That the Local Government Association of Queensland lobby the Minister for Local Government, Planning and Sport the Hon Andrew Fraser MP requesting amendments to the Local Government Regulations 2005 in response to the recent amendments to the Local Government Act 1993 that now require the disclosure of sponsored hospitality received by a councillor to be placed on a council’s website requesting that the disclosure requirements for sponsored hospitality are brought into line with the existing requirements for state members of parliament.”

CARRIED

NO. 5 COOLOOLA

LAND ACQUISITION - LEGISLATIVE REVIEW TO PROVIDE MORE EQUITABLE COMPENSATION
MOVER: Cr M Venardos (Cooloola)  
SECONDER: Cr D Neilson (Cooloola)

“That the Local Government Association of Queensland lobby the State Government to review the Land Acquisition Act to accommodate the people who are suffering hardship due to compulsory acquisition.”

CARRIED
NO. 6

ELECTIONS - CHANGE OF DATE
MOVER: Cr P Pidgeon (Logan) SECONDER: Cr A Gallagher (Carpentaria)

“That the Local Government Association of Queensland make representations to the Minister for Local Government, Planning and Sport, the Hon Andrew Fraser MLA requesting:

a) that the local government general elections set down for 15 March 2008 for all Queensland council’s be deferred until October 2008; and
b) that this change in month for holding quadrennial council elections be reflected in an amendment to the Local Government Act 1993 (LGA) so that this remains the month for council elections from 2012 and beyond.”

AMENDMENT
MOVER: Cr R McCullough (Mt Isa) SECONDER: Cr D Egan (Douglas)

Carried on the voices to accept the amendment to split the motion into two separate motions 6A and 6B. Motions 6A and 6B where then put to conference as follows:

NO. 6A

ELECTIONS - CHANGE OF DATE

“That the Local Government Association of Queensland make representations to the Minister for Local Government, Planning and Sport, the Hon Andrew Fraser MLA requesting:

a) that the local government general elections set down for 15 March 2008 for all Queensland council’s be deferred until October 2008;

LOST

NO. 6B

ELECTIONS - CHANGE OF DATE

“That the Local Government Association of Queensland make representations to the Minister for Local Government, Planning and Sport, the Hon Andrew Fraser MLA requesting:

a) that this change in month for holding quadrennial council elections be reflected in an amendment to the Local Government Act 1993 (LGA) so that this remains the month for council elections from 2012 and beyond.”

LOST
Finance and Administration

NO. 7  LIVINGSTONE

RATING - REMOVAL OF GENERAL RATE EXEMPTIONS FOR RELIGIOUS BASED ORGANISATIONS OPERATING RETIREMENT/NURSING HOMES
MOVER: Cr B Dorey (Livingstone)  SECONDER: Cr D Rial (Livingstone)

“That the Local Government Association Queensland makes representation to the State Government to remove the general rate exemptions contained in Section 957 of the Queensland Local Government Act and more specifically Section 41 of the Local Government Regulation 2005, for religious based organisations operating retirement/nursing homes with the exception that subsidies still apply to facilities that predominantly provide for disadvantaged and low income community members.”

CARRIED

NO. 8  COMBINED MOTION WONDAl/WBBROC/MUNDUBBERA

RATING - COMPENSATION FOR LOSS OF RATE REVENUE - STATE GOVERNMENT ACQUISITION OF LAND FOR FORESTRY PURPOSES
MOVER: Cr D Carter (Wondai)  SECONDER: Cr T Dredge (Kilcoy)

“That the Local Government Association of Queensland lobby the State Government to reimburse councils for the loss of revenue caused by the acquisition by the Government of private land for the purpose of establishing timber plantations owned by the Government or by Government owned entities.”

CARRIED

NO. 9  EXECUTIVE

FUNDING - STATE GOVERNMENT CAPITAL WORKS SUBSIDY ALLOCATIONS TO BE INDEXED ANNUALLY IN LINE WITH RELEVANT COST INDICES
MOVER: Cr M Brunker (Bowen)  SECONDER: Cr D Seccombe (Redland)

“That the Local Government Association of Queensland lobby the State Government to index the annual capital works subsidy allocations in line with cost increases relevant to the type of infrastructure being constructed”.

CARRIED

NO. 10  MAROOCHY

FUNDING - STATE SUBSIDY FOR CAPITAL WORKS ON TRUNK ROADS
MOVER: Cr G Rogerson (Maroochy)  SECONDER: Cr J Natoli (Maroochy)

“That the Local Government Association of Queensland lobby the State Government to provide Local Governments with a 40% subsidy for capital works on trunk road networks.”

CARRIED
NO. 11

CHARTERS TOWERS

FUNDING - TIMELY PAYMENT OF SUBSIDIES BY GOVERNMENT
MOVER: Cr B Beveridge (Charters Towers) SECONDER: Cr F Beveridge (Charters Tower)

“That the Local Government Association of Queensland lobby the State Government in relation to the slow payment of subsidies approved for Local Governments.”

CARRIED

NO. 12

KILKIVAN

DEPRECIATION - REMOVAL OF REQUIREMENT TO FUND
MOVER: Cr R Dyne (Kilkivan) SECONDER: Cr T Perrett (Kilkivan)

“That the Local Government Association of Queensland make representations to the Hon Andrew Fraser, Minister for Local Government, Planning and Sport, to remove the requirements for council’s to fund depreciation on council’s road infrastructure.”

LOST

NO. 13

EXECUTIVE

VALUATION OF LAND - REMOVAL OF CONCESSION VALUATION UNDER SECTION 25 OF THE VALUATION OF LAND ACT
MOVER: Cr P Tully (Ipswich) SECONDER: Cr K McDuff (Bundaberg)

“That the Local Government Association of Queensland lobby the State Government to amend the Local Government Act 1993 (section 967 (4)) and section 25 of the Valuation of Land Act 1944 to remove all rating concessions for subdivided land held in the name of the developer.”

CARRIED

NO. 14

EXECUTIVE

VALUATION OF LAND - SITE VALUATION METHODOLOGY FOR URBAN PROPERTIES
MOVER: Cr K McDuff (Bundaberg) SECONDER: Cr M Brunker (Bowen)

“That the Local Government Association of Queensland lobby the State Government to amend the Valuation of Land Act to allow site valuation to be the methodology to be used for urban property.”

CARRIED
Environment and Health Services

NO. 15  BOONAH

LAND MANAGEMENT - REAPPOINTMENT OF THE LAND PROTECTION COUNCIL
MOWER: Cr J Brent (Boonah)  SECONDER: Cr D Davidson (Tambo)

“That the Local Government Association of Queensland make urgent representation to the Minister for Primary Industries and Fisheries for the reappointment of the Land Protection Council as required pursuant to the Land Protection (Pest and Stock Route Management) Act.”

CARRIED

NO. 16  CQLGA/FITZROY

POISONOUS PLANTS - MANDATORY LABELLING AT THE POINT OF SALE
MOWER: Cr S O’Brien (Fitzroy)  SECONDER: Cr J Hopkins (Fitzroy)

“That the Local Government Association of Queensland request the State Government to introduce mandatory labelling of poisonous plants at the point of sale to people.”

CARRIED

NO. 17  CABOOLTURE

VEGETATION PROTECTION - CONTROL OF VEGETATION REMOVAL TO ACHIEVE SCENIC AMENITY
MOWER: Cr G Chippendale (Caboolture)  SECONDER: Cr J Leishman (Caboolture)

“That the Local Government Association of Queensland establish a Working Group with the objective of developing a generic Policy and Local Law to provide a consistent approach and assist councils in managing and protecting natural vegetation that is illegally removed from council owned or controlled land in order to gain improved views from adjacent properties.”

CARRIED

NO. 18  IPSWICH

ANIMAL MANAGEMENT - CALL FOR STATE GOVERNMENT LEGISLATION ON COMPANION ANIMALS
MOWER: Cr A Antoniolli (Ipswich)  SECONDER: Cr P Tully (Ipswich)

“That the Local Government Association of Queensland call upon the State Government to develop, in collaboration with Local Government, state-wide legislation for companion animals.”

1 For the purpose of this motion companion animal means each of the following: (a) a dog, (b) a cat (c) any other animal that is prescribed by the proposed legislation as a companion animal.

CARRIED
NO. 19

NOISE POLLUTION - CONTROL OF NOISE FROM SMALL MOTOR BIKES
MOWER: Cr P Pidgeon (Logan)  
SECONDER: Cr B Dorey (Livingstone)

“That the Local Government Association of Queensland lobby the Minister for Transport and Regional Services, the Hon Mark Vaile MP, requesting a change to the design standard of imported small motorbikes, in particular, the inclusion of more stringent noise control devices.”

AMENDMENT

To remove the word “small” from this motion to read as follows:
MOWER: Cr V Bull (Beaudesert)  
SECONDER: Cr J Drescher (Beaudesert)

NOISE POLLUTION - CONTROL OF NOISE FROM SMALL MOTOR BIKES

“That the Local Government Association of Queensland lobby the Minister for Transport and Regional Services, the Hon Mark Vaile MP, requesting a change to the design standard of imported motorbikes, in particular, the inclusion of more stringent noise control devices.”

LOST

The original motion was then put and was CARRIED

Planning and Development

NO. 20

PLANNING SYSTEM – FLEXIBLE APPLICATION OF POLICY BY STATE AGENCIES
MOWER: Cr B Dorey (Livingstone)  
SECONDER: Cr D Rial (Livingstone)

“That the Local Government Association Queensland makes representation to the State Government to amend their current practice of Policy implementation, so that policies be applied with a degree of flexibility to achieve ‘desired outcomes’ rather than applied dogmatically simply to defend a particular policy position.”

CARRIED

NO. 21

PLANNING SYSTEM – TWO YEAR MORATORIUM ON FURTHER CHANGES WITHOUT FINANCIAL SUPPORT
MOWER: Cr J Chapman (Atherton)  
SECONDER: Cr L De Marzi (Atherton)

“That Local Government Association of Queensland actively lobby the Department of Local Government, Planning, Sport and Recreation to ensure that no further statutory planning projects are imposed on councils for at least two years without appropriate financial assistance.”

CARRIED
NO. 22 EXECUTIVE
PLANNING SYSTEM - DEVELOPMENT ASSESSMENT DISPUTE RESOLUTION COSTS
MOVER: Cr D Neilson (Cooloola) SECONDER: Cr M Brunker (Bowen)

“That the Local Government Association of Queensland continue to lobby the State Government to address the significant legal costs being borne by Local Government in resolving disputes relating to development assessment decisions.”

CARRIED

NO. 23 EXECUTIVE
PLANNING SYSTEM – CREATION OF DEVELOPMENT LAND BANKING MONITOR
MOVER: Cr A Bennison (Brisbane) SECONDER: Cr P Tully (Ipswich)

“That the Local Government Association of Queensland continue to lobby the State Government to undertake a thorough analysis of the land banking activities by the State’s major developers in order to determine the impacts on housing affordability in the State.”

CARRIED

NO. 24 MAROOCHY
PLANNING POWERS - LEGISLATIVE AMENDMENT TO ENABLE DEVELOPMENT COVENANTS BASED ON GEOTECHNICAL REPORTS
MOVER: Cr J Natoli (Maroochy) SECONDER: Cr G Rogerson (Maroochy)

“That the Local Government Association of Queensland lobby the State Government to amend section 97A of the Land Title Act 1994 to allow for a Covenant to be registered on a title for the purpose of ensuring that development and ongoing use of a lot proceeds only in accordance with an appropriately certified geotechnical report referred to in a development approval for that lot.”

CARRIED

NO. 25 HERVEY BAY
BUILDING REGULATION - PROTECTION OF PROPERTY OWNERS OF ADJOINING DEVELOPMENT SITES
MOVER: Cr B McNeven (Hervey Bay) SECONDER: Cr T Sorensen (Hervey Bay)

“That the Local Government Association of Queensland request the State Government to amend the Building Act 1975 to provide statutory requirements for developers/builders to protect the property of owners which adjoin development sites.”

CARRIED
**Community Development and Human Service**

**NO. 26**  
**COMBINED MOTION**  
**CHARTERS TOWERS/LOGAN/SOUTHROC**  

**JUVENILE OFFENDERS - LEGISLATIVE AMENDMENT ENABLING COUNCIL TO RECOVER FINES FROM PARENTS/GUARDIANS**  
**MOVER:** Cr B Beveridge (Charters Towers)  
**SECONDER:** Cr F Beveridge (Charters Towers)  

“That the Local Government Association of Queensland lobby the State Attorney General and Minister for Justice to change sentencing laws in relation to juvenile offenders charged with property offences to make discretionary restitution orders against parents subject to default penalty in order that some inducement is placed on parents to take responsibility for their children's actions.”

CARRIED

**NO. 27**  
**REDCLIFFE**  

**POLICE RESOURCES - REVIEW OF FRONT-LINE OPERATIONAL RESOURCES**  
**MOVER:** Cr A Sutherland (Redcliffe)  
**SECONDER:** Cr D Hitzman (Redcliffe)  

“That the Local Government Association of Queensland approach the Minister for Police and Corrective Services seeking a review of the level of front-line operational police resources in local communities.”

CARRIED

**NO. 28**  
**REDCLIFFE**  

**CRIME STATISTICS - AVAILABILITY TO COUNCILS**  
**MOVER:** Cr A Sutherland (Redcliffe)  
**SECONDER:** Cr D Hitzman (Redcliffe)  

“That the Local Government Association of Queensland approach the Minister for Police and Corrective Services seeking police crime statistics to assist councils in their crime risk management role.”

CARRIED

**NO. 29**  
**REDCLIFFE**  

**WHEELCHAIR BOUND RESIDENTS - STATISTICS TO BE COLLECTED IN FUTURE CENSUS**  
**MOVER:** Cr A Sutherland (Redcliffe)  
**SECONDER:** Cr D Hitzman (Redcliffe)  

“That the Local Government Association of Queensland approach the Australian Bureau of Statistics to include on future census forms, relevant questions relating to the mobility of householders so as to ascertain statistical information to assist with decision making with regard to disability access.”

CARRIED
Road, Transport and Infrastructure

COUNCIL ADVISED THEY WISH TO WITHDRAW THE FOLLOWING MOTION - 30/07/07

NO. 30 CABOOLTURE

WATER INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS - MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN NEW BULK WATER ENTITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT REGARDING CARE/CONTROL OF WATERWAYS AND CATCHMENTS

“That the Local Government Association of Queensland lobby the State Government for the formulation of a Memorandum of Understanding between the State Government, any new Bulk Water Entities and Local Government regarding the care and control of waterways, catchment areas and riparian zones.”

WITHDRAWN

NO. 31 LIVINGSTONE

FUNDING – INCREASED SUBSIDY FOR REGIONAL WATER INFRASTRUCTURE
MOVER: Cr B Dorey (Livingstone) SECONDER: Cr D Rial (Livingstone)

“That the Local Government Association Queensland makes representation to the State Government, to conduct, in conjunction with the LGAQ, an immediate review of current subsidy arrangements for major water and waste-water reuse projects with a view to increase the level of subsidies to 70% or greater where such projects can be demonstrated to form part of a regional infrastructure grid or network. Such determination to be made using the following criteria:

Criteria for identifying eligible projects:
1. Is a project that is identified and supported in a regional study and planning document; or
2. Is trunk infrastructure that comprises or is an integral part of a regional network or grid; or
3. Can be demonstrated to have a significant impact on regional economic growth; or
4. Is required to achieve a significant Regional, State or National environmental outcome.”

CARRIED

NO. 32 PINE RIVERS

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT - EXTENDED POWERS OF ENTRY FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT’S BUSHFIRE PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT PURPOSES
MOVER: Cr B Millar (Pine Rivers) SECONDER: Cr P Taylor (Jondaryan)

“That the Local Government Association of Queensland make representation to the State Government to amend the Local Government Act 1993 to provide local governments with powers in relation to extinguishment of fires, prevention of fires and issuing notice for unlawful fires and breaches of the act.”

CARRIED
“B” MOTIONS

Governance

COUNCIL ADVISED THEY WISH TO WITHDRAW THE FOLLOWING MOTION - 30/07/07

NO. 33 CABOOLTURE

LOCAL LAWS - IMPROVED MAKING PROCESS

“That the Local Government Association of Queensland make representations to the Department of Local Government, Planning Sport and Recreation to amend the Local Government Act to ensure a more timely, streamlined and effective local law making process.”

WITHDRAWN

Finance and Administration

NO. 34 NQLGA/DALRYMPLE

RATING - COMPENSATION FOR RATES FOREGONE FROM COMMONWEALTH AND STATE GOVERNMENT OWNED LAND

MOVER: Cr B Callcott (Dalrymple)  SECONDER: Mr J Gott (Dalrymple)

“That the Local Government Association of Queensland lobby both the State and Federal Governments to increase compensation/contributions paid to Local Government by both these tiers of government, given the Local Government in Queensland contributes significant funds towards infrastructure which supports State and Federal properties.”

CARRIED

NO. 35 BANANA

RATING - REVIEW OF PENSIONER RATES REBATE SCHEME

MOVER: Cr G Churchill (Banana)  SECONDER: Cr P Bienek (Banana)

“That the Local Government Association of Queensland lobby the Government to increase the current Pensioner Rate Rebate Scheme taking into consideration current inflation - rate of index.”

CARRIED
Environment and Health Services

NO. 36

STOCK ROUTES - WATER FACILITIES AND PERMIT TO OCCUPY
MOVER: Cr B McNamara (Flinders)
SECONDER: Cr D Egan (Douglas)

“That the Local Government Association of Queensland lobby the Department of Natural Resources and Water (Stock Routes Section) to include appropriate conditions, as requested by a Local Government, when issuing Permits to Occupy (PTO) over stock routes. Conditions, if requested by a Local Government, to include -

• Style and quality of fencing including location of gates and/grids;
• Use of stock route water facilities as a condition of the PTO. This may include the requirement for water supplied to a property owner from the stock route water facility or the property owner providing water to the stock route water facility;
• Water agreements would be negotiated under general guidelines provided by the Department; and
• Failure to comply with the conditions of a PTO would lead to its cancellation.”

CARRIED

NO. 37

STOCK ROUTE - WAIVER OF AGISTMENT PERMIT FEES DURING DROUGHT DECLARATION
MOVER: Cr G Churchill (Banana)
SECONDER: Cr P Bienek (Banana)

“That the Local Government Association of Queensland lobby the State Government to amend the Land Protection Act to allow the option for the full waiver of the stock route agistment permit fees payable by landholders during periods of drought declaration.”

CARRIED

NO. 38

HEALTH SERVICES - INCREASE IN LEVEL OF PATIENT TRAVEL SUBSIDY
MOVER: Cr G Roger (Stanthorpe)
SECONDER: Cr S McEvoy (Stanthorpe)

“That the Local Government Association of Queensland request the Minister for Health to review and increase the subsidies available to patients under the Queensland Health Patient Travel Subsidy Scheme given the current levels of subsidy have not been increased in over 20 years.”

CARRIED
Planning and Development

NO. 39  MAROOCHY

PLANNING SYSTEM - REVIEW OF INTEGRATED PLANNING ACT
MOVER: Cr J Natoli (Maroochy)  SECONDER: Cr G Rogerson (Maroochy)

“That the Local Government Association of Queensland calls on the Department of Local Government, Planning, Sport and Recreation to address the following issues in the review of the Integrated Planning Act 1997 (IPA) and the Integrated Development Assessment System:
- The need for greater emphasis on achieving good planning outcomes over planning processes
- The need for simplification of planning instruments, including the balance of statutory and performance based components of instruments
- The need to reduce the timeframe to make and amend planning schemes, through clearly defined State interests and streamlined State interest checks
- The lack of technical support and clear information from State agencies during plan making and development assessment
- The need to reintroduce prohibitions within planning instruments / legislation
- The need to monitor the effectiveness of planning instruments / legislation
- The need to repeal compensation provisions and review associated provisions for development under superseded planning schemes
- The need to expand and define information to be lodged with applications
- The need to establish standard administrative definitions to improve consistency across councils and State agencies; and further

That the Department of Local Government, Planning, Sport and Recreation provide councils information about the following in relation to the Discussion Paper:
- The timeframe for the release of the final consultation report and how this will be distributed;
- Action plan to implement the agreed improvements, including timeframes for the short-, medium- and long-term improvements, resources and which organisation will be responsible for the implementation of each Proposed Improvement;
- Further consultation with councils in relation to these improvements; and
- How changes to IPA will be monitored to determine their effectiveness.”

CARRIED

NO. 40  PINE RIVERS

PLANNING SYSTEM - PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH PIPs AND WORKING RELATIONS AMONGST STAKEHOLDERS
MOVER: Cr B Millar (Pine Rivers)  SECONDER: Cr G Rogerson (Maroochy)

“That the Local Government Association of Queensland make representation to the development industry and relevant State Government agencies concerning the disruptive and costly effect the introduction of Priority Infrastructure Plans (PIPs) is having on affordability and the resources of Local Governments requesting practical assistance with the development of PIPs.”

CARRIED
NO. 41  
ATHERTON/FNQROC  
PLANNING SYSTEM - EXTENTION FOR PREPARATION OF PRIORITY INFRASTRUCTURE PLANS TO JUNE 2009  
MOVER: Cr J Chapman (Atherton)  
SECONDER: Cr L DeMarzi (Atherton)  
“That Local Government Association of Queensland actively lobby the Department of Local Government, Planning, Sport and Recreation to extend deadlines for Priority Infrastructure Plans to June 2009.”  
CARRIED  

NO. 42  
BRISBANE  
HOUSING AFFORDABILITY - DEVELOPMENT OF THE QUEENSLAND HOUSING AFFORDABILITY STRATEGY  
MOVER: Cr A Bennison (Brisbane)  
SECONDER: Cr R Buchan (Balonne)  
“That the Local Government Association of Queensland make representation to the Queensland Government to consult with representatives from all levels of government, development, industry bodies, financial institutions and relevant housing groups on the implementation of the Queensland Housing Affordability Strategy.”  
CARRIED  

**Community Development and Human Service**  
NO. 43  
NQLGA/CHARTERS TOWERS  
PROPERTY ADDRESSING - REINSTATEMENT OF ADDRESSES IN PHONE BOOKS AND GOVERNMENT DATABASES  
MOVER: Cr B Beveridge (Charters Towers)  
SECONDER: Cr R Buchan (Balonne)  
“That the Local Government Association of Queensland lobby the State Government to have town/city names reinstated in addresses in telephone books and Government databases, particular emergency services.”  
CARRIED  

**Road, Transport and Infrastructure**  
NO. 44  
COOLOOLA  
LAND RESUMPTION FOR HIGHWAYS - PROMPT AND ADEQUATE COMPENSATION  
MOVER: Cr D Neilson (Cooloola)  
SECONDER: Cr K McDuff (Bundaberg)  
“That the Local Government Association of Queensland lobby the State Government to request that residents and property owners affected by proposed Highway By-passes by granted prompt and adequate compensation by the Department of Main Roads.”  
CARRIED
“C” MOTIONS

Governance

NO. 45  CLONCURRY/NQLGA

ELECTION - EXTENDING PERIOD FOR BY-ELECTIONS
MOVER: Cr D Egan (Douglas)  SECONDER: Cr R McCullough (Mt Isa))

“That the Local Government Association of Queensland lobby the State Government to seek amendment to section 253 of the Local Government Act to provide 18 months instead of the existing 12 months for the holding of by-elections in the case of vacancies created by the resignation of councillors.”

CARRIED

NO. 46  HERVEY BAY

PARLIAMENTARY PRIVILEGE - EXTENDED TO COUNCILLORS
MOVER: Cr B McNeven (Hervey Bay)  SECONDER: Cr P Giandomenico (Hinchinbrook))

“That the Local Government Association of Queensland lobby the State Government to extend the notion and protections of parliamentary privilege, that currently apply to members of the Queensland Legislative Assembly, to duly elected representatives of Local Government Agencies, i.e. Councillors.”

LOST

Environment and Health Services

NO. 47  CQLGA/CALLIOPE

PEST MANAGEMENT - MANAGING FLYING FOX COLONIES IN URBAN AREAS
MOVER: Cr R Bichsel (Calliope)  SECONDER: Cr R Rolfe (Bauhinia))

“That the Local Government Association of Queensland be requested to lobby the Queensland Government and Federal Government to amend legislation so that Local Governments can take action to move on colonies of flying foxes which are adversely impacting on residential amenity, causing health problems and property damage in residential areas.”

CARRIED
Community Development and Human Service

NO. 48 IPSWICH

LIQUOR LICENSING - COUNCIL ENDORSEMENT FOR APPLICATIONS ON COUNCIL OWNED OR CONTROLLED LAND
MOVER: Cr P Tully (Ipswich)

“That the Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ) make representation to the State Government to amend the Liquor Act 1992 to require council endorsement of any application for a general purpose permit where the permit is to be issued for council owned or controlled land.”

WITHDRAWN - REFERRED TO EXECUTIVE

LATE MOTION

NO. L/M 1 CABOOLTURE

PLANNING POWERS - LOCAL GOVERNMENT EXEMPTION FROM INFRASTRUCTURE CHARGES
MOVER: Cr C Chippendale (Caboolture) SECONDER: Cr J Leishman (Caboolture)

“That the Local Government Association of Queensland request the State Government to clarify and confirm Local Governments’ powers to exempt themselves from paying infrastructure charges under the Integrated Planning Act.”

CARRIED

NO. L/M 2 DOUGLAS

CONSTITUTIONAL REVIEW - REVIEW OF ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF FEDERAL, STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT
MOVER: Cr M Berwick (Douglas) SECONDER: Cr D Egan (Douglas)

“That this conference believes the current system of federal, state and local government has become outmoded and dysfunctional and calls on the Australian Government to facilitate a comprehensive independent review of the roles and responsibilities of all three spheres of government.”

BACKGROUND

The appalling approach to local government reform in Queensland, the upcoming federal election and the willingness of both parties to assist provides an unparalleled opportunity for real reform. The problem is that the Australian government has no legislative power to intervene but they do have the power of referendum and could run a comprehensive reform if they chose to underpin that referendum

The outmoded system of government Australia has inherited from a state centric constitution has become the single biggest obstacle to the environmental, social and economic function and future of Australia. All people who have to deal with the current system, at a local state and national level, are aware of its dysfunction but until now no one has had the political will to take this on. Let the Qld catastrophe be the trigger for this long overdue review.
The way forward would require a comprehensive approach to research, the dissemination of its findings, the engagement of all sectors of society and a willingness advocate an overhaul of the constitution through referendum. There should be an attempt to gain bipartisan support for this agenda.

We believe an agenda such as this provides the only hope of a reprieve or reassessment of local government boundaries in Queensland but more than that may dramatically improve service deliver and democracy at all levels in all states.

Matters to be considered in conducting the review:
(A) Summary of concerns:
• The current system is over-governed, wastes resources, duplicates effort, shifts costs and is focused on blame;
• There has been piecemeal approach to local government reform by all states;
• A universally poor approach to boundary change and amalgamation;
• The disempowerment of local communities;
• Depopulation and decline of rural, remote and inland areas;
• Overdevelopment and lack of integrated planning of coastal Australia;
• Inefficient delivery of services to regional and local communities; and
• Ongoing and unfunded devolution of responsibilities to local government.

(B) Principles to be considered:
• Empowerment of local and regional communities;
• Improved participatory democracy for communities and neighbourhoods;
• Regional and rural development;
• Fully integrated regional planning;
• Efficient delivery of services;
• Equitable and accountable collection and distribution of taxes;
• Alignment of commonwealth state and local government services;
• Direct funding to local governments and regions;
• Avoiding duplication, cost shifting and blame shifting; and
• Constitutional recognition of local government.

CARRIED

NO. L/M 3 TAMBO

REVIEW OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORM IMPLEMENTATION ACT – DIVISIONAL BOUNDARIES
MOVER: Cr D Davidson (Tambo) SECONDER: Cr P Maguire (Emerald))

“That the Local Government Association of Queensland call on the State Government to review the Local Government Reform Implementation Bill to enable councils which have been divided into single member divisions for the elections on 15 March 2008 to seek the option to go to those elections on the basis of either multi-member divisions or undivided.

CARRIED
Venue for 2009 Annual Conference:

THE NOMINATION WAS ACCEPTED BY CONFERENCE FOR THE 2009 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION ANNUAL CONFERENCE TO BE HOSTED BY MACKAY CITY COUNCIL.

The venue for the 2008 LGAQ Annual Conference is Cairns 1-4 September 2008.
ADDRESSES

Opening Address

*Hon Jim Lloyd MP*

*Minister for Local Government, Territories and Roads*

*Member for Robertson (NSW)*

Thank you very much Paul for that very kind introduction and thank you everyone for the opportunity to be here on what is a very, very important conference for all of you involved in local government. Firstly, I would like to pay tribute to each and every one of you for the work that you do in local government in Queensland. Without the dedication of our councillors and our paid and unpaid volunteers in local government, our community would not be the strong community that it is today. I have said many times that you are at the front line of our democracy and that is a very true statement. Where do people turn when they want something done in their local community, of course they turn to local government in the first instance. Over the past three years we have, with the Australian Government, I believe, strengthened the relationship between the Australian Government and local government in Australia. We have seen the signing of the Intergovernmental Agreement, by all the states and territories, ALGA and the Australian Government, in relation to cost shifting and that was an historic agreement, and it is one that we need to built on and strengthen over the years. We’ve seen the passing of the resolution in both Houses of the Australian Parliament recognising the role of local government and the importance of local government as a distinct level of governance in Australia. The Australian government has continued to significantly increase the amount of funds that go to local government. We now provide more than $2.1 billion to local government every year. Our grants have increased by 78% since the Howard Government came into office in 1996. The financial assistance grants that have been provided between 1974/75 and this current financial year, now stand at some $29.2 billion. In 07/08 we will provide $1,763 million in local financial assistance grants with $343 million of this going to local government in Queensland. These grants do maintain their real value in per capita terms and this is specified in the legislation. Over the five years, if we extrapolate that amount out, over the next five years the Australian Government will be providing to Queensland Local Government in excess of $1.7 billion compared to the best estimate that we could find for the Queensland Government between 2006/07, according to their website, of some $700 million. So the Australian Government is providing well in excess of double what the Queensland Government is providing. Also it is quite difficult to assess what exactly the Queensland Government is providing to local government because of the way that they structure their accounts and their budget process and I do call on the Beattie government to make it more transparent and more obvious of the amount of money that goes directly to local government. In Victoria and South Australia those state governments make it very clear and it is very easy to identify how much money is going directly to local government. Of course, I am aware that ALGA wants to lift the financial assistance grants to 1% of government revenue, we have asked the Productivity Commission to enquire into local governments own source revenue raising capacity and the Council of Australian Governments with consider local government funding arrangements after the Productivity Commission reports in April 2008. I remind you that ALGA is a member of the COAG and will have the opportunity to make its case in those discussions. Of course, I have received a great deal of correspondence from councils throughout Australia asking me to establish a fund to help renew vital community infrastructure such as libraries, town halls, recreation facilities and the like, and I was delighted that on 20 August 2007, the Prime Minister committed the government to maintaining, as appropriate, budget surpluses of at least 1% of GDP in future years, with the surpluses locked away in a fund so that only the earnings would be available for investment in economic and social infrastructure. The details of how this fund will be administered will be announced in coming weeks. The Australian Government has outlaid a huge amount of monies to assist Queensland communities recently affected by natural disasters. We provided an additional $141 million under the Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements following cyclones Larry and Monica in 2006. This payment was on top of $277 million that had already been provided to restore infrastructure, to provide re-establishment grants for businesses and primary producers and to provide income support for affected communities in Queensland. One of the things that I want to do if our government is re-elected and I am appointed in this same position, as Minister for Local Government, is to ensure that local government is aware of the assistance that is available from the Australian Government and I have found that as I have
travelled around Australia, we need to ensure that councillors really are up to speed with what help is there. The reason for that is of course, in the event of a natural disaster, who are the people that have to deal with the emergency in the first instance, it’s the local councils and so often invariably these disasters seem to happen in the middle of the night or on long weekends or weekends when there is limited other assistance immediately available and I think that we need to make sure that local councils have all the assistance that is readily available so that they can respond even quicker and better than they currently do. As part of our regular support for the regions, the Australian Government also provided $152.3 million in 07/08 to support regional development through a number of programs, including the Regional Partnership Program, targeted as assistance to particular regions of need through the Sustainable Regions Program and support for our area consultative committees. The government started the Regional Partnership Program in 2003, a program that has been constantly attacked by the Opposition, but a program that we strongly support in the Howard government and a program that will continue under our government because it is so successful. It has funded 1300 projects at a cost of more than $310 million. It is an important program for local government, in 06/07 about 39% of the successful applications under the Regional Partnership Program, were from local government at a cost of just under $40 million. We are also partners in the delivery of the biggest investment in land transport infrastructure ever made by any Australian Government, of course I am referring to AusLink, our land transport plan. AusLink overtook the old national highway into a wider network of roads and added the interstate railways to form the AusLink National Land Transport Network. Under the AusLink 1 the Australian Government is investing some $15.8 billion from June 2004 until June 2009. We are injecting more than $3.5 billion into Queensland road and rail infrastructure projects in the first five years of AusLink, which is nearly double the spending of the preceding five years. Some of those key projects include over $1 billion committed to projects on the Ipswich Motorway, $255 million on the Logan Motorway Interchange, which is now under construction, more than $800 million on the Bruce Highway, which of course is the backbone for traffic along Queensland’s coastal corridor, and big investments in outback links, notably the Barkley Highway where work is nearly complete on more than $116 million worth of improvements. Looking ahead, the Australian Government will invest some $22.3 billion from 2009/10 to 2013/14 under AusLink 2, the second stage of our plan. This is again a 41% increase on the current program.

Roads to Recovery, of course is a very valuable program and one of the most popular with local government. It was introduced by the former Deputy Prime Minister, John Anderson, to help councils replace roads and bridges that were nearing the ends of their economic lives. Since 2001, councils have built more than 25,000 projects on local roads that Australians use every day. The program has provided such benefits that the Australian Government has extended it to June 2009. In the four years from July 2005 to June 2009 we will be providing $1.23 billion for local roads. There is hardly a community in this country that will not benefit from these funds. We have provided a further $307.5 million to councils in June 2006 to supplement the Roads to Recovery. Over $562 million has been provided to Queensland councils in Roads to Recovery and supplementary Roads to Recovery funding to June 2009. In 07/08 Queensland councils have been allocated $62.5 million under the Roads to Recovery Program. I am delighted that in the last budget the Australian Government announced that it would extend this program until 2014 and furthermore the annual funding for the Roads to Recovery will increase from $307.5 million now to $350 million a year from 2009/10. This increase will, of course, help councils offset the rising costs of road construction and enable them to fix even more roads. The allocation of funding to each council should be announced in early 2009, council allocations will be based on the recommendations of the Local Government Grants Commission for the local roads component of the Financial Assistance Grants.

The AusLink Black Spot Program funds safety works like roundabouts, crash barriers, street lights and places where there have been serious crashes or where they are likely to occur. The Howard Government re-introduced the program in 1996. By June 2008 it will have fixed some 4200 road hazards around Australia. We estimate that it will have saved at least 130 lives and prevented around some 6000 serious crashes. In 07/08 we are spending about $8.9 million on the Black Spot Program in Queensland. More than $97.6 million has been allocated to eliminating over 750 dangerous crash locations around Queensland since our government re-introduced the Black Spot Program in 1996. We will be increasing the Black Spot Funding to $60 million a year from 2009/10 to 2014 under AusLink 2. This is again an increase of some 33%, because many of the accidents occur on country roads, about half that funding will go to regional areas.
We are also providing an extra $300 million for the Strategic Regional Program across the five years of AusLink 2. This will help councils to fund transport infrastructure projects that will boast their local economies and create jobs. The extra $300 million will be allocated in two new $150 million application rounds to be held in 2009/10 and 2011/12. We originally invested $220 million in the Strategic Regional Program, allowing 107 projects to be funded, there were so many good projects on offer that we could not fund them all under that existing allocation and recognising this unmet need, the government allocated an extra $250 million in 06/07 for the program to fund additional projects. Late last year the government announced that the Strategic Regional Program funding of $35.7 million for 23 road projects in Queensland, more funding than any other state in Australia. From the additional funding announced in the May budget, a further 102 local road infrastructure projects have received funding from the Australian Government. In Queensland, this means that 26 additional projects have received a total of $83.1 million, once again, more funding than any other state in Australia. This brings the total commitment to Queensland under the Strategic Regional Program, to $123.8 million, over a quarter of the Strategic Regional Program Funding, under AusLink, will go directly to Queensland councils. The Strategic Regional Program is yet another demonstration that we have confidence in local government and confidence in your ability to deliver services quickly and effecttively to your regions and to your local communities.

Ladies and gentlemen you can see that the Australian Government has a great deal of confidence in local government, we have invested greatly in local government, we will continue to invest very significantly in local government and we have built and strengthened the relationship between the Australian Government and local government, but ladies and gentlemen all those gains are now being placed at risk by the Queensland Beattie government. We have stood firm with you against the process that the Queensland Government has undertaken in their draconian push to amalgamate your councils from more than 150 down to 72. We have believed that the process is undemocratic, it provided for no opportunity for review, no consultation with the communities and we are very pleased that the legislation that we have introduced into the Australian Parliament, to allow the Australian Electoral Commission to access the commonwealth rolls for the purpose of conducting plebiscites, has forced the Beattie government to back down on their draconian amendments to the legislation, their outrageous amendments to the legislation, which said that any council or councillor that simply wanted to allow their communities to have a voice, to have saw, could be dismissed. I have noticed that the Queensland Local Government Minister, Andrew Fraser, has made some comments in relation to offering false hope, that nothing will change and the Queensland Government will proceed with its forced amalgamations in Queensland. Well, I have a message for Andrew Fraser, I don’t believe he really understands the political will of the people and how politics works. I remember a few years ago as a service station operator in Gosford, long before I ever thought about entering politics, and we had an issue with the then state liberal government in NSW, they had closed the old Pacific Highway and I organised a petition, a petition which contained many thousands of signatures which was presented to the Australian Parliament and was also presented to the NSW Parliament, and we changed the NSW governments mind over that issue, and it was simply people power that did that. That road now is an important link that was reconstructed and rebuilt and I guess in many ways it is the reason that I was elected as the member for Robertson and now have the honour of being the Minister for Local Government, Territories and Roads. So the message to Andrew Fraser is, do not underestimate the will of the people because politics is about people, you are entitled to have a say, your government whether it’s the Australian Government or the Queensland Government, needs to listen to the community because we are, after all, here to do the bidding of the community and to make decisions in consultation with the community, so we will stand with you in this issue and we will continue to stand up against the forced amalgamations. It is not that the Australian Government doesn’t believe that amalgamations, where appropriate, should not take place. You were undertaking your Triple S process that was well down the track, the Size, Shape and Sustainability Process, it was well underway and the Beattie government should completely scrap the process that they’ve undertaken now, start again, go back to consultation and get the process right.

Just in conclusion I want to mention another very, I guess, controversial issue and that is the issue of Constitutional Recognition. I have said on many occasions, previously, that I was not prepared to look at Constitutional Recognition, unless someone could convince me that there was advantages to local government and whether we could actually make a difference for local government. The happenings in Queensland have caused me to reconsider that view, to whether we can in some way strengthen the role of local government. But it is not as simple as just making some populist statement to say that we are
going to have a referendum on Constitutional Recognition at a certain point in time. We need to examine what that actually means. I am sure that many of you in this room really do not quite understand what it would mean or what advantages it would mean to local government. Does putting a line in the Constitution acknowledging the role of local government in its own right make a difference? Will it have the support of every state and territory, will local government still be part of the legislative process of state governments, does the Australian Government, even if there is amendment to the Constitution, have the role to override the legislation that has created all your local governments. Will every state and territory premier be prepared to give up a share of the GST funding, remembering that you cannot change the GST Agreement without the support and acknowledgement of every single state and territory premier in Australia. Will state governments walk away from local government and not provide any funding and expect the Australian Government to fund every need of local government, if local government is acknowledged in the Constitution. Does it provide you with extra protection and the point that I make is that having every single government of one political persuasion does not give you that protection, you have seen that in Queensland here where the Australian Government has been prepared to stand up against the Beattie government and give you some right of reply, some protection. Should the Labor opposition be elected to government, and should Kevin Rudd become the Prime Minister, and should you have a referendum of Constitutional Recognition, does that give you any further protection. What happens if a future Labor government, a federal Labor government, decide to move against local government the way the states have done in Queensland, would the states roll over and allow all the Labor governments in Australia to attack local government without any protection. There are many, many unanswered questions and I am certainly prepared to engage in serious discussions with the Australian Local Government Association and the LGAQ and to work with all of you to ensure that we have the best possible local government arrangement in Australia for you. I have supported you for the last three and half years as Local Government Minister, for as long as I have the honour of being Local Government Minister, I will support and acknowledge the role that you provide, I will continue to seek additional resources for you so that you can provide the services which our communities expect you to do and I hope, and I’ve already made it clear, that if we are re-elected to government at the next federal election, that I would be very honoured if the Prime Minister asked me to continue in this role.

Previously, we had three local Government Ministers in three years, before I was appointed, and I made the point then to Paul Bell and to others that I would be seeking to provide some stability so that we could build that relationship and I hope that that relationship can continue and strengthen for many years to come.

Thank you ladies and gentlemen.

Chair

On behalf the councils and our communities, we want to thank you for the incentives that you have given us in regards to roads and roads funding, the $250 million extra for the Strategic Roads Component in this years budget, which was allocated again prior to 30 June, was significantly well received and it is initiatives like that that certainly can make so much of a difference to the assets that we do own. On behalf of our communities I think local government owns 80% of the road network in Australia. We need to have those sorts of injections of capital into our road networks to make sure the economic growth of Australia continues and that the local government road network plays its part in that economic growth.

Cr Oaks

You know me well, we’ve had a few tête-à-têtes over the last twelve months or so but before I get to my question I would like to tell you this, I trust your government, I trust you and your government, at this particular time and for the last four or five months I have had quite a profound distrust in the Beattie government. So I would like to let you know that for a start. Now I would like to get to my question, it is in relation to the old issue you and I have had many discussions about, it is the Peak Downs Highway, now I think you do acknowledge it is a road of regional significance, you also continue to tell me it is a state government road. Well my question to you Jim is that if you get back into government in October/November, would you consider taking the Peak Downs Highway off the state government because they have demonstrated, in my mind, a clear incompetence in keeping that particular at a level of construction that it deserves, in terms of its national significance. I would just like to repeat that, it is a road, in my mind, of national significance and I do not believe the Beattie government should have
control of that and I would like you to do something about that after you get back into government in October this year. Would you consider that please?

Hon Jim Lloyd

Thanks Bob. Look I do know the Peak Downs Highway well, it is a state highway, but it is one that we have acknowledged through our Strategic Regional Funding, that we have provided some assistance to the state government. It is very interesting that as I travel around Australia I get these sorts of requests from every single state in Australia, that our state government in not providing the funds that they should be providing for whether it is council roads or state government roads, so there is an expectation for the Australian government to step in and prop up the states. There is a limit to what we can do, but certainly with programs such as the Strategic Regional Program, we can look at applications on an application basis to assist the state governments. But we are not going to let the state government walk away from their responsibilities. At the end of the day, state governments put forward their policies and their proposals to the electorate and the Queensland electorate elect a government, state government must be responsible for something, they must stand up for the things that they are funded for, the GST funds that they are provided and the additional resources that we are providing on the AusLink Network which should free up funds for them to honour their obligations to the community. If they are not honouring their obligations to the community, whether it is in Queensland or in any other state or territory, then people need to consider whether they should have a different government in the states and territories, but not constantly ask the commonwealth to come and bail out the states every time. But I am happy to continue to assist where we can on the Peak Downs Highway.

Robert Buchan, Mayor of Balonne Shire

Good morning, welcome to Queensland. I have a question, there has been a fair bit of talk about our councils being inefficient and too many CEOs and too much waste of many and all that sort of stuff and we had to be amalgamated to save. There have also been questions about whether or not we could save by getting rid of the state governments and you could just send the money directly to us. It is probably not going to happen but could you just tell us what would be the procedure if we were going to get rid of the state governments so you could deal directly with us. Thank you very much.

Hon Jim Lloyd

Thank you for that question. It is a serious question because it does raise the issue of the relationship between local, state and federal governments and I believe that if we are going to have a serious discussion about Constitutional Recognition, that that discussion should also involve the responsibilities and the roles of the state governments around Australia, because as I said there are more and more people coming to us, asking us, as the Australian government, to bail out the state governments. Every time we do we get criticised, you know if we want to run a hospital in Tasmania we get criticised for that, and yet it is the communities that are calling on us to get involved. We have the Councils of Lord Mayors coming to Canberra and wanting us to get involved in urban public transport, which again is clearly a state government, in most cases and in this case Brisbane City Council also have a role to play, but it is their responsibility. So I think that if we are going to have a serious look at Constitutional Recognition we ought to have a serious look about the roles and responsibilities of all level of governments in Australia.

Andrew Champion, Caloundra City

I just have to say I am a bit disappointed in your comments about recognition of local government. I have been hearing it for twenty years. You have a federal election coming up in the next couple of months; Kate Lundy is going to be addressing this conference later on. I think you need to come out with something more than just entering into dialogue with us, I think you actually need to come up with a vision.
Hon Jim Lloyd

Thanks for those comments and look I understand what you are saying but the point I was making was it is very easy to say platitudes. It would be very easy for me to say now that you know we are happy to go forward the same as Kate Lundy has said. But there is no point in doing that unless you do enter into serious discussions, there is no point in proposing to go to the Australian people with a referendum unless you do have support of the states and territories and all sides of politics, because otherwise a referendum will fail and if you take this issue to the Australian public a third time, and it fails, you will set back local government again for decades. I am not prepared to risk that, I want to build the relationship that we have with local government and enter into very construction dialogue, not just talk, to see if there are areas where we can genuinely assist and make a real difference for local government, not just political platitudes which sound good and maybe might get a few votes in the short term.

Cr Neville Pootchemunka, Aurukun Shire Council one of the remote communities in Cape York Peninsular

I have not got a question for you but just a message to be delivered to your government about recognising the remote indigenous communities as being part of the Local Government of Queensland. The roads that the government are more or less taking care of, the state roads, it is not only the rural and mainstream communities access but coming from indigenous communities perspective, that we definitely have to be recognised, our roads have to be maintained. For example for the tip of Cape York heading right down to Cairns takes about nearly nine to twelve hours driving and by the time that we get to some of the mainstream communities such as Cairns and a few more others, our exhaust pipes are almost gone and so has the suspension. So I guess this has to be considered and the people of the remote communities are booked by the highway patrols. Thank you.

Hon Jim Lloyd

Thanks very much for those comments and I guess it just re-enforces what Paul said, that there are not many parts of Australia that I have not visited. I was up in your area about three weeks ago, up in Seisia and Bamaga and Torres Strait, because I am a great believer that the people in isolated communities and small rural and regional towns deserve the same representation as those who live in the major cities in Australia. I spend a lot of time in those smaller communities, and yes the Peninsular Development Road does need work, and it is one that the Australian government has already put a significant amount of money into and the Prime Minister, when he was there last time, announced an additional $10 million to the Peninsular Development Road. It is very interesting that we all take for granted our tarred and sealed roads and we all complain about the congestion and the fact that we need to duplicate roads, but when you get down to the basics of many of these isolated indigenous communities, all they are asking for is a road that, as you said, does not break your car over every trip, you end up with the exhaust falling out and every passenger being jarred along the way for several hours, and we will continue to work with the Queensland government and continue through programs, such as the Strategic Regional Program, to assist not only urban areas but those very isolated communities, such as yours.

Chair

Delegates I would just like to on your behalf present a bound copy of our Conference Proceedings to Minister Lloyd for being with us to launch our conference, on such a positive note, about the federal governments investment into local communities and particularly into the roads and transport areas of local communities, as well as the continuation of the federal assistance grants. Can I say at the last round table we had all of the state presidents of local government with Jim and Jim did say that he would take back to his colleagues that there was an issue in regards to the escalation factor of federal assistance grants. This is the first time we have had any positive response in regards to at least a federal government looking at that issue. There are lots good, positive messages coming back from the federal arena in regards to local government, about involving us and continuing to involve us in the new ways of service delivery and Jim certainly played a strong part in being our advocate at the federal level, and I want to thank you for that Jim. It has been a very good partnership, we have worked very closely together and from local government in Queensland and our local communities that have benefited from the direct investment into local communities, particularly in the those roads and transport areas, thank you very much and we wish you all the best in the forthcoming election.
Presidential Address

Cr Paul Bell AM
President LGAQ and ALGA

Mayor of the host council of Gold Coast and fellow LGAQ Executive Member, Cr Ron Clarke MBE; Federal Minister for Local Government, Territories and Roads, the Hon Jim Lloyd MP; State Minister for Local Government, Planning and Sport, the Hon Andrew Fraser MP; Shadow Minister for Local Government Mr Howard Hobbs; other members of State Parliament; ULGA President Cr Tony Mooney; ALGWA State President Cr Judy Peters; LGMA State President Mr Gary Stevenson; our keynote speaker Sir Peter Gershon from the United Kingdom; other distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen; welcome to this historic conference.

This morning I will be short and to the point, but that doesn’t mean there won’t be some plain speaking. Certainly, there will be no glossing-over of the important issues.

On behalf of all present, thanks to the Gold Coast City Council for agreeing to host this year’s event. It’s been seven years since we last visited Australia’s playground and it is most fitting we return here to mark the centenary of the Surf Lifesaving movement in Australia - let’s all give all of our surf lifesaving friends a great round of applause for a century of service to us.

Thank you also to the Hon Jim Lloyd MP for opening our conference and his great support on both federal road funding and of course for using federal constitutional and legislative power to restore the fundamental democratic right to our communities to have a vote on the future of local governance boundaries and arrangements. Thank you Jim and thank you especially to the Prime Minister.

Ladies and gentlemen - as I said last night at the beach - I want the next three days to be a celebration of what’s good about Local Government, about your councils, communities and their achievements.

This conference will not be a wake. It will not be a descent into verbal warfare with the State Government and it will not be about arguing between ourselves. Be proud, be very proud of the people you so passionately represent, proud of who you are and proud of what you have done.

Despite what Mr Beattie and Mr Fraser say, Queenslanders think you are doing a mighty fine job as a group, a much better job than the State Government; a claim supported by the most recent biennial Community Attitude Survey, the results of which will be unveiled by Channel 7’s Sunrise co-presenter Melissa Doyle tomorrow afternoon.

Friends I am not here to give you a blow-by-blow account of what has transpired since April 17 this year, when forced amalgamations were foisted upon us and our communities without the courtesy of any prior notice. Millions of words have been written and spoken by men, women and children across the length and breadth of Queensland and indeed Australia. The issue continues to boil today and it will for weeks and months to come by virtue of the right we have deservedly won to hold federally-run and funded plebiscites.

I will make some observations. The first is that this was a done deal from the moment it was announced, probably before. The whisper was 70 councils, we predicted 60-70 councils based on the Local Government Reform Commission’s terms of reference and that’s what we got.

Secondly, this issue is much larger than council boundary changes. It’s a full on frontal assault on Local Government. It’s an attempt to limit the influence of Mayors and councillors and weaken Local Government’s power. When you hear the words “stronger councils” don’t believe a word of it. It’s spin, pure and simple.

For some time now, this State Government has carried an agenda of attacking local government elected members. Attacking your rights to stand for higher levels of office. Attacking how you get elected to council, what you get paid, whether you are full time or part time. Attacking your divisional discretionary project funds and - potentially - even the control of your workforces.
Whether you are pro or anti-amalgamation, you should be very worried by these attacks on your rights and abilities to properly represent and lead your community. Don’t take my word for it, recently, Dr Scott Prasser of the University of the Sunshine Coast, said the measures were all about payback and power. I will quote him verbatim:

“The Beattie Government’s motivations for amalgamation have little to do with promoting efficiency by creating larger councils. Nor is amalgamation needed, as the government contended, because local government boundaries have not changed for 100 years. This is a fiction, as there have been many alterations over the years, including some major ones made by the Goss Labor Government a decade ago. Local Government amalgamation is about the exercise of power. It is about a State Government anxious to gain control over land, water, housing, and environment issues and to access a new revenue resources, now so important in Queensland’s burgeoning urbanised south-east corner and coastal regions.

It is about having control over local government that has enjoyed considerable leeway for some time. And it is about payback, given the way local government forced the Beattie Government to back down on some policy initiatives in the past. Indeed, local government has often been the only effective critic and brake on the Beattie Government”.

I couldn’t have said it better myself. Remember, these remarks are by an academic who has not always been favourable in his comments about the LGAQ or councils.

What riles with me – really irritates me – are the attempts by Messrs Beattie and Fraser to denigrate elected members and councils. This duo had to put the boot in. So-called reform wasn’t enough - they had to add insult to injury.

It’s been, to say the least, hypocritical and outrageous from a State Government which has a far worse track record on service delivery than any council in this auditorium today. Way, way, worse. HOW DARE THEY!

This State Government does nothing wrong, just ask them. They blame-shift and blame-shift and blame-shift some more. Ask the poor old south-east Queensland councils what’s happening on institutional reform of their water assets and businesses. It was all councils’ fault, the SEQ water crisis. The State Government didn’t count on the PriceWaterhouse Coopers report it commissioned to find fault with council’s performance being leaked. Finding no fault, in fact, the councils did good work, the report said. So said deputy chair of SEQ water Bob Grice - who is also the government’s adviser on probity - just two weeks ago, when he properly pointed the finger of blame where it was deserved - George Street.

For the record, councils did have a go at self reform - but after only 14 months, the State Government pulled the pin. SSS didn’t fail - it wasn’t given the chance to succeed.

Has this been a tough fight, absolutely? Is the LGAQ for the turning? unequivocally NO. We are battered and bruised, but our heads are not lowered.

As President of this great organisation, I will defend the decisions you make at these conferences with every ounce of energy in my body, and then some. We will run the race to the finishing post - true to our creed. We will see referendums, polls, or plebiscites, call them what you may, held in communities where councils request them - democracy can and must prevail.

The LGAQ and the Australian Electoral Commission have formed the view that a full postal ballot is the way to go and I’m recommending to councils the actual polling date should be Saturday October 20, 2007. It is best that there is one common date across the State.

Neither I nor the LGAQ will be cowered into submission by threats of any sort from Mr Beattie or Mr Fraser. Many councils and councillors have put their jobs and personal finances on the line, on a fundamental point of principle. If that’s self-interest Mr Premier, then thank God for self-interest. Clearly, despite Mr Fraser’s comments on radio a few weeks ago, that with respect to politicians that “it takes one to know one”, nothing could have been further from the truth, Mayors and councillors are better than that.
The Executive and I fully accept some councils want to get on with amalgamations and we respect those decisions. LGAQ has launched R Cubed - Reform, Reclaim and Rebuild. A great deal of information has been sent to councils already to support you through the change process - weekly bulletins have gone to some 8,000 people in Local Government over the last month.

LGAQ will partner with councils who require assistance, right through this amalgamation process. Your Association has a proud history of innovation and leadership - none of that will change. Indeed we are all for reform - good, sensible and democratic reform and we have asked the author of British Local Government efficiency reviews, Sir Peter Gershon, to address this conference on doing our jobs better as councils. That’s why this year’s conference has a theme of “Local Government Providing Best Value”. We will look forward not backwards. We will stand by our members.

Understandably, you might think the entire year gone was dominated by amalgamation, but of course other things - good things - did happen.

I’m proud to say as both ALGA and LGAQ President, both organisations achieved a great outcome on federal road funding to councils - an extension and increase in the size of the annual Roads to Recovery program - more strategic roads initiative money - more Blackspots money - all up $1.75 billion of federal money for local roads. Let’s give Jim Lloyd a big clap.

On another front, I managed to get the issue of Local Government securing access to a federal growth tax on Canberra’s agenda. For the first time ever it was discussed at a COAG meeting in April this year. I am confident that this push is now bearing fruits, even if it is in other areas of funding.

Many of you would be aware that the Federal Government has announced a major national building program last week - where half of all future federal budget surpluses will go into a fund the interest on which will fund community and council non-roads, water and sewerage infrastructure projects, that is, libraries, parks, community buildings, sporting facilities, etc.

The tip is the program could be equal in size to the wonderful Roads to Recovery program and grow in similar fashion, giving us a direct link to growth in the economy. The LGAQ and the ALGA have been doing their job - securing more resources for members.

With respect to planning, the developers didn’t get their way on infrastructure charges or elected member rights to represent their constituents in determining development applications. LGAQ won those battles.

LGAQ did a great deal of work in addressing skill shortages in our sphere of government - the Think Local campaign was just two weeks away from its media launch when forced amalgamation hit us amidships. Promoting a career in Local Government just didn’t have the same attraction and the $1m program was shelved. Time permitting, we will run the Think Local ads for you during the conference.

Industrial Relations has been a minefield for the LGAQ and councils alike. Whether they are pro or anti-WorkChoices, councils and their workforces have become the meat in the sandwich. The whole issue is a complex legal minefield. As in all things, your Association stands up for its Member Councils, and without being an advocate for WorkChoices, we have, and will continue to defend the rights of councils to follow the law of the land, all the way to the High Court if need be.

There is one thing you can count on if a council is in trouble or needs help, the LGAQ will be there - shoulder-to-shoulder - with you.

It’s been an amazingly busy year for the LGAQ. I have kept the promise I made to you when I took office and hopefully will have visited every council at least twice by March 15 next year. Thank you for your great hospitality and friendship when I and LGAQ staff have visited over the last year.

LGAQ staff continues to do an incredible amount of good work for our members. Over the last year on average they answered 880 phone calls a day from you, plus responded to 542,000 emails, 4220 items of written correspondence, made over 100 formal submissions to state and federal governments, attended 60 of your district, regional or professional meetings, answered 4,500 requests for industrial relations or human resource management advice, produced 364 circulars, 120 news releases and 11 feature media
articles. Better still they are passionate and very committed supporters of Local Government. Give them a clap folks.

Clearly, the world could be different going forward, potentially with fewer councils and fewer members of the Association. The LGAQ’s rules, voting and subscription formula will need to change before March 15 next year. Timing of the Reform Commission’s decision and the State Government’s response, just weeks before this event, did not permit us to discuss changes here - we can’t rush such a critical decision. The Executive have agreed to hold a special one-day conference before the commencement of the Christmas school holidays at a date yet to be fixed. I can promise you the widest possible consultation on any proposed new arrangements so we can come to a consensus view on this matter.

In closing, I want to thank my fellow office bearers Crs Ann Bennison, Bob Abbot and Brendan McNamara, and indeed all the Executive for their efforts on your behalf over the last year. All have stood up for you when it counted.

To those of you who are not standing again next year, thank you so much for your great efforts over many years. To those recontesting - simply, I wish you good luck and I hope to see your happy smiling faces on March 16 next year. To all the CEOs who will be out of a job over the next year, thank you for your efforts - we honour you today as well.

Finally colleagues, I will ensure LGAQ continues to do its very best to protect and promote Local Government’s interest over the next year. Once again let’s celebrate all that is good about Local Government over the next three days.

**Keynote Address: “Providing Best Value in Local Government”**

*Sir Peter Gershon CBE FREng*  
Chairman of Premier Farnell plc and Symbian: London; Great Britain

Due to copyright laws this speech was unable to be published.

**Address: “Asset Management”**

*Mr Roger Byrne*  
International Manager, GHD Asset Management Group

Due to copyright laws this speech was unable to be published.

**Address: “Housing Affordability - An Elephant in the Room”**

*Mr Chris Richardson*  
Director, Access Economic Pty Ltd

Due to copyright laws this speech was unable to be published.
Address: “The Best I Can Be”
Ms Allana Corbin
_The first woman to circumnavigate the mainland of Australia, solo in a helicopter_

Due to copyright laws this speech was unable to be published.

Address: “Virtual Local Government - Shared Services the Way Forward”
Professor Percy Allan AM
Research Director, Review Today Pty Ltd

Paul Bell, ladies and gentlemen, good morning. Let me put a proposition to you today, and that is that virtual local government rather than council mergers, is the answer to achieving local democracy with administrative efficiency. Local government reform should recognise two realities, one is political the other administrative. Politically, small is beautiful, residents want local not regional government, residents want micro-solutions not master plans. Administratively, large is necessary for some things however, most council functions do not need to be big to be efficient but some functions do benefit from size such as works and maintenance, rates and payroll processing, database management and so forth. Why is small beautiful? Smaller councils allow better access to elected councillors and senior administrators have a better knowledge of local conditions and opinions so can better target services and can consider local issues for example footpaths, parks, projects and so forth at council meetings. Also smaller councils are forced to competitively outsource many services which bigger councils may inappropriately do in-house, they have flatter administrative structures so can coordinate different tasks more easily, and they are less likely to become hostage to restrictive work practices, something which should not be underestimated. There are many examples, as shown here, where local polling shows that mergers are extremely unpopular because people want local government to be local, not regional. They want their councils to re-enforce their sense of place. What has been the legacy of amalgamations, in Victoria the Kennett government promised 20% savings and got only 8.5% which was mainly from compulsory competitive tenders, not mergers, and there was a public backlash and probably cost his government office. Since then, also council rates have come back into line with other states, they increased quite strongly in the last ten years. In South Australia, the government promised 17.4% savings, got only 2.3%, rates escalated after a temporary freeze and the public became disenchanted. In Tasmania, the shift from tiny to medium size councils had mixed results, a further attempt at achieving bigger councils backfired and thereto there was a public backlash. In NSW, mergers were rejected by residents, when asked, but it still occurred in some cases and not in others. I will not go through these in detail. The amalgamation movement is based on the theory of economies of scale, it contends that the average cost per unit of output will fall the bigger an organisation becomes. Yet it also recognises that beyond a certain point, diseconomies of scale set in, the result is a U shaped average cost curve to volume curve as shown here, so as you can see in this chart as you become bigger to begin with, your average costs of production of servicing fall and eventually they start rise, this is the basis of micro-economics, if you pick up any micro-economic text. In this U shaped curve, the first bit, the economies bit where you get more economies with scale, that is due to basically three things, the vision of labour and specialisation of tasks, increased scope for shared services, increased dimensional capacity. The diseconomies that arise after a certain point where the curve points up, are due to control span limits, coordination complexity and communication, information network requirements. The father of Big is Better was Ronald Coase, who back in the 1930s set out to explore the new phenomenon of large corporations which had emerged in the 1920s, and he said that large organisations such as companies make sense when the transaction costs associated with buying things on the market, that is from others, exceed the fixed costs of establishing and maintaining a bureaucracy. That was his reasoning why large corporations were developing large bureaucracies back in the 1920s, 1930s and that held through the 1950s and 1960s but as you will see in a moment it has broken down in the last thirty years. Yet the notion that things have to be big to be efficient has fallen into disrepute even within large corporations themselves, as I said in the last twenty, thirty years. This is what the economist magazine had to say back in 2001 and it still holds true:
Modern technology is shifting the balance of advantage away from firms and towards markets. The current goal is to focus on the views things at which they undoubtedly excel and to hand over everything else to equally focused specialists.

I will speak a little bit more about this but large corporations are not what you see, these big brand names like General Electrics, behind them are highly fragmented organisations. That is the only way they have survived. What is the research evidence on efficiency and size, and this is what the leading academics abroad and also in Australia have to say about efficiency and size, specifically in local government.

Boyne back in 1992 said “Concentrated structures were associated with higher spending than more fragmented local government and that there may be diseconomy of scale factors operating that outweigh the technical benefits of larger units”.

Jones, talking about Australia, said in 1993 “It was once thought that small local governments allowed more community control, but were more costly than larger units, now the view is that smaller units are the most democratic and participative and also the most efficient. Research shows that larger units tend to spend more per head than smaller units, even with the same general population characteristics”. Sancton, again an overseas writer in North America, “By 1991 the issue had been thoroughly investigated and there was precious little evidence to support the consolidation position”.

Coming back to Australia, the Australian Institute of Urban Studies investigated the subject in 1999 and concluded “When combined with empirical evidence from other overseas, the economic and public policy literature supports the contention that there is not a single or standard size that is appropriate for local authorities”.

Ron Lochoson, the guru in America on this subject, had this to say in 1991 “Fragmentation is associated not with higher but lower government spending per capita, numerous empirical studies have found this relationship. Moreover the relationship holds up when indicators of public demand for services are controlled, supporting an inference that fragmentation is positively related to efficiency. Fragmented metropolitan areas tend to get more services from less spending”.

The favourite academic of the amalgamation movement in Australia is Stephen Soul, yet few in this camp appear to have read is doctoral thesis which favours mergers for political reasons, not economic ones. Stephen’s basic underlying support for amalgamation is simply that it is easier to implement urban consolidation in metropolitan areas in bigger councils where the local influence can be submerged. Indeed Soul’s research on the relationship between average operating costs, average rates and council size in metropolitan Sydney bears outs what others have found overseas. So let me quote him on this, in terms of costs he says “Increasing population yields a lower level of gross expenditure per capita, however, once population reaches a point between 31,500 and 100,000 increasing population size results in higher levels of gross expenditure per capita”. Here is the chart from his thesis. The only reason he has really got a U curve at the beginning is because he included the city of Sydney, which is a very special case, it has very high costs per capita because there are few residents in the centre of Sydney, but there are a lot of business rate payers. If you left that out, as you can see, it looks pretty flat with a bit of a rise at the end. This is what Stephen has to say about rates “The line of best fit indicates the average rate per residential assessment amongst NSW jurisdictions rising consistently throughout of the population of jurisdictions and will continue to rise to at least 2.3 million residential assessments. Here you can see it, the bigger your council, the higher your rates.

The reason that I’m very sceptical about mergers is that when I chaired and directed the NSW Local Government Enquiry in 2006, we found that except for the smallest councils, under 8000 in rural, and I’ll come to those in a moment, there was no conclusive evidence that mergers would reduce unit costs and even in these cases the lack of population density rather than size appeared to be the main cause of higher operating costs per resident. Nevertheless, the enquiry saw benefits from resource sharing between councils, especially for skilled staff in short supply such as planners. Our enquiry found that where the NSW Government had encouraged mergers it had also imposed legislative requirements that merged councils must have no forced redundancies for three years, employee terms and conditions must be preserved, staff may not be relocated outside the boundaries of the former council area if they claim hardship and pre-existing employment levels must be retained in rural areas. This was to stop mergers from being used to drive efficiency gains and yet the mergers were justified in first place as being for
better efficiency. This chart is actually wrong, I imposed the wrong chart, is should be showing urban council costs, in fact it shows rural council costs I’ll come to in a moment. But if I had the correct chart here, you would see that there is an insignificant correlation between size and cost of urban councils, that is Sydney metropolitan councils and larger urban regional councils in NSW. There is only a 24% correlation which statistically speaking is not significant. But let’s turn to the rural one which is actually this one, the Local Government Enquiry did find a correlation between smaller rural councils and higher costs. You can see it in this chart, the smaller the population, the higher the average cost and there was a 47% correlation for that which is statistically significant whereas for urban councils it was on 24%, which is not statistically significant. However, this is what a lot of the amalgamation movement bases itself around is this kind of chart. When we dug deeper, we found that this correlation was being driven by population dispersal rather than population smallness. When we correlated the dispersal of a council’s population, that is population density with the average cost of a council, you can see here that where councils have very low population density, they have very high costs. Indeed the correlation is nearly 73% and that is what is driving these charts, showing for rural councils that there is a correlation between size and cost. The true correlation underlying it is really being driven between councils which have very large areas and small population, have very high costs whereas shires that have bigger populations and small areas have lower costs. There is of course a solution to this problem and it has been tried in China where I’ve done a lot of consulting when they flooded the Yangtze River and they had to move millions of people, they were able to also improve their council efficiency, they prodded them into regional centres, that was compulsory, and they moved them into these towns and sure enough their council costs went down the more people they herded into cities. Now for some reason we can’t do that in democracies, but other than that if we want to get some efficiency in this area I would suggest the state government get people into regional cities, get them out of these smaller towns because you might get some efficiencies then and have a look at the Yangtze model.

Now, we’ll turn to NSW Local Government Enquiry as well, we recommended that the DLG and LGSA jointly undertake a functional analysis to determine which, if any of the services that councils deliver, would benefit from being provided by contractually based resource sharing or outsourcing arrangements, including jointly owned shared service centres and sizeable third party providers such as regional electricity authorities. Work that my company reviewed at Woollahra Council in Sydney in 2001 showed that certain activities benefited from being done on a large scale while others needed to be done on a much smaller scale and for some, scale wasn’t a factor. For instance routine processing such as rate notices, paying invoices did benefit from scale, from doing that on a bigger scale. On the other hand, case by case determination such as new traffic signs required much closer place management and there are actually inefficiencies of trying to consolidate all that. For capital works and maintenance, for the capital works again scale can be important for footpaths, lawn mowing and so forth. For corporate services it actually varied, normally scale can be important but there are also certain things like writing policy and so forth where scale may not be important if it is very local specific.

Functions suitable for outsourcing to shared service centres or independent specialist providers tend to exhibit these characteristics, they have something called low core capability, in other words they are strong on process rather than policy discretionary elements. High supplier availability, low task complexity, high scale economies, highly specialised IT and low asset specificity in other words generic assets or ones with a short life span. In the Local Government Enquiry we surveyed 28 council General Managers and identified several activities where rural and regional councils could either pool or share services and they included, fire protection, emergency services, mobile libraries, health administration and inspection, noxious plant eradication, museums, water and waste water, tourism and area promotion and sale yards and markets.

So what matters for efficiency in today’s automated and interconnected economy, the truth is that it is speed not size, I’ll repeat that it is speed not size, that is what the modern management literature tells corporations and governments. Speed not size is what determines efficiency and effectiveness in organisations and you get speed through flexibility and flexibility needs a shamrock structure not a big bureaucracy. I do not have time to go into the shamrock structure, it was first enunciated by the management guru, Charles Handy, but basically it says you should have professional fulltime staff for the core functions that are unique to your type of organisation, you should use part-time contractors, you in-source to do specialist tasks where you do not have those skills in-house, or peak load tasks. You might have a lot of customers around lunch time, so you would bring in part-time staff to man or woman the
counters at midday and you would outsource, particularly your back office type of work, corporate support work or anything that is really generic, generic to all kinds of organisations such as financial transaction processing, IT and so forth where it is not unique to your organisation and indeed the Charles Handy model is the one that most successful companies in the world are now adopting. This is the one that is giving them speed and the flexibility and they have moved away from size.

So, the traditional school of thought assumed there was a trade off between bigness efficiency versus smallness democracy. In other words, you had to make a choice, you could either be small if you were local government and very democratic or you can go big and become efficient. But this is a false trade off, bigness impedes, in my view, both democracy and efficiency and indeed it is a trade off that in every sector of the economy has been given up, no one else, no other sector of the economy now says the local government and very democratic or you can go big and become efficient. But this is a false trade smallness democracy. In other words, you had to make a choice, you could either be small if you were off, bigness impedes, in my view, both democracy and efficiency and indeed it is a trade off that in every sector of the economy has been given up, no one else, no other sector of the economy now says the local government and very democratic or you can go big and become efficient. But this is a false trade smallness democracy. In other words, you had to make a choice, you could either be small if you were off, bigness impedes, in my view, both democracy and efficiency and indeed it is a trade off that in every sector of the economy has been given up, no one else, no other sector of the economy now says the local government and very democratic or you can go big and become efficient. But this is a false trade smallness democracy. In other words, you had to make a choice, you could either be small if you were off, bigness impedes, in my view, both democracy and efficiency and indeed it is a trade off that in every sector of the economy has been given up, no one else, no other sector of the economy now says

Let me suggest a three step plan for local government reform. Democratic choice, joint service centres and competitive sourcing. Starting with democratic choice, citizens should be free to decide what size municipality they want. The state government could put lower and upper and limits on this, for instance in metropolitan councils it could say the minimum size of a council should be 20,000, the largest size a 100,000 because that is somewhere where the economies lie, if you follow a traditional bureaucratic model and you do not go to a virtual council. If you went to a virtual council, you could make them smaller than 20,000 in the metropolitan area through shared service centres and still achieve efficiencies. You could set lower limits for rural councils, again if you want to follow a conventional model, though again if you have a virtual model the size of the council will be dictated more by the population density, as I said, than any other factor. The second step would be joint service centres, councils would be required to transfer those services that would benefit from being done on a larger scale to a shared service centre, an SSC. The SSC would be jointly owned and governed by it’s member councils. The SSC would be run strictly as a business, providing works, maintenance, IT, financial services etc to participating councils on a fee for service contract basis. Thirdly, competitive sourcing, to ensure that a shared service centre gave value for money, a sunset clause would apply to its exclusive service mandate. Thereafter councils would be free to chose alternative suppliers if they offered better services. The shared service centre would be required to cease those services for which it had insufficient clients. There are of course critics of my model, and I should say I wrote a book about this back in 2001, this particular model, and so if any of you are interested in the book I think there are a few editions left over. There have been a number of academic journals around this model written in Singapore and Brittain on my model on virtual local government having a look how it applies in certain centres like in Singapore they have attempted it. Time prohibits me from going into the criticisms of my model in great detail, I will just touch on what I think are the majors ones and these are the criticisms of the virtual government model. It does not address equalising rates and services within inner Sydney when it came up in that context, and here I simply ask the question is this the real agenda and if so why won’t someone say so. Each municipality should have the discretion to decide both the level of rates and services it wants. Income and wealth redistribution is the function of the commonwealth and state
governments, not that of local government. However, if this is the objective then it should apply across the whole of Sydney or NSW not just inner Sydney, and putting a levy on all councils and redistributing the total proceeds through the states Grants Commission would be the most equitable solution. If local government is about income redistribution and wealth distribution, but I personally think that is a function of state and federal government, I do not think that should be the function of local government. The other complaint is that it does not address regional planning and coordination, in my view this is not the job of local government but of state government, the Minister for Planning with input from councils and ROCs, should set regional planning guidelines, councils would be required to operate within those guidelines, the state government would ultimately be accountable for such regional frameworks. An independent state planning commission should advise the minister on DAs, development applications for projects of regional or state significance, cabinet should decide the outcome on DAs where the minister disagreed with the commission’s advice. Another criticism is that smaller councils would be more susceptible to minority group capture, my view is that local government should be about local capture. The smaller a council the more control and hence responsibilities citizens feel for its operations. This should deter councillors from acting against the community interest. If there is a wider regional or state interest at stake then the state government should exercise it’s power to set the framework within which councils operate and ultimately the state government has to answer to all electors. The fourth criticism is that the model does not address all other issues about local government. Here I agree but it is not a deterrent to addressing these issues. The major other issues, in my view, are governance, democratic participation and administrative integrity, accountability, public transparency and communication and performance, relevant services, value for money and prudent management and most of these objectives are better served by smaller councils than bigger ones.

So in conclusion let me repeat, local government reform should recognise two realities, one is administrative the other is political. The administrative reality is the efficiency and effectiveness of a local council is not a function of size, all the empirical evidence suggests that big is not better when it comes to local government. Where are economies of scale are relevant, for example public works and maintenance depots, financial transaction processing, the most practical solution is shared service centres not amalgamations. The political reality is that people believe that small is beautiful, they want their local council centred on their neighbourhood. People identify with distinct neighbourhoods not amorphous regions, people want their local councils to address micro-issues within their neighbourhoods, and people expect the state government to address wider regional issues. In my view, let us put amalgamation in the too hard basket and address the real gap that concerns people about their councils, governance, accountability and performance. But that is a talk for another day.

Thank you very much.

Questions:

John Kennedy, Balonne Shire Council
Thank you very much for your speech. I wonder if you could repeat the first half of your lecture, the Minster was late.

Professor Allen
I am happy to email anybody a copy.

Cr Dredge
What I was about to say has already been said by Balonne, thank you.

Chair
I think it sounds like there is pretty resounding agreement of what you have been saying Professor.
Bill Cole, Crows Nest Shire
Just wondering if we could get a copy of your notes that would be most handy and appropriate for us.

Professor Allen
I have certainly made a copy available. I need to correct that one slide dealing with urban councils as it had the rural councils slide on it and I will send that to Bron Browning and I am sure through her you can get a copy.

If you are interested, as I said, I wrote a book about this in 2001. More importantly in the local government enquiry, if you go to our website which is I can’t remember but if you go to the local government enquiry on Google, just Google the independent enquiry into the Sustainability of Local Government in NSW. It goes under the title of Local Government Enquiry, it will come up and if you go to our website and read our report there is a whole chapter around this issue of size and costs of councils. The charts I am showing here are there and again if you are interested in this talk, you can get a copy from Bron Browning. I also wrote an article around the subject in the Australian Journal of Public Administration, assessing government, smaller councils, controversies, my article was the feature article. That was in September 2003 in the Australian Journal of Public Administration and as I said I wrote a book about it back in 2001 but the most current literature on it is the Local Government Enquiry Report which I chaired and directed last year which you can get on the website of the Local Government Enquiry or the LGSA in NSW.

Cr Dory
Thank you Mr Chairman just to put the background to my question, the report that the state government based its decision to bring the amalgamation and the boundary changes in the form that it has done, was done on a report studied by the Armidale University and they said it would not have even got a pass if it had been an assignment for the faculty. My question to the speaker, was he resourced as information or a bank of knowledge that could have been used, was he used in a determining by the decision of the state government in the process of reform.

Professor Allen
I was involved in the NSW enquiry, I was not invited to be involved in the Queensland enquiry.

Alan Sutherland
Professor, once they have totally stuffed it up, made a meal of it and destroyed our local government how hard is it to de-amalgamate.

Professor Allen
I must say I have not looked at that issue because there have not been that many attempts at that in Australia. The virtual government model though should make it possible because in the virtual government model you could really take a large council and break it into councils on award basis. Indeed in the United States in the last few years there has been a strong movement towards succession away from large councils such as in Los Angles and Hollywood and the San Fernando Valley, they had a movement to break away from the Los Angles Council. I have not checked recently whether they succeeded or not but again a virtual government model can do that, where you would have a shared service centre servicing a number of councils so the politics would stay local but the administration could be very large if you wanted that model. Or you could have a shared service centre that dealt with some functions that small local councils which banded together would perform, and then other functions would be performed within those small councils either in-house but probably more likely through outsourcing. In New Zealand there are a number of councils which operate with very small staff, have 60,000 or more population and have only about thirty three staff in one case and many of those staff were actually the library which they didn’t outsource. The rest of them were managers who outsourced all the other functions and those councils have performed very, very well. They are actually big populations but quite
small councils. Now, if they can run a large council with such a small group of people imagine what you could do with a smaller council if you used a shared service centre or you outsourced some of your needs. It is possible, it has been done elsewhere. In the United States the whole Lakewood Movement which started in the 1950s saw a whole lot of small councils established which broke away from large councils again using the virtual council model. It was in the end stymied by largely democratic politicians who for union reasons did not want small councils and so the number of councils started shrinking back in about the 1980s. Recently it has revived, that movement, and there is a move again away to succeeding, to breaking away from large councils and as I said the virtual council model is one that allows that, where you can still get very high efficiencies and the flexibility I spoke about and you get away from these big bureaucratic monoliths which are actually stoking up costs.
Address: “State Local Government and Planning Update”  
Hon Andrew Fraser MP  
Minister for Local Government, Planning and Sport

Good morning ladies and gentlemen, can I acknowledge in the first instance the traditional owners, can I also acknowledge your President Cr Paul Bell and can I thank you for the opportunity to talk with you today. I would like to do a number of things today, I would like to talk in the first part of my address about two substantive issues relating to jobs, both the jobs of employees in local government and also in relation to the circumstances of those of you who are seeking a return to public office after 15 March next year and to talk about the Local Government Remuneration Tribunal.

One of the things and one of the issues that has been at the heart and at the core of the discussion and the debate and even the concerns about local government reform, is the future interests of employees in local government. We know around the state that there are some 37,000 employees, who toil on a daily basis in the service of their communities through local governments across Queensland. Early on in this discussion, in this debate and in this process, we made it clear that we would legislate to protect the jobs of those employees for three years through the transition process. The legislation that put in place the new structure for local government, which was passed through the Parliament a couple of weeks ago, included a legislative guarantee that for each and every one of those employees, apart from the CEOs, for each and every one of those employees, there would be a legislative protection against a forced redundancy. That is now the law in Queensland and through to the 15th of March 2011, three years beyond the next election, that will be the case for each and every employee that is part of a local government that is impacted by boundary reform in Queensland. Under that legislation there was provision to sign into law a code of practice that would govern the transition through this process, to ensure that with everyone’s best endeavours and with everyone’s best intentions, that the process of change, a process which is always difficult and always involves many and complex issues, would as far as possible and as best as possible be able to transfer and seek a smooth transition of those employees to new entities. Yesterday I signed off the transition code of practice for local government employees. It is a code of practice which will be gazetted later today and published later today. It is in fact a blueprint about how, with best endeavours and best intentions, we can ensure that for each and every local government employee across Queensland that their interests are taken account of, that their interests are placed at the centre of our deliberations and the decisions that we make. I want to say to you quite genuinely, quite seriously and on the record, and I’ve said it in the parliament and in other places, that I do want to acknowledge the effort since day one, the professional effort, despite the circumstances, despite the nature of circumstances, of entities such as the LGAQ, the LGMA and the Unions who over many months through a great deal of work and a great deal of professional effort, not in the easiest of circumstances by any stretch of the imagination, who have through solid work and a commitment to ensuring that this is undertaken in the best manner possible, produced collectively a document which I’ve now signed off, without change, a document which I believe provides for a framework and a platform for ensuring that the interests of those employees can best be incorporated into a new structure. That was not an easy task to do for any of the people sitting around that table and I say quite openly, quite genuinely and on the public record, that I want to acknowledge the ultimate professionalism that was displayed by the representatives of those organisations through many meetings, on a weekly twice weekly basis, as they ploughed through these issues. The issues that they covered are both far reaching and wide but I believe there is a platform and a framework there to ensure that as we move forward through the next seven months and beyond the 15th of March next year, that with the best advice and the best efforts of everyone involved in that process, we will ensure that as far as humanly possible, the interests of local government employees across Queensland will be taken account of and protected. I also want to say quite clearly that through those efforts, I believe we have come up with a code that can provide for that. I also want to say to you quite clearly that I believe that the challenge and indeed the task for all of us who have the best interests of employees at heart, is to look to this code and to abide by it. It represents the law, and we should all obey it. We should all obey it in the knowledge and safe in the comfort that we are ultimately dealing here with local governments, not local corporations. It has been the view of this government for a long time, predating the reform process, predating any of the issues that we are currently dealing with, that in fact work choices based on the corporations power should not apply to local government. That has been a view of this government for some time and it remains our view firmly and I believe that for everyone, who has as their stated best interests as many people did state through this process, a concern for the conditions of employment for their workforces,
the conditions of employment for their employees, should look towards this code as the product of what can be achieved when the various stakeholders and the various interests look toward to putting together, with best endeavours, a framework for the future. In that regard I look forward to a general acceptance of the code, an acceptance that this is the best pathway forward and the platform on which we should base our decision making as we embark upon the difficult transition process.

I also want to talk with you about the Local Government Remuneration Tribunal and talk with you about it in these terms. I think, and I know a good many of you think, that one of the least edifying episodes that occurs in public life in local government after each and every election is the task that befalls all of you under the current act of the day, and that is to decide amongst yourselves how you will be remunerated, and then to always take that decision out to the public and stand by it and to put if forward to a public. For any level of government or for any set of elected representatives, the notion that that task can in any way be one of the more edifying episodes of public life, I think is fundamentally misplaced. I believe that by moving towards a Local Government Remuneration Tribunal, an independent mechanism to set the remuneration for the effort that people put in as councillors, that we will be able to overcome that episode that occurs every four years, and sometimes more often, in local governments around Queensland. The task for those people who seek and attain public office beyond the 15th of March, is these circumstances, in this day and age, regardless of the reform task, is certainly one that each and every year, each election cycle and exponentially grows more difficult, more time consuming and more complex. For those of you who walked across the stage last night to receive certificates of up to forty years service, you know that the difference between the point at time in which you commenced service of public office in local government and the point at which we are now is unrecognisable. More to the point, I know that many of you hold the view that you cannot recognise and draw a small step between the tasks that befell all of you as elected representatives in the early nineties to what it is now. The change that is occurring beyond the immediate context that we are talking about generally today, the change that is occurring out there in government means that for the effort that everyone has to put in the task is more complex, the task is more burdensome, there are higher responsibilities and more difficult tasks. In my view, what a mature and robust level of our liberal democracy requires is in that effort everyone is invited to be a part of that democracy and to be properly remunerated for that effort. In that regard, I think that the Local Government Remuneration Tribunal, in its design and in its execution, will provide for remuneration of councillors that takes account of all those facts. More to the point, it will take it away from the daily political process, it will take it away from the decision of elected representatives to have to be in charge of setting their own pay. That is a hallmark of state and federal governments and it is a hallmark of a robust level of democracy and I believe that ultimately the implementation of an independent Local Government Remuneration Tribunal will certainly pave the way forward for an enhanced ability to recognise and reward those people who seek public office in local governments. There will be three members of the tribunal and those members will be appointed shortly. They will have a task to make a determination, with finality, of classes of council and the remuneration that will be provided to councillors and mayors. They will take public submissions, as is the case with the determination of salaries for federal and state politicians, and they will take account of population, of size, of population density, cultural diversity, economic structure, all of those things which make up the various aspects of each and every different local government across Queensland. They will do that in a way in which I think will ultimately provide for a better ability to attract and reward those people who seek to serve in public office. That tribunal will be constituted shortly and their task will immediately be to move towards calling for those public submissions, to make sure that they can make that determination, and provide with certainty to all of you who seek to return to public office at the next election, a set of pay scales that you know and can make decisions at a personal level about prior to the election. One of the concerns that I have, and one of the concerns that I know is shared by a good many people who seek to attain public office, is that presently the task for local government candidates is to jump off the cliff, to go into the unknown not knowing what will be the remuneration for the effort that is required to serve in public office. There are some people whose personal circumstances mean that they cannot afford that uncertainty, they cannot afford to take that punt. Ultimately that is a hindrance on the ability of everyone, fairly, to be able to seek public office and I think that in the same way that over time an independent salary has been evolved for all elected representatives at different levels of government, that should be what occurs at this point for local government as a true and third tier of government. In that regard can I make a few remarks about the call yesterday made by the Federal Labor Party about constitutional recognition of local government. I believe that with an independent setting of remuneration for local government, the conduct of elections by the independent electoral commission and independent boundary determination,
with those three hallmarks, which are hallmarks of state and federal levels of government, that the case for constitutional recognition of local government is in fact enhanced. More to the point, the case and the prosecution of that argument out there in the community, is enhanced because with that comes the rigour and independence that is required to insert at the base level a structure of a true robust element of a liberal democracy.

Ladies and gentlemen, I also want to share with you today some considered remarks about the position we find ourselves in, and where we are heading and look toward the future. So I might return to the core of the matter that we are addressing here, at this point in time, for all of you in the middle of local government reform. I appreciate the opportunity to talk with you at this critical juncture in time, a time of some moment. It is a time where there is a duality in outlook, there is a way forward and there is a path that has already been forged. I want to, at the outset in these remarks, acknowledge that by definition all change is difficult. With any change comes uncertainty, that much is axiomatic, these are in fact unarguable parts of the human condition as is doubt and doubt is part of all of us. It causes us constantly to revisit in our minds, to take stock, to check our thinking, to satisfy ourselves as far as humanly possible, that our decisions are the best they can be in an imperfect world, made as always, by imperfect people. There is of course very little that is perfect in the world, a new dawn perhaps, but probably little else. It is a case that the promise of the new, the next and the future can more easily be romanticised as having the potential for perfection than the reality, the lived actual experience, despite the easy comfort of what is known. When we cast of humans beings walk across the world stage, with our collective imperfections, there is very little that can survive the aggregate co-efficiency of drag that we produce together. In this imperfect world, populated by imperfect people, voting in imperfect governments, to make imperfect decisions on imperfect information, we find the settings for imperfect results. Philosophically, we can all wonder about whether in a deconstructed post modern world we can ever attain perfection, I suspect we cannot. Indeed one women’s perfection is probably another’s perversion just as sure as one man’s trash is another mans treasure. So I want to talk with you today with some conviction about what I believe to be true, if not without doubt and almost certainly without perfection. In abstract terms there can be little doubt that reform of local government is necessary, but there is always context and in today’s context I have little doubt that reform remains necessary. Along the way of course, as a government we constantly revisited, assessed and wondered about each decision and each step. Our decision making has not been characterised by cavalier or capricious disposition, despite the musings of the grassy knoll conspirators. It has been driven by an abiding commitment, a fronting up to and facing square shouldered the challenges of the future. It has taken as its reference point the burden of responsibility, the crushing reality of governing and it has been imperfect, as a government we have acknowledged that. But equally, I want to affirm to you, unambiguously, that our focus as a government is very much on the future. We are looking toward the future and we are working towards that future. We have in our sights, set firmly on the horizon, driven by the altruism that drives the majority of us, of whatever stripe and whatever level to serve in public office. We have put in place a new structure for local government in Queensland based not on political whimsy, but on the process of independent boundary determination. Without ever declaring perfection, we have accepted the decision of the Independent Adjudicator. That adjudication, like all adjudications, is about relativities, independent boundary determination. Without ever declaring perfection, we have accepted the decision of the Independent Adjudicator. That adjudication, upon which we rely and upon which we store our faith, is the product of a discipline that lends itself to perfection. We have, however, a deliberated outcome, it is an outcome that features the rigours of process, of contextual decision making, of the enabling charter of looking to the future. That adjudication, upon which we rely and upon which we store our faith, is the product of a process that sought always to attain perfection, always with the knowledge that perfection is utterly unattainable. We set out to chase the horizon, as you always should, even when time after time the horizon always lies beyond reach. Based upon that determination we have in place, in law, and determined with finality, a set of boundaries for the future. We have built, constructed and forged a framework and a platform for the future structure of local government in Queensland. We have reached this point upon our best endeavours, not without doubt, but certainly with a conviction within our intentions and in forming our determination to embark upon reform and we are not looking back, we are looking forward. Ladies and gentlemen, our burden, our calling, our responsibility as leaders, whether as individual councillors, mayors, elected representative of whatever stripe at whatever level of
government, is to look beyond the horizon and to strive for the unattainable, to focus always upon the future. Around the state, mostly without fanfare, mostly quietly and even a little clandestinely, the transition to the new system is now occurring. It will feature, I assure you, all those uniquely human imperfections but they will be overcome with our best endeavours, with a commitment to leadership and to the future, with a resolve that seeks to work through the inevitable issues that lie within the transition, rather than baulk at each ridge upon the way, with a determination to avoid the convenient urge to call for retreat at the first adversity. We will meet upon this journey the cross fire and the pot shots, the charlatans and the double agents peddling a line but dealing in false hope and cruel comfort. They should, as always, be cast aside. We all face our tests and we all must face our fears and our doubts. Abiding doubt about possible perfection may well be a hallmark of the human condition, perfection of course easily slips away, it is somewhat elusory and mostly in the eye of the beholder. We rarely have the privilege of perfection in this world, nothing in life is certain but there just might be a few absolutes and a few inalienable truths and of those truths there are some worth knowing and some worth embracing. Those old verities of altruism and honour, the unceasing burden of responsibility, the duty to the future and the unattainability of perfection, knowing this we must draw upon those original fires that burn within all of us, we must recall our primary responsibility, it is a duty to the future and we must look towards it and about that, there can be no doubt.

Thank you for your time.

Questions:

Carol Taylor – Cambooya Shire Mayor

I am one of those mayors that are politically self-serving in a small shire, no office, no car. Minister I believe, it is not a question, I think you have insulted our intelligence here this morning, you really have. And I believe that is a performance worthy of Jimmy Hubbard, thank you very much for nothing.

Unknown

Mr Chairman through to the Minister I say this with the highest respect for your office and your presence here today, in all my life I have never heard such an astounding rhetoric which did not point to one issue, one percentage increase, one indication of the future except imperfections. We in local government do not work on imperfections, we set the bar and we set our targets up there and we try and achieve them. We never look at imperfections, we look to achieve because we have to do that that is what we have to do for the people. The thing that absolutely astounds me, Mr Minister, is that in all the reform information that we had to deal with, there has not been one evidence or base or data or percentage or indication of where we are going to achieve the efficiencies of delivery and cost saving and that is the basis of the Armidale University assessment of your report, which they would not even pass as a student assignment for the reason, only one reason Mr Minister, it did not contain any evidence of where the savings would be and what percentage they would be. No company in Australia or any business in the world can ever do a merger or a change in direction unless it has done extensive study to have the evidence to prove that there is potential for improvement and if you can explain to me those percentages and give them to us today we might think differently. We have nothing to base the improvements with reform, I’m not against it, we have nothing to base the improvements on reform. Can you give us those percentages, gain in delivery, percentages in cost saving efficiency. That is what we need. Thank you.

Minister:

Clearly the outcome and the way forward for local government in terms of reform has many competing issues that surround it. I know that there is some comfort taken by many people about particular academics but the world of academia is one that is by definition, defined by people who hold different views. There are people who hold that view, I accept, equally there are people who hold entirely opposite views. There are people, like John Rolf at the Central Queensland University, who look toward the gains that can be made into the future about infrastructure provision and proper planning from
undertaking that planning in a way that is contemplated by local government reform. There are efficiencies to be gained in the long run, that is absolutely the case, and this is very much about looking not to the next five minutes, but to the next five years and the next fifty years. In that regard the gains that are to be made are in terms of proper planning and infrastructure provision in the longer term against a backdrop of the sort of growth that we are experiencing in Queensland. There will be administrative efficiency gains, but along the way there will be money that has to be expended to achieve that. It is often the case, in business and in government that money needs to be spent in order to save money that much is true. So in that regard, there is a weight of evidence, I believe, and a weight of cogent evidence that points to the benefits that can be gained through the sort of reform that we undertaking. I will always acknowledge the fact that people like, Professor Dollery and others, will continue to hold an opposite view, but that is the nature of the beast.

Bruce Scott.

As for your little bit on local government councillor’s remuneration, as I understand from your words, the local government reform tribunal will set the salaries for all councillors to ensure consistency and transparency, responsibility will be taken away from individual councils, however Brisbane City Council has been excluded from this process as I understand it. Will it still set its own salaries, are the rules now deemed unacceptable everywhere else, why does the state government think Brisbane’s residents and rate payers should not receive the benefits and consistency and transparency now available to everyone else across the state of Queensland.

Minister

Thank you Mayor for the question, with respect the premise of you question is in fact wrong. The Brisbane City Council does not set its own salaries, they are linked to the Independent Remuneration Tribunal that operates at a commonwealth level and it has been that case for some time.

Mike Berry, Douglas Shire

I take it I am a grassy knoll conspirator, a double agent and charlatan and I don’t think that is a fair comment but my questions is, you have said one of the corner stones of democracy is independent boundary review and I would support you on that but I understood the commission was staffed with secondments from the department and from the ministerial office. My question is to you how can you label that as independent and I would suggest that if the Australian Electoral Commission was similarly staffed the would not have much credibility as being independent.

Minister

Thank you Mayor, there were no ministerial staff involved or in any way employed in the work that was undertaken by the commission. There were a number of officers both from the Department of Local Government and also from Queensland Treasury who were seconded into the reform commission, they operated from separate premises under the chairmanship of Bob Longland. While they were in that task they answered to Bob as the Chair and to Kevin Newberry as the administrating CEO. Those officers undertook that task according to the charter that was set out in the legislation. Any suggestion, I believe, that you make that those officers or indeed the commissioners that they answered to, operated in a compromised manner is one which I am sure people like Bob Longland would find entirely objectionable.

Cr Strelow, Rockhampton

Minister, Rockhampton is one of the few that has welcomed the reforms that have taken place and I have got to say I admire your guts, should I say intestinal fortitude, being here this morning. Some clauses, I must say also about plebiscites and the like that went into legislation were not your government’s finest hour. That said, government is tough and we have all had to make tough decisions, looking forward if we get past what will be an imperfect and difficult time, I am concerned in two or three years time what the relationship between the government and LGAQ will be and how strong our councils will be allowed to
remain. I am looking at the changes or the review of the Local Government Act and really keen to see very strong robust councils.

Minister

Thank you Mayor in that regard I don’t think that anyone would pretend that this has not been a difficult time in terms of the relationship between the LGAQ, local government more broadly and the state government. Anyone who wants to prosecute an argument to the contrary of that is clearly outside of this immediate context. I do want to acknowledge however, that ultimately as with most things in public life that there requires a level of professionalism. In my remarks earlier I was genuine in what I said about the professionalism of the LGAQ. Ultimately there are different positions in this debate, different public positions and the reality of the prosecution of any political argument is going to require people to be at loggerheads and competing with different views. What is clearly the case, I believe, is that beyond that we have been able through this period as ultimately professionals to be able to deal with those issues. I am not going to pretend and I am sure that Paul would not pretend that this is the high water mark of the relationship between local government and the state. But Paul and I still have each others phone numbers, we still need to talk about these things and on the 15th March there is going to be a new set of local governments, there will be a Department of Local Government, there will be an LGAQ and there will be a Local Government Minister, those things will always endure and ultimately we need to look towards that as part of the way in which public life needs to be executed. In relation to the Local Government Act review and the provision of the ability of local governments to be stronger both in their scale but also in their operation. In my mind the reform of local government structure is the first step along that path. Clearly with scale and ability I believe that the nanny state concept, which I think pervades the Local Government Act presently, is one that can be discarded and rightfully so. I do not see that any public interest is served by the fact that across my desk comes on regular occasion the sort of authorisations that I think individual councils are entirely competent to make every day of the week, whether you are selling half a footpath to a neighbouring owner, transferring $50 between different trust accounts or any of the other various types of issues that inevitably through the current structure of the Local Government Act come to the minister of the day. I think it is entirely more appropriate that local governments answer for those issues and are responsible in their own communities and, through the Local Government Act Review that is what we are seeking to attain. So I thank you for the question.

Peter McGuire, Mayor of Emerald Shire Council

My question is about when the government accepted the reform commission report, and then we were also allowed the make representations about name changes and then also to question about divisional arrangements, does the government have a position. Because after we received the electoral commission information about those councils that wanted to have divisions, we thought we could have multi-member divisions and when we got the stuff it had to be single member divisions. So my question is, are we going to be allowed to have the multi-member divisions or, as our new proposed council has put forward go back to being completely undivided.

Minister

Well the provision that was included in the legislation provided for single member divisions in the new council structure. Obviously, as is well known, the commission recommended across the board all councils be undivided, apart from two given the nature of those circumstances in those two indigenous communities. It has long been a trend, as you know Mayor, that there has been a move towards undivided councils across Queensland from around twenty in the 1980s to around sixty now. That is something that has been occurring entirely independent of any actions upon the state government and there are views, I think, which go right down the middle of this room about whether being divided or undivided is the best way of governing and I know that some of the more spirited debates that occur within council chambers relate to that very fact. In making a cart blanche recommendation about there not being divisions in the new local government structure, as a government we thought in light of the reform effort that was required in the bringing together of communities that there should be provision for divisions to assist in that regard. As you point out, we ask councils about their views in that regard. We did that on the basis that councils were able to say what they felt was appropriate but also under a time pressure that in order to meet the next local government election, given the requirements of the
joint role arrangements in Australia that we needed to undertake that fairly quickly. That is a requirement of the electoral commission, not of ourselves. So in that regard we asked people for their views about it, your question, as I understand, it is about whether you can revisit the decision that has been made at that time and the legislation is now in place so that is not possible for the next election.

Unknown (Nebo)

Thanks very much Mr Chairman. Andrew I am a known opponent to your forced amalgamations, particularly without referendums, and I make no excuse about it. I was very interested in hearing you use the word democracy so much earlier on in your speech and if I am concerned about anything, it is that you actually believe what you have been telling us here today somehow equates to democracy. That is my greatest concern for this great state of ours of Queensland. I have got three questions, I had them in one, two, three but seeing you did mention democracy so much I am going to start with number three. Considering you have demeaned and ridiculed mayors for doing the very thing they are expected to do, that is lead their communities, will you meet with mayors in circumstances where they have been given a mandate by their communities to dispute reform commission recommendations, that is number one. Number two, why have you stacked interim committees with unions representatives to the extent that in some circumstances they can virtually run the show themselves, if not directly by doing a deal with at least one of the other councils and the third one is are you in fact going to remove the responsibility of employment of local government staff and workforces from local governments. One, two, three, Andrew.

Minister

Thank you Mayor, I continue to meet with mayors upon their requests and soon as this address is over then I have a series of meetings of mayors who have arranged to meet with me in blocks throughout the later part of today, so that is something that quite clearly I am prepared to do. But unambiguously this is not about revisiting the boundaries that have been put in place. They have been determined but I am happy to meet with people about their views upon that. Secondly, in relation to the inclusion of representatives of the workforce through unions on local transition committees, there were many people who through this process said to me that their main concern and a driving concern, a central part of their issues with the amalgamation process relating to the welfare of their workforce. Some of those people after the fact now seem to have a concern that the workforce should be represented on the transition committees. I think that there is a leap of logic in that that I do not readily comprehend and so in that regard it is my view that it is entirely appropriate, given those circumstances, that there be union representation on the local transition committees and more to the point that those transition committees should not be the forum or the site for never ending prosecution of arguments about past decisions or past views but they should be very much focused on the transition and on the future and in that regard I expect them to operate largely by consensus rather than the way in which you envisage as the premise of your question. As I said in my opening remarks we have long believed, prior to the local government reform process, that local governments are just that, not corporations, we have taken action in the Federal Court as you would be aware to ensure that work choices is not utilised in the local government sector and we will continue to hold that view. We believe that the state, the fairer state industrial relations system should be available and open to the employees of local government and we will continue to hold that view as a government and to take steps to ensure that ultimately this is what occurs.

Cr Crystal Stark, Crows Nest Shire Council

We are one of the seven rural shires Mr Fraser who will be taking over Toowoomba City under your amalgamation program and I am quite sure that moving forward in a spirit of cooperation and goodwill we will be able to do the best we can for our residents. The concern of the most the people across the state of Queensland is about the economic impact on our small towns of your amalgamation. So my question to you is, what provision has you government made to support the businesses in small rural towns when the shire councils start closing down their accounts.
Thank you for the question. Clearly this is one of the issues that does exist in some particular parts of the state. It is one that was raised with me directly when I spoke with the mayors and councillors in Toowoomba last month or the month before that. The reality is of course that the imperative that you are talking about operates also at a state level and that is through purchasing policies, there is an ability for any entity to be able to, through a signed off purchasing policy, ensure that those sort of issues can be taken account of. As a state government we have a purchasing policy and a purchasing framework that allows us to look towards local areas in preference rather than just the bottom line and there is every ability for local governments to pursue that, at this point in time and beyond.

Address: “LG Infrastructure Services Update”
Mr Graham Matthew
Chief Executive, LG Infrastructure Services

Thank you very much. I would like to just start by acknowledging the traditional owners of the land, recognising also Honourable Mr Andrew Fraser, Member for Local Government, Planning and Sport, Cr Paul Bell and all elected members. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today, I appreciate that this is a very interesting time in local government and that there are many more pressing issues on your minds concerning the reform process and amalgamation, so today I am going to keep my remarks as brief as possible. I do have one key theme and I am going to keep return to that theme, LG Infrastructure Services has been in existence now for two years. It was really an experiment that was set up between Qld Treasury Corporation and LGAQ, to help local government deliver infrastructure in difficult times. I am proud to say that we have been fortunate to help many local governments over the last two years and I guess my key theme today is that as you all go through the amalgamation process, you are going to go through a very difficult time and you are going to need help and at LG Infrastructure Services we are here to help you through that process and I am going to take a little bit of time today to show you some of the ways we have helped councils over the last two years to see if you can see the parallels with how we might be able to help your council navigate through what is going to be quite a difficult process over the next twelve months.

This is a truly unique collaboration, LG Infrastructure Services is 50% owned by Qld Treasury Corporation and 50% owned by LGAQ. As far as we can establish there is no other entity in the world that has the represents the same coming together of a local government association and a central financing authority with the sole aim of helping local government deliver infrastructure. It is really all about a couple of key concepts and early speakers have spoken about these concepts as well, in particular your first speaker, Percy Allen, spoke a little bit about this as well. We are out to help local government do three things and those are to reduce the risks and costs of major infrastructure provision, we try and do that by capturing economies of scale and scope and I will show you how we do that in a minute. One of the ways we do it is aggregate lots of small projects together to create projects that have more scale about them and are likely to be of greater interest to the market. Importantly, we are not out to profit at the expense of local government and LG Infrastructure Services measures its success by the value that we create on the books of local government. The aim of this business is to operate profitably, but not with a view to profit maximisation at the expense of local government. That is a pretty busy slide but pretty much what that says is that we are here to help at every stage of the infrastructure delivery life cycle from planning, working with government, selecting a delivery model right through to execution and also helping unpack and repack projects where they get into trouble, and there have been a few of those and many of you have probably been associated with projects that can get into trouble. Sometimes we will do a full scale resurrection of a project, in other circumstances we are happy to come and do a snapshot review and tell you what is working well or what is working poorly, and what can be done better. Importantly, if you undertake a transaction with LG Infrastructure Services, the knowledge and IP that is associated with that is then available for any other council to use, should a similar project come along, and we have had quite a number of instances where that has happened in the last two years.

I think I have mentioned already some of the things we are trying to do. Typically we are trying to aggregate projects, come up with new ways of doing things that work, we are using local government peers, a lot, and I will show you some examples of that and trying to add fire power to your decision
making capability. As I say we are here to help. We are quite prepared to travel around and hop on light planes and we are fortunate enough to travel with our friends at LGAQ and fly all over Queensland, and we will go anywhere if it will help local government. Over the last two years we have worked on about fifty transactions for both individual councils and larger regional projects, adding up to now about $3 billion worth of infrastructure we have advised on, travelling over 300,000 km, with about twenty people working fulltime doing nothing else other than help local government deliver projects and services.

We are active in a number of areas, we have been highly active in water, particularly in response to the drought, and we do not mind small projects. We have done everything from very small projects out west helping councils put together, for example new bores, where we have helped with everything through to conducting business cases and helping apply for subsidies and getting bores coming out of the ground, right through to working on large scale transactions, such as pipelines. We have been very active recently in regional waste, working with large groups of councils to try and come up with regional waste management solutions that work for collection, landfill and materials recycling. We have done a lot of property, a growing area in local government, where local government typically is in the unique position of being landlord, tenant, owner and regulator all at the same time and we are pleased to be of assistance to councils in sorting out property and commercial advisory assignments. We are very proud of some of the regional work we have done and this is where I think the true value can come from our group.

Even in a pre-amalgamation world we have been conducting transactions on behalf of large numbers of councils, we are working on a project in south east Queensland, to fix leaky pipes, where we are working on behalf of eighteen local government agencies. The Home WaterWise Service, which is a service where you can dial a number and a plumber will come to your home and install a range of water efficient devices, is conducted on behalf of the state and twenty one participating councils. Interestingly, that service now retrofits over 3000 houses a week, employing a call centre of thirty people and a plumber workforce of around 140 plumbers. We have recently commissioned a report which I am please to say the Department of Local Government Planning and Sport paid for, to identify opportunities to better deliver sewerage treatment plant upgrades on a state wide basis. We have also recently been mandated to work with small communities in central Queensland to essentially drought proof those communities and as I mentioned before doing a number of transactions in central Queensland related to achieving regional waste facilities.

I am very pleased to say that despite the amalgamation process and the uncertainty that might be expected to be associated with that process, the state has supported all of the projects we are involved in that have the objective of pursuing a sensible regional solution and we see that there is no handbrake on pursuing sensible regional projects that will achieve value in your communities. The way we go about regional projects has always been to ignore council boundaries and look at what is the best technical solution, what is the best economic solution, what is the best transactional solution and contractual solution and then reimpose those council boundaries to determine how best to go about implementing the solution. This is an approach that has worked very well to date, it is an approach that we will continue to use post-amalgamation. The only difference will be who actually signs the contact because I think that we all know that when we wake up tomorrow there is still garbage to be collected, there is still water to be processed and treated and there is still services to be provided. This is the approach that we use and we think it stands up.

So what is going to lie ahead in the next twelve months, you don’t need me to tell you that you are facing new council boundaries and that difficult prospect of amalgamation. I would be surprised if there is not a broader scale water reform as well across the rest of Queensland in the same way that we have seen in south east Queensland. I think we will continue to see greater moves towards regional collaboration, even with a smaller number of councils, because it is just a fact that councils will still need to cooperate across boundaries in order to create scale and deliver services. I think we will still be seeing greater moves towards shared services and the suite of service offerings that is available to you through the LGAQ stable of service providers will be more relevant in a post-amalgamation environment than probably it has ever been. Amalgamations are not a panacea and there will still continue to be pressure on infrastructure provision and pressure and costs, skills and resources.
I’ll spend a few minutes giving you our take, the LG Infrastructure Services view if you like, on the local government reform process and what we think it means. As we see it the move to seventy two councils from the number that we have now is going to add up to over one hundred very significant change management processes across all areas of a councils business, whether that is human resources, industrial relations, systems, financial management, risk management, infrastructure planning, which is what we do, and compliance. This is going to be a very difficult and a very costly task, I imagine you know that only too well. As the Minister has mentioned, it is an imperfect process, and as much as you strive for perfection it is going to be difficult. The worst thing that could happen is that the process is handled poorly and that you end up with a number of situations where councils are formed without sufficient attention to getting the change right. A wise man once told me that the keys to success in anything lie in planning and in execution, and as best you can achieve it what you should be seeking in any endeavour is to have immaculate planning and flawless execution. That would be true whether we were amalgamating councils, trying to win rugby league matches or producing winning race horses, those same principles apply no matter what your field of endeavour.

So how can we help, we have been putting a bit of effort into gearing ourselves up to help you and we have tried to break it down into three areas. We think we can help councils that have to deal with the amalgamation process assess the situation, plan for transition and then make it happen. In terms of assessing the situation, LG Infrastructure Services would be happy to help do things like this:

- Have a look at your existing infrastructure plans and strategies, your existing business plans and identify issues, options and risks relating to procurement of major infrastructure across amalgamated councils;
- In terms of planning, we would be very pleased to assist with the development of the transition action plans, review budgets and examine options and the risks and benefits of alternative delivery strategies and help you plan in order to succeed in implementing those difficult infrastructure reforms;
- In terms of making it happen, very happy to assist and work with your teams in whatever way you think you need to role out and implement your transition action plans, whether that be tendering and procurement. If you want us to lead, manage or assist a project team, we can help with that. If you want assistance with any of your timing, tactics, negotiation, planning or completion, we can assist you there as well.

We know that this is going to be difficult and we feel very fortunate and proud to be of assistance to local government over the last two years. We know it is going to be difficult and my key message that I would like to leave with you is that we are here to help, if you would like to come and see us we have a booth outside and we are more than happy to talk to you about any issues or problems you might have.

Thank you very much.

Chair

Delegates we have been working together very closely with LGIS team in ensuring that we get down to every council with an opportunity to meet the staff of the team one on one. I will be taking a number of Graham’s people with me on some of my council visits so that we are able to give you all first hand, some of the thinking and the opportunities for individual processes that might be of interest to you. We have done this on the pressure and leakage project, we have done that on the Home WaterWise Service Project and the mechanisms that we have used have been to create documents such as a memorandum of understanding, which eighteen or twenty one councils in the state have all signed, which map out how all those bodies are going to work together through us to deliver infrastructure across regions. They are memorandums of understanding that typically address issues such as governance, funding, reporting structures and how the programs at work are going to be executed and delivered. The mechanisms that we bring together really are illustrative of how virtual local government can be made to work, the only difference between how it will work in a pre-amalgamation world and a post-amalgamation world, is that we will have fewer council signatures on the instruments of that type. I do not see it changing if, for example, once the boundaries change in south east Queensland, I think that rather than having twenty one, if we were doing the project now on pressure and leakage or Home WaterWise, rather than have eighteen or twenty one councils signing we would have had five or six councils signing. But the
mechanism, the instrument and the benefits would have been the same and I do not think for an instant that the amalgamations are going to result in their being a need for less co-operation across council boundaries, because it is simply a fact that the scale benefits that are available through collaboration are going to transcend even the new boundaries. That would be how I would see the world.

Chair
I think I agree. Is there other questions now?

Cr Natoli
Thank you Graham just a couple of questions, the first question is obviously Queensland is a very much a growth state and under a lot of pressure, especially in south east Queensland, and suppose mindful of the strategies that are needed to try and maintain the costs down so that we can actually get best delivery outcomes, under that pressure. The second question is I suppose relates to yesterdays key note address by Sir Peter Gershon who, they found through procurement there was a 40% saving. That is where the major saving was and I would imagine that probably relates to the procurement of infrastructure services in a collaborative process under your structure. Do you see similar sought of gains being able to be made of that sort of percentage or if not, how do you relate the type of savings that could be there, especially under the new reform process that we are going through and how do you then relate that to the growth pressures and upward pressures of the costs of infrastructure.

Graham Matthew
Thank you Cr Natoli for the question. Yes the questions is in two parts, I guess the first part relates to cost pressures and infrastructure delivery and yes, I see those cost pressures in Queensland continuing do to nothing but rise. In our experience, since we have been in this business, the capital costs of major infrastructure provision are probably escalating at a rate of about 20% per annum, 1.5% per month for things like concrete, steel and civil works. The reason for that is many faceted, the first is the resources boom and the pressure that that is placing on all core raw materials, especially steel. It is also placing enormous pressure on labour. The other reason we are seeing this is, is that not only is China and India booming but at the same time, in fact right at this very moment, we have the largest civil engineering projects, ever in the history of the state, all being undertaking simultaneously. We have the Gateway Bridge, $2 and a bit billion, which is singly the largest civil engineering project ever undertaken in the state. We also have at the same time the Trans Apex projects underneath Brisbane, we are also building a water grid. The government, at various levels, is pump priming the economy with new infrastructure provision and normally governments pump prime at the time of a recession. Governments at the moment are spending money on infrastructure at a time of private sector economic boom time, so all of that is contributing to a rise in costs and the pressure on local government will continue. A lot of these companies will not get out bed unless the project is $1 billion in terms of total capital cost and that the sort of scale you have to look to, to interest the major players. So achieving scale is very important if you want to get a competitive response to physical infrastructure in this state. It does not surprise me that Peter Gershon mentioned a figure of 40%, that lines up in terms of saving, that lines up very well with our experience and I will tell you a very practical example. We have recently completed a study for the state on how all of the sewerage treatment plant upgrades for local government in Queensland could potentially be delivered as a co-ordinated program of work. If individual councils deliver those projects the cost will range between $10 to $40 million, on average. That is going to make it difficult for councils to create scale, but if you aggregate all those projects together, you create a capital works program in excess of $1 billion and our market soundings tell us that we could expect, if it was delivered as a co-ordinated program of work, that the capital costs could be in the order of about 20% and the operating costs could be of a similar order of magnitude. So taken as a whole there are wonderful opportunities for scale based procurement for local governments through vehicles such as ours, or any other, which seeks to aggregate projects together to create scale. We think it is a very powerful opportunity and a very important opportunity and an opportunity that we would look to continue to create for local government. That is why we are very excited about the regional work that we do because we think that is a true valuer creator for local government in a difficult environment.

Chair
Cr Natoli it is a good point and it is one that we certainly have been working closely with Local Government infrastructure Services and the QTC for a number of years in regards to finding some solutions to individual councils putting out for tenders, particularly in the very hot and overheated construction market, to a stage where we are, on an individual basis, becoming very much price takers. Bundle it, put it all together, and you become a price maker, particularly if you have four or five years of work you can put out in the one tender, you will get very large construction groups looking at those particular offerings and that drives savings and that drives the potential benefits to your community. I think as Graham said, in some of the metros it could be as high as 20/25% and in some of the rural regional areas it could be as high as 40% savings if you bundle it together, run it over five years, but it is about us working collaboratively and getting away from our old thinking that we have to do everything ourselves and starting to look at this virtual governance arrangement and stringing together, as I said, as much of the spend that local government puts out now, particularly on the infrastructure spend market, into those collaborative arrangements. The Central Queensland Waste Management Strategy and others, there are lots of good examples of that.

Cr Burns, Eacham Shire

Very interested to hear about the co-ordinated project that you mentioned. What is the time scale on that and when can we expect to have some information that we might be able to think about accessing it.

Graham Matthew

We have completed our report and given it to the Department of Local Government, Planning and Sport. We are awaiting the response to that report. I think it is fair to say that there have been other issues on the agenda of late, but the report is finished and it has been welcomed and I know it is seriously being considered within government but as I stand and talk to you today I do not have a timeline. We are seeking a timeline at the moment.

Chair

Graham can I on behalf of all the delegates’ thank you again for being with us at the conference, not just for your presentation but for the whole of conference. I know that you had your team here, they have been working closely with councils individually, I really do urge all local governments to go and have a talk to the staff that are here from LGIS and I can just say from my experience and the work that we have done with both the Board and with the whole LGIS team, it is a true partnership, it is not in anyway competitive, it is not driven by profit, individual profit, it is driven by the needs of local government getting the best out of your rate payers dollar. It is not like I suppose some of the other consultancies that we do enter into where people are percentage based returned, this is about good fee for service, constructive bundling of local government construction and infrastructure needs and getting the best deal out of our dollars. Graham congratulations on the work that you have done so far, we really are very supportive of taking this partnership forward, thanks to you, the Chair and the Board for all the work you have done. Delegates could you please again thank Graham for his presentation.
Address: “Federal Opposition Local Government Update”
Senator Kate Lundy
Shadow Minister for Local Government

President of the LGAQ, Cr Paul Bell, members of the Executive, my senate colleague, Claire Moore and elected representatives of local government, ladies and gentlemen. When Kevin Rudd was elected leader of the Australian Labor Party, he made it clear to the people of Australia that he was determined to fix the federation. In saying this he acknowledged a serious problem and that problem is cost shifting between the three spheres of government and the political blame game that has reached new heights under the Howard government and people are fed up with it. Inevitably, local government is where the buck stops, and councils are closest to the very localised needs of their communities. But over the years costs shifting and buck passing of the blame game has increased the fiscal burden on local government, a chronic shortfall in funding makes it difficult for many councils to maintain their existing services, let alone respond to the many new challenges like climate change, changing demographics, sea and tree change trends and fast growth corridors. While this was well understood within many councils, it was a visionary step for some of the state LGAs and subsequently for ALGA to invest in the economic analysis of the Price Waterhouse Coopers Report to bring the harsh fiscal reality of an unsustainable future into the federal political arena. This report provided some useful insights on what councils could do to improve their performance, particularly in the important area of whole of life asset management, but it was also an unmistakable calling to task of the Howard government, who for eleven years was contemptuous, I believe, in its neglect of local government. At no time have we seen a credible response from the Howard government to the financial pressures that face local government, despite having it all laid out for them as long ago as 2003 by the Hawker Review. At no time have we seen the Howard government acknowledge the underlying cause of the growing fiscal burden of local government, the Faggs methodology and indexation. Instead the government has provided assistance in the form of direct grants designed to maximise their own political benefit. These direct grants are just enough for councils to keep their heads above water, just enough to keep local government grateful and begging for more, but there is no strategy underlying it.

Ladies and gentlemen it is because Kevin Rudd and Federal Labor is serious about ending the blame game, serious about putting a halt to unfettered cost shifting the buck passing, and adopting the positive agenda of cooperative federalism, that we have announced our time frame to achieve constitutional recognition of local government. On Monday, I announced that an incoming Rudd Labor government will consult in our first term with state and territory governments and representatives of local government including the Australian Local Government Association, the Council of Capital City Lord Mayors and other stakeholders, on the process for achieving constitutional recognition. Constitutional recognition will redefine the relationship between the commonwealth, state and local governments and guarantee that communities have an effective local voice in decision making on the issues that affect their lives. Labor has a long history of supporting the constitutional recognition of local government, I remind you that in office in 1974 and 1988 federal Labor sought constitutional recognition on both occasions, however this was not supported by the coalition and the referenda failed. We support constitutional recognition because we believe that it is important to redefine the relationship between the commonwealth, state and local governments. The public policy problems that confront us today can only be solved through cooperative and collaborative partnerships between the three spheres of government. We need to make sure that local government is properly positioned to play its role as a key part of the government of this country. Local councils should no longer be seen as the plaything of state governments to be dismissed or restructured at will or left as the last port of call for struggling communities when other governments abandon their responsibilities. Communities need an effective local voice in decision making on the issues that affect their lives and federal Labor will make sure that happens.

I understand that at the National General Assembly in November, the Australian Local Government Association will be looking at the form constitutional recognition could take, and this is a timely opportunity. I remind you that proposals for constitutional recognition have twice been defeated. We know that opponents of constitutional recognition will take advantage of any ambiguity in what constitutional recognition might mean. There will be fear campaigns about new layers of government and increased taxes. Opponents of constitutional recognition will exploit any signs that local government itself lacks conviction about its support for constitutional recognition. It is important that local government develop a clear idea of the form of constitutional recognition that it prefers and that local
government be prepared to campaign with a single voice to build community support for this important initiative. Constitutional recognition will allow local government to take its rightful place at the policy table as a full partner in the business of government, but there is a great deal of work to be done in the building grass roots support. Clearly the chances of a successful referendum will be increased if there is bipartisan support for this initiative. Accordingly, I again call on Liberal and National parties to indicate now that they will support constitutional recognition for local government.

We will need to support constitutional recognition with a robust institutional framework, Labor will put in place the structures and processes that support constitutional recognition by giving local government a forum in which it is able to exercise its constitutional place as the representatives of local communities. We will make the time and place for formal dialogue between a future federal Labor government and local government. The federal government needs to involve local government in addressing issues of national importance, Labor understands that sustainable solutions to the really difficult issues facing our nation require cooperation and collaboration and structures in which that collaboration can actually take place. This is why I am happy to announce today that in our first term of office we will establish a Council of Australian Local Governments, this body will provide the forum that allows local and federal governments to meet and discuss issues of national importance. A Council of Australian Local Governments will strengthen the dialogue between federal and local governments on issues that are of common interest to us all and provide an opportunity for local government to influence the issues considered at the Council of Australian Governments. It will also ensure that local government representatives have a more effective voice at COAG. I will invite local government bodies, including the national and state Local Government Associations, the Council of Capital City Lord Mayors, regional local government organisations and other stakeholder bodies, to nominate representatives for this council. The council will have federal representatives not just from the local government portfolio, but from portfolios across federal government, including an Economic Minister, the Ministers for Local Government and Regional Development, Infrastructure and Water, Housing, Health and Transport and I would envisage a range of other federal Ministers being coopted as required. The council will meet on a formal basis twice a year and be supported through the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, as is COAG. One of the first tasks of the council will be to plan for a national referendum on the constitutional recognition of local government, including the hosting of a form of constitutional convention, if that is what is believed necessary by stakeholders. Labor understands that constitutional recognition for local government and improved communication between all three spheres of government is essential if we are to improve the way our country is governed. The Council of Australian Local Governments will meet twice a year, as I said, and these bi-annual meetings will set a timetable for constitutional recognition and build the foundation to move forward on the big issues involved in creating a strong and sustainable future for local government.

We believe that one of the first topics of this dialogue will rightly be the need to improve the underlying financial arrangements between our governments. This cannot wait until after constitutional recognition, federal Labor is committed to finding ways to redress the funding shortfall suffered by local government, and as a first step in meeting that commitment I will ask the Council of Australian Local Governments to provide advice on the future funding arrangements for local government and on processes for involving federal, state and local government in developing clearer definitions of the roles and responsibilities of local government and other levels of government. Our national platform is eloquent in its expression of Labor’s commitment to collaborative partnerships with local communities. Clause 10 of the relevant chapter says this:

Labor respects the capacity of communities to determine their own futures and will support each region in assessing its own potential, identifying its own priorities, devising its own solutions and driving its own agenda. Labor will develop placed based policies to respond to local solutions and coordinate the delivery of long term strategies across departments and between levels of government.

Ladies and gentlemen we intend to pursue these principles, as I said not just in the local government and regional development portfolios, but across all the activities of government. We will adopt an approach that allows local communities to develop solutions that best meet their needs and aspirations. Federal Labor recognises that many councils are already working together to address regional challenges in a
more strategic way. One example is Advance Cairns founded by the Cairns City Council and Port Authority to coordinate the efforts of regional organisations, to facilitate new and existing business development and to advise on key components of the regional economy. But there are many others, in Queensland and other states. I recently met with the Peel Development Commission, a regional grouping that incorporates the geographical boundaries of five local municipalities in the west that together represent the fastest growing region in Australia. Federal Labor will support these efforts through a new body, Regional Development Australia. Regional Development Australia will support the work that local government is already doing to build partnerships across regions with similar interests and development needs. Regional Development Australia will give local government a focal point in their region and allow local government to have greater input into the federal governments thinking about regional strategies and infrastructure priorities. The Federal Labor Leader, Kevin Rudd, has provided detailed plans to overhaul the planning, development and investment of infrastructure in the nation’s future. The existing assets of the future fund will be retained in a Building Australia Fund under a future Labor government for the purpose of funding the infrastructure that is essential for the development of our national economy. Infrastructure Australia will be set up within one hundred days of the election and will have a deadline of twelve months to produce its first infrastructure priority list to set a clear agenda for government investment in infrastructure. With the right planning processes and a pro-market approach, we can overhaul Australia’s infrastructure environment and ensure that we have world class infrastructure for the future. But we will need to do this in partnership with local government. The Council of Australian Local Governments and Regional Development Australia will provide local government with a real voice and an opportunity to contribute to the formulation of a national program for infrastructure renewal and development.

Let me conclude with a couple of examples of how we will work collaboratively with local government on issues of national significance. On the launch of Labor’s new direction for affordable housing, Kevin Rudd committed a future federal Labor government to a new housing affordability strategy. I was very pleased that the Australian Local Government Association was an active participant in that Housing Affordability Summit we held last month. As one outcome from that summit, federal Labor, Australia’s eight state and territory governments and the Australian Local Government Association have committed to work cooperatively to improve housing affordability. This national consensus will provide national economic and policy leadership in improving the supply of affordable housing for Australian families and Mr Rudd has since announced, that if we do form the next government, Labor will establish a housing affordability fund to invest $500 million in new housing related infrastructure. Labor’s housing affordability fund will assist up to 50,000 new home buyers across Australia over the next five years and it will form the basis of a new partnership between the commonwealth and local governments to tackle housing affordability. Labor’s plan will not meet the cost of all new housing related infrastructure, but it will go a long way to make homes more affordable in the future. For too long the problem of declining housing affordability has been the subject of the blame game between the various spheres of government and I believe the housing summit shows how Labor views local government as a full partner in tackling issues like this, issues of national significance. This improved dialogue is critical to ending the blame game.

My second example of the way in which a Rudd Labor government will be working with local communities was set out last week by Nicola Roxon, Labor’s Shadow Minister for Health, in a statement on new directions for Australia’s health. As part of a $2 billion health and hospitals reform plan, a Rudd Labor government will invest $220 million to establish GP Super Clinics in local communities. Labor’s GP Super Clinics will provide infrastructure for GPs and other health professionals to work together in the one place, providing a greater range of quality services in local communities, and much greater convenience for patients. Federal Labor will provide leadership and funding to deliver the services, but we need to work in partnership with other spheres of government and local communities on where the clinics will be located and the exact configuration of services. Localism has in itself been built into the design of this new program. The exact configuration of services will depend on the needs of the local community, local involvement from health professionals through to councils and area consultative committees will be encouraged. Tenders to build and run the GP Super Clinics will be open to local consortiums, including local councils, existing practices looking to amalgamate, health professionals and divisions of general practice. Tenderers will be required to seek input from local health professionals. The GP Super Clinics will represent community based solutions for better service delivery and Labor’s GP Super Clinics will help deliver more frontline health services in local communities, they will help get doctors and other
health professionals into areas that need the most, particularly in regional areas and the fast growing outer suburbs and growth corridors that tend to be under serviced by health professionals. This is a national policy initiative, tailored to meet the needs of local communities.

In office, Labor will be looking to build partnerships in all portfolios in order to provide the best possible outcomes for local communities. This is the principle that underpins the Council for Australian Local Governments. The council will provide a robust and structured form of dialogue on policy development that ensures that we, as a future federal Labor government, are enlightened by the insights offered by local government as we develop and test policy ideas. Also we need to engage directly with local government if we are to have any hope of improving services to the community and improving the liveability of our communities. Labor is committed to localism and committed to working with local government to deliver the services needed. This means a real relationship, collaboration between the three spheres of government and forward thinking, not the short sighted election year blame game of a tired coalition government. So I would like to thank you for this opportunity to be present here at your 111th Annual Conference of the Local Government Association of Queensland. It is a real privilege for me to be here today and share with you our ideas for the future. I have focussed on the positive agenda that federal Labor has in the local government area of policy, because we believe it is time for local government to engage as an equal partner, it is time for constitutional recognition of local government and we can do better together.

Thank you.

Donna Stewart - Warroo Shire

It is very good to have you here Senator Lundy and hear what you have to offer as an alternate government, federal government. It was interesting to hear you refer to the current federal government as tired we have a pretty tired government here in Queensland currently. Perhaps it is time for a change. My question to you is, I am sure that you are aware of the recent happenings here in Queensland where the state government tried to crush the democratic process and also to fine councils if they went ahead with the polls and also to sack us as well. But that has, I understand, been withdrawn. My question to you is do you support the proposed referendum that is going to be held here shortly in Queensland to allow people to exercise that democratic right and express their views on the forced amalgamations of councils in Queensland.

Senator Lundy

Look thank you for that question. The plebiscites to be managed by the AEC are subject to legislation currently before the Federal Parliament that is in turn subject to a senate enquiry which will be occurring Thursday, Friday this week and Monday next week. Labor’s position is that we support the legislation and we support your right to express a view with respect to the amalgamations. That is Labor’s view, that is Kevin Rudd’s view and this is one issue that we disagree with the Beattie government about.

Unknown

Does your constitutional policy for local government give local government a mandate to govern without control by state government and secondly does it give access to entitle federal government to local government without interference by the state government.

Senator Lundy

The answers to those questions are as yet unresolved. One of the key points that we have made in our announcement about constitutional recognition is that the precise form of it needs to be determined through full consultation and discussion with local government. So I am not able to answer those questions. If that is the prevailing view you will have the opportunity to express it as part of those consultations and I think that that conversation is going to be a very critical one and an interesting one.
and quite key to the shape that constitutional recognition will ultimately take. We certainly envisage it as empowering to local government and for local government to have far greater say over their future size and shape and role.

Rod Davis - Douglas Shire

With half the room being emptied of its representational democracy by way of bye bye to half the councillors here is the Labor party possibility considering the options of replacing representational democracy in these small areas with a form of participatory democracy.

Senator Lundy

That is a terrific question. It is certainly a principal that Labor likes and respects and would like to see developed through local communities. I think it also should be the subject of dialogue within our Council of Australian Local Government and part of that forum about how that develops. But I have seen some fantastic examples of participatory democracy occurring and giving local communities whole new directions for the future once they have that conversation with their community so it can be a very exciting way forward for many councils.

Unknown

Thank you Senator, I thought we used to have participatory democracy here we seemed to have lost some of that lately. I am interested in your comments about Labor’s infrastructure plan. What guarantees are there that local government will get a share of infrastructure funding for council projects under this plan. We have got very significant infrastructure backlogs and renewal needs, can you guarantee that councils will get funds to assist in this task.

Senator Lundy

Today I have announced the main thing is our forum, our Council of Australian Local Governments, and that forum is designed to look at those big issues but also with Infrastructure Australia and local governments input to that, I expect that the questions of big infrastructure, local government will have a say. But that does not answer your question the question of the specific shortfall of infrastructure I think is twofold. One is the consideration of the very specific ask by ALGA of both Labor and the Coalition governments for their local community infrastructure renewal fund to fill the shortfall being experienced immediately. That is something we are still considering but we have not made any announcements about yet and I note the Coalition government has not made any specific announcement in that regard either. Secondly, federal Labor is committed to continuing the direct grants relating to Roads to Recovery, to regional partnerships and other forms of funding to local government. Finally, the big question of fiscal reform in those infrastructure shortfalls will be the subject of a comprehensive discussion within the forum that I have proposed today. I do not believe that we can look at that question of methodology and indexation and how that could possibly start to fill the shortfall being experienced by local government in my capacity as a member of the opposition. It is something we need to engage fully and properly on BUT only when local government is in the room and empowered as an equal sphere of government in those conversations. Otherwise it becomes a conversation about local government not including local government.

Cr Gillian Archibald - Burnett Shire

My question is in relation to, you have talked about involving the community and under a Labor Rudd government in the future you would collaborate and talk to the community and get their advice. Well obviously experiencing live that a Labor government do not do that on a state level at all. I would like to know from you, right now, what is the federal Labor Rudd government going to do now to help local government in Queensland. You do have the power inside the party, you are the federal guides of the Labor party, why isn’t someone saying the Beattie and Fraser you cannot take democracy off Queensland, you must go and ask the Queenslanders whether they want this to happen because this government is taking over something, you are standing up there as a federal person running a great campaign and look...
Rudd is doing well there but why doesn’t he come into Queensland and fix this problem with the government that is taking away our democratic right.

Senator Lundy

Thank you for that question. I think in politics you can make a couple of observations about issues and how we approach them. But I do not think you would get a clearer message than Kevin Rudd and federal representatives of Labor standing up and saying we disagree. We disagree with the government and it is obvious to me and I think to you that we have been unable to persuade the Queensland government to change their view. We have taken the choice to make a public stand nonetheless because that is our firm belief. But I can assure you that there is no greater political expression of our conviction or our view and by definition what we think they ought to be doing, than by taking the public stand that we have taken.

We support your right to have your vote. We support your right, we will support the legislation when it’s dealt with in parliament in the next few weeks that is clear and on the public record and has been for well over a week now.

John Kennedy – Balonne Shire

Senator, there is constant complaints from local government right across Queensland about the issue of cost shifting from the state government level down to local government. It is not that long ago when the state government generously donated most of the main roads in our shire, for instance, along with all the wooden bridges that needed to be replaced immediately. We have had state government swimming pools in Dirranbandi that they have generously donated a couple of hundred thousand of the $1.5 million it cost to build and donated the constant running cost back to the council for evermore. We have them wanting to close down a railway line to Dirranbandi and then they want to give us a road that is going to cost more to maintain than it will at the moment, they are losing a corridor they will not take it over as a main road corridor which is what they should do as a transport corridor. Will you give a commitment as the federal local government minister if you win government after the next federal election, to halt and hopefully even reserves this invidious trend of state governments to constantly hand costs down to local government, imposing higher and higher costs on us and then come back behind us and say you are not an efficient way of governing.

Senator Lundy

Look I take your point I think it is an accurate observation of what has occurred, not just in this state but right around the country. By establishing our forum and backing it in with the principle of a constitutional recognition of local government, the federal Labor government wants to be a part of that conversation. So in a way we are inserting ourselves into that dialogue that occurs at state level between state and local government or I think your point is that there is not any dialogue, it just happens. So I cannot give you the guarantee that you are looking for in a specific sense because I would be required to be a member of the state government to do that and empowered appropriately. But I can say to you that all of the issues that you have talked about we want to place on the federal agenda as well, we want to show leadership in stopping these problems occurring for the future because we know it is not sustainable. We know it is not helping the communities that we want to be able to represent more effectively and service effectively. So that issue has to be a part of what we are doing and I would like to add one more point, one of my colleagues, Senator Bob McMullen, is our Shadow Minister for Federal State Relations, he will have more to say about the relationship there as well and the three spheres of government need to come together to work out some of these big picture issues because it just cannot work on the sort of polarised transfer and cost shifting that has occurred in the past. We just cannot do it like that anymore it is not going to work.

Cr Paul Bell

Delegates just before the Senator goes I would like to on your behalf thank her for those policy announcements. We have been looking at how local government nationally can better engage and how we can have the discussion about who does what in this country. We cannot, as you have just iterated I
think very nicely to the senator, continue to have things devolve to us without finances, we cannot have responsibilities, infrastructure or whatever given back to local government without the finances and without proper discussion and proper resolution of all the issues that are now creating such a huge pressure on local government finances and its financial sustainability. Today Senator your announcement of a plan in Prime Minister and Cabinet to work through the issues of the National Agenda of Local Government is very welcome. The establishment of a Council of Australian Local Governments is a newer idea and it is one that I have very quickly come to embrace warmly because I know as the ALGA representative at COAG, it is a pretty lonely place where I sit there with the seven Premiers and First Ministers and their contingents, which are like a little army, where I sit there with Adrian Beresford-Wiley and possibly one other policy person representing 670 local governments, around that table with the PM, it is not a place that is conducive to getting our arguments, our points of view across. But what you have announced today will give us that opportunity, I believe, to not just be an invitee to the table at COAG but to be a truly recognised sphere of government that has a great role to play in this federation in the 21st century. Seven years into this 21st century Senator we need to get the arguments of local government right, we cannot go through the 21st century not having us recognised in the constitution and not having us truly at the table as a sphere of government in the federal arena. Thank you for your announcements and we wish you all the best Senator with the upcoming election and we look forward to working closely with you and Mr Rudd during that campaign. I think we have got our ten point plan just about ready Adrian haven’t we, so we will be there to see you very shortly about the points that local government would like to see resolved in the lead up to the next federal election. Delegates please again thank Senator Lundy.

Address: “Community Attitude Survey Report Back”
Ms Melissa Doyle
Channel 7, Sunrise Host

Due to copyright laws this speech was unable to be published.
Address: “Mr Howard Hobbs MP”  
Shadow Minister for Local Government and Planning

Thank you very much Paul Bell, President of the Local Government Association of Queensland, Mr Ron Clarke, Host Mayor, Ray Stephens, Local Member, Distinguished Guests, Mayors, Councillors, CEOs, Departmental Representatives and Ladies and Gentlemen. Well what a wonderful night last night it was to catch up with everybody and thanks once again to Hastings Deering for putting on such a wonderful show, the entertainment was first class and a wonderful opportunity for people to get together in this particularly very important conference. The Three Waiters, I didn’t see anybody having to strain to hear them, but they were wonderful, they were really great and Bjorn Again, well wow weren’t they something hey. Congratulations Greg and to the LGAQ for the choosing them and I am sure you had to do two or three visits to watch them perform to see how they were, but it was well worth doing, that was well done.

Ladies and gentlemen I always like to try and share a story with you, but it’s a bit hard you know to find much to laugh about these days and I did have a couple of stories that I considered but they were a bit rough and ready, they probably suited the mood out there actually. But then again when you see mild mannered CWA ladies throwing missiles at ministers and you see pony club instructors who don’t swear, hurling abuse, I guess that you know anything goes. But I use what I call my personal parliamentary rictor scale that I use to determine how far I can go before the Speaker throws me out, and I thought that they might have been a bit rough and I’d only get probably one paragraph out before he would have put me out so I’m not going do it. But what I did do, I did hear one story, they swear it’s true, and I got it on very, very good authority and it was about this long serving councillor who died, and contrary to Peter Beattie’s clock and St Peter said oh Jesus has that in the office using it for a ceiling fan. Lincolns and the clock has moved twice, Abe told two lies when he was on earth and he said where’s what are they? St Peter said oh they’re lie clocks. Oh are they, he said whose clock is that one and St Peter said that’s Mother Theresa’s. See every time you tell a lie the hands move and on that clock the hands had not moved. Wow, he said whose clock is that one there? St Peter said that’s Abraham Lincoln’s and the clock has moved twice, Abe told two lies when he was on earth and he said where’s Peter Beattie’s clock and St Peter said oh Jesus has that in the office using it for a ceiling fan.

I think after this morning, the minister’s hands of his clock have moved one notch, as well. I’ll start off, we live in an imperfect world, with imperfect people, leading to imperfect politicians making imperfect decisions. I’m sorry that’s not my speech that’s notes I took from the Minister’s speech. History will record that 2007 was the year that local was taken out of local government in Queensland. Forced council amalgamations have dominated and paralysed most local governments since April this year. Most councillors are aware of the details and implications of amalgamations, particularly in their part of the state. But for the record, it’s important I outline the situation the way I, and the coalition, see this extraordinary attack on our third tier of government and the reasons for my strong opposition in the parliament and throughout the state. I’msure that even those councillors who support amalgamations could not condone the way in which this process was handled by the Minister and the state government.

Amalgamations might be right, for some councils but not right for others. But at the end of the day the decision of local communities should be accepted, not overridden, by a dictatorial state government. Any state government that goes so far as to make criminals out of duly elected representatives, who are prepared to exercise their legislative and democratic right to have a say, is not fit to govern. It is quite clear that the ministerial statements supporting the Triple S were being made while behind the scenes plans were well underway to destroy it and force amalgamations on Queensland councils. After the Premier and Minister’s announcement on 17 April that 43% of councils were not sustainable and the Local Government Reform Commission was set up and that Queensland councils would undergo sweeping restructure, councils took some time to analyse the situation. As details were demanded it soon became clear that the truth from the government was the first casualty in this process. There was no choice but to seek independent advice. An independent analysis of the Queensland Treasury Corporation “weak category councils” by international administrator and receivers, McGraw Nichols, found those councils were unlikely to become insolvent within the foreseeable future. They also found the financial ratings of those councils, and this is interesting, are higher than the reported results of some of Australia’s companies listed on the Stock Exchange. They also found that any private sector company who was similarly rated weak, pursuant to the Queensland Treasury Rating Process, would have time to fully
consider its financial sustainability and implement remedial strategies to trade their way out of difficulty. In other words they would not go broke, they would not go broke at all the way the Premier and the Minister claimed. The government were relying on the Price Waterhouse Coopers report to show Queensland councils were unsustainable, however a closer examination of the report found that no councils in Queensland were examined. In fact the report examined councils in NSW, Victoria, South Australia, and Western Australia and extrapolated those findings across Australia. All states, except Western Australia, have undergone amalgamations and the report found those councils had sustainability issues. Council sustainability is an issue, it’s an issue and there we all know that. However, council revenue not keeping pace with the federal taxation revenue going down from 1.2% to .6% of the federal taxation pool and cost shifting have had the most significant impact on council revenue. Most Queenslanders would be shocked, absolutely shocked to know, that the state government had not done a cost benefit analysis to support their reform proposal, there was no professional, no academic, no economic or no social studies undertaken to support the method of reform proposed by the state government for councils in Queensland. Professional advice was available from people, such as Professor Brian Dollery, who would examine in particular fifteen reports, he wrote many, many reports, but certainly fifteen on sustainability and amalgamations and was very critical of the Queensland reform process. He believed that councils could improve sustainability and service delivery through resource sharing and recommended a continuation of the Triple S process. Dr Mark McGovern as well, a Senior Lecturer at QUT, along with Dr Scott Prasser, Senior Lecturer at the University of the Sunshine Coast, have also been critical of the reform proposal. The state government commissioned Morton Consultants, Alan was here a while ago, to undertake a review of the major structural changes to local government in Australia and overseas. He found that experience elsewhere suggested that factors such as efficiency, scale, cost reductions and elimination of duplication are often over emphasised and not properly balanced with factors such as the attachment people have to place and community, and their concept of local democracy and representation. He also pointed out that previously amalgamated councils in Queensland have had a slightly higher rate increase per capita compared to that of councils across the state. So even the report that the government commissioned did not give them a reason to proceed. And this is particularly interesting, the Local Government Reform Commission, the government have consistently hailed the independence of the Local Government Reform Commission, what needs to be clearly pointed out is that if you study the terms of reference given to the Commission and the statements on the formation of the commission by the Premier and the Minister and the short timeframe, it becomes clear that the Local Government Reform Commission had little option but to come up with anything other than what they did, which was what the government had requested in the terms of reference in the first place. At the time, I compared the terms of reference and the Minister and the Premier’s statements with a map of existing council boundaries, and the map that I drew then was not un-similar to what we had in the final result. In other words, all I had to do was join the dots, it was as simple as that. So I informed some of my councillors of that finding and the interpretation that I got from some of them was that surely that couldn’t happen, they wouldn’t do that to us, but they did, they did and it was not by accident. Councils in the far west would have faced further amalgamations if it were not for their concerted campaign pointing out the absurdity of such amalgamations. I would like you to put your hands together for those tough guys out in the west, good on you fellas it was fantastic. I congratulate those councils for their grit, their determination and their fight and the Premier’s contact with the Commission did reduce the number of amalgamations in the west.

A Local Government Reform Bill 2007 was passed on 9 August 2007, this legislation in reality places councils in caretaker mode until the 2008 elections and gives extraordinary powers, absolutely extraordinary powers, we’ve never seen this in any legislation, in this state before. The Minister has the final say on actions of the council before and after the change over date. The Minister can remove local transition committee members at any time. Interim CEOs can override council CEOs and can direct staff to do what ever they want, cannot make decision over $150,000 of the last annual report earnings, local transitions committees will have to develop and implement non-industrial arrangements under the state government controlled guidelines. Unelected union officials will have a disproportionate ability to affect the outcome of any industrial relations activity and lock the new councils into the outcomes. Through these arrangements, the government and unions, will have a chance to bring all council employees in Queensland under their preferred industrial relations model. It’s no secret the government were working on a model to prevent council workers from accessing the work choice options. Setting up statutory authorities, separate to local government, to employ the 37,000 local government staff, the preferred model will depend on the outcome of the Etheridge Council case presently before the Federal Court. Your employees will become public servants of a sort and you will have a lot less say on how you
employ, run and operate with that structure. Many wondered why the union movement were originally so quiet, we all did, where’s the unions, why are they prepared to let employees burn in some of those towns where the councils are going to be taken away. Why weren’t the unions standing up for us, and for them. We know now why, it become clear they did a deal with the state government to remain silent provided they had a win against work choice, using local government employees in this political manoeuvre. It’s also my understanding that Kevin Rudd was well aware of this deal, so all this business about we’ll help and everything else, rubbish they were in it up to their necks right from the very, very start. So there’s no good saying one thing and meaning another, this is what the main deal was about. The Minister said this morning, interestingly enough, he said the law is the law and we should obey the law. Interesting that the federal government also had a law that allowed you to operate work choice but this state government is going to create a law to avoid the law, it’s a bit of inconsistency there I would have thought.

Council polls, the Premier and Minister have stated that they will not sack councils for having a poll, however the legislation to take out fining and dismissal of councils while introduced, still has not been passed, it is still in the House and it is still law. I congratulate those councils and mayors who undertook community surveys and polls to determine the feelings of their communities. Many did it in defiance, absolute defiance, of the government’s outrageous and dictatorial decree that people should not have a say in what happens in their community. I’m aware of the ridiculous situation where councillors after 9 August were seeking legal advice if they could even meet with federal members of parliament in case it was seen as a request for a poll, giving the state government an opportunity to sack them. The eyes of Australia are now on local government in Queensland and I welcome the Prime Minister’s intervention and I recommend to all councils, affected by change in the way local governments operate in Queensland, to request an Australian Electoral Commission to have a plebiscite. This morning, for instance, Margaret Strelow mentioned when the Minister was speaking, she said that there council was reasonably happy with the amalgamation process, and that’s good, that’s fine, that’s their right but I think also what that council needs to do is have a poll so then they can go to the Minister and say the council supports it and the community supports it. I suggest to everybody that we all have a poll, many councils who have not had boundary changes are affected in other ways. For example by reduction in the number of councillors being forced upon them, single member divisions when they were promised multiple member divisions and councils unable to undertake their own industrial relations arrangements. There councils will be given an opportunity to have a plebiscite in accordance with the Prime Minister’s wishes. The Premier and the government continue to say it’s only councillors and mayors looking after their own positions who have kept the amalgamation going, it’s an opportunity for you to set the record straight that it is in fact that community who is not happy with these undemocratic changes. Let your community send a strong message to George Street.

A Senate Enquiry will be held this Thursday, Friday and coming Monday on the Commonwealth Electoral Amendment Democratic Plebiscite Bill and it will be a good opportunity for some of the real facts to be brought before the people of Australia. We ask ourselves why did this happen, why on earth did it happen. Many ask why did it happen and how could a government get away with being so deceitful on the issue with the public and the reasons, particularly when you’re in the political game where I guess I am, it’s fairly simple, it’s a diversion away from the water and infrastructure crisis, and unprecedented government debt in Queensland. Had the south east Queensland water resources been topped up last year, we would not have had such a large scale amalgamation. As a consequence of the water crisis and the need to take the south east Queensland water assets, estimated to be worth $18 billion, and don’t forget Queensland Rail is worth about $10 billion, so that’s how big it is, which in time can be partly sold off or franchised off, that’s one of the main reasons. A separate Price Waterhouse Cooper’s report into south east Queensland water rejects the Premier’s criticism that councils were not reinvesting in water infrastructure, then again, we knew that all the way along, his statement’s were only a stalking horse for taking over your water assets. The Queensland debt levels, by 2010 it is predicted to be $52 billion, $22 billion state government debt will require an interest payment equivalent to building a 700 bed hospital every year, that’s the interest payment only. On top of this, there’s $30 billion owed by the government owned corporations in Queensland. By 2010 every Queenslander will owe $150,000 accruing at $12 million a day, that will be your debt, and that’s what he wants to hide.
The other factors that have played a part, one is the majority of councillors who make it to parliament are conservation, I’ll let you work out the reasons. The other and most serious is the state electoral redistribution must be done before the next election, and the state electorates generally follow council boundaries and that was the main reason for the haste. Remember the short period when you had to name your council, whether you had divisions or not, you had about three or four days, get it in quick, get it in, this is the reason. The Electoral Commission need to commence working on the state electoral boundaries by September this year and be completed by March 2008, the clear manipulation of the Local Government Reform Commission into drawing boundaries has flowed over into pre-empting the new state electoral boundaries to benefit the Labor Party in the state elections for the next decade. How could he get it in, this is the reason. The Electoral Commission need to commence working on the state electoral boundaries and that was the main reason for the haste. Remember the short period when you had to get away with it, people often say how on earth in this day and age 2007, can he get away with it. Well amalgamations, it’s in their editorials, they make no secret of it and they’re prepared to support the state wide stories and they, I believe, have been quite balanced and good. The Courier Mail supports have been a lot more issues bubbling out there and the people of the metropolitan area, the large use of the facts and figures, advertising and government resources manipulated for a political purpose to government you could bet your boots they wouldn’t stop until they’d exposed the rotten and untruthful smaller communities throughout Queensland. If a similar event had occurred under a conservative deceit and manipulation of this dictatorial state government at the expense of people who live in the population, would have known what was going on. The ABC, I’ve got to say, however have run several metropolitan television and the Courier Mail. One media outlet advised Jeff Sweeney, our leader, after many days, he tried for days and days and days to get this issue up, for you, for us, for all of us and he was told, mate why are you flogging this dead horse. They just weren’t interested, it didn’t affect Brisbane, and that’s another point too, is you know in all reality why shouldn’t it affect Brisbane, I mean the boundaries of Brisbane are 82 years old. The Minister mentioned this morning about the salaries, Brisbane City Council set their boundaries so why shouldn’t it be the same for all of us. The reality is I suppose had the Premier involved Brisbane in this, it would have involved the media and there would have been a lot more issues bubbling out there and the people of the metropolitan area, the large population, would have known what was going on. The ABC, I’ve got to say, however have run several state wide stories and they, I believe, have been quite balanced and good. The Courier Mail supports amalgimations, it’s in their editorials, they make no secret of it and they’re prepared to support the deceit and manipulation of this dictatorial state government at the expense of people who live in the smaller communities throughout Queensland. If a similar event had occurred under a conservative government you could bet your boots they wouldn’t stop until they’d exposed the rotten and untruthful use of the facts and figures, advertising and government resources manipulated for a political purpose to keep them in government. It should be blatantly clear to all by now that this is not about council reform, it’s a political decision and it will require a political solution. These opportunities will present themselves in the lead up to the federal and state elections. Due to the facts that I have presented to you today, and in particular there is no clear evidence, no clear evidence at all, that this model as proposed by the government will improve sustainability nor will it improve regional development and deliver improved services. It would not be also inconceivable that the implementation costs could be in excess of $1 million.

The coalition plan, I announced with some detail clear policy difference, clear policy difference between the labor state government and the conservation coalition. The coalition on return to government will allow communities, affected by forced amalgamations, will be given the opportunity to consider to de-amalgamate. A Queensland coalition guarantees that communities affected by forced amalgamations will be given the opportunity to consider whether to de-amalgamate through the following four point plan:

1. Communities within local government areas that have either already established, or establish prior to the March 2008 local government elections, through representative petitions or polls, that their communities object to the forced amalgamation of their council, will automatically be given the opportunity to de-amalgamate under a Queensland Coalition Government.

An example of this is Noosa Shire which has demonstrated through submissions to the Local Government Reform Commission and petitions, that the community is overwhelmingly opposed to forced amalgamation.

2. Following the March 2008 local government elections, people within newly amalgamated local government areas that can demonstrate that amalgamation is not suitable for their communities will be given the opportunity to consider de-amalgamation under a Queensland coalition government. De-amalgamation can occur, as you heard this morning and in fact in Victoria, there are two councils down there that have just recently de-amalgamated, so it can be done, it has been done and it will be done here. This will need to be demonstrated through a poll run across the new local government boundaries and can be triggered by resolution of the newly amalgamated local government or a petition of 20% of their representatives. Financial assistance will be available in special circumstances to assist communities in undertaking these polls. If the
poll demonstrates support for de-amalgamation, the Minister for Local Government will refer the matter to the Local Government Commissioner, who will review the boundaries in consultation with the community and make recommendations to the Minister;

3. The seventeen Torres Strait Islander councils will be automatically reinstated as individual local governments with a single joint government central financial management and accountability system. This will enable the councils to have the autonomy of decision making given back to them and retain a single, central financial control arrangement. It is so simple to do, I don’t know why the government have done that.

4. A Queensland coalition government will seek to have local government formally recognised in an appropriate way in the Australian Constitution to prevent future state governments from dictating these types of sweeping and devastating actions on local communities. Don’t forget however, that local government is recognised in the Queensland constitution and it didn’t help. If and when we’re able to get recognised in the federal constitution, we need to ensure we have the anchor points in there that mean something. That actually means we have some ownership, we some hurdles that governments, rogue governments, may have to at least go through before they can do what this government has done to local government here. So it’s not a simple thing to say we’re going to do it, it’s a matter of we’ve got to work our way through what we want, what suits local government and then we should do it.

The “no disadvantage” test, the Queensland coalition will ensure that communities of interest will be protected and will never again be devastated or destroyed by dictatorial decisions, made by out of touch state governments. Further to our plan to give communities a say on their future, we call on the state government to implement a “no disadvantage” test, for every community affected by forced council amalgamations. I see in the Code of Practice that’s put out today by the Minister, there is a “no disadvantage” test in there for the employees, why shouldn’t we have it for our communities as well. Residents need to be assured that rates will not rise excessively, council services will not be withdrawn including those usually not offered such health clinics, aged and child care, support for community and sporting clubs and rural fire brigades. There will be no job losses for council staff delivering services, percentage of council staff delivering outdoor services will not decrease. The distance needed to travel to access council services does not increase, small business and services, such as banks, post offices, hospitals and schools do not have to close down or relocate due to council administration moving to other centres. The same level and type of development allowed under old town plans are maintained in new town plans to ensure local identities and communities are preserved. An independent audit to benchmark the above elements of the communities, “no disadvantage” test needs to occur prior to the March 2008 local government elections. This will allow communities no disadvantage test to be applied during the forced amalgamation process. The Queensland coalition will continue to fight the forced amalgamations of local government through every means possible, it isn’t over yet, it isn’t over so don’t think it is. The Queensland coalition will also fight to ensure that if communities are forced to undergo local government amalgamations they will be no worse off. I take this opportunity to express my admiration for the professional way in which the Local Government Association of Queensland managed this forced amalgamation political debacle. It must be remembered, and this is particularly important, that it was purely a political process. There was no avenue, no avenue for negotiated debate or settlement, it was purely a political process and they had to take it on that way. The government of the day have made some very unfortunate decisions and I understand the need to maintain some third tier of government which means working with the Local Transition Committees. It does not mean you give up hope, but once again having a genuine local government structure to provide the facilities that you once had. I do however send a strong message, a very strong message to the Local Transition Committees and to councils who are formed after March 2008; don’t dispose of existing council chambers, because we might be needing them again. We can win the debate and the fight in the parliament but we can’t win the vote. But that won’t always be the case, but when we do we’ll give you your councils back. Thank you.

Cr Buchan, Balonne

I just wanted to ask the Minister a couple things this morning but I couldn’t get around to it. One is that I believe that, and I’ll speak mainly for the bushies because I’m not a city expert, the majority of bush councillors and mayors work for their communities, they work for what I consider to be a fairly mere
pittance and in the case of Balonne Shire, the first ten months of this last financial year, the total cost for the ten councillors including the mayor, with all their allowances and communications allowances and travel fees and meeting fees and all that sort of stuff was about $100,000. That’s not really a lot of money for the work we did, we had them dotted all over the shire and we’ve been reduced from ten including the mayor to five. It’s going to make it very difficult and much more expensive, I believe, that having the ten that were there, the cheapest part of our council was that. I believe in saying that it’s just up to councils and mayor looking out for their jobs and worrying about their positions, I believe that was an insult and I would have liked to have asked the Minister for an apology this morning and I would like you to do that for me one day. My second question is you mentioned the debt, it’s my belief that the majority of labor governments I’ve studied or watched through my lifetime, and you can Burke in Western Australia, Bannon in South Australia, Cain in Victoria, I think Field didn’t do too well in Tasmania, it looks like Carr’s bailed out just before it’s gone down the gurgler, because they had to try and sell the Snowy Mountains to try and get out of the deep dodar. This place up here will be in an absolute monster of debt pretty soon. I’d like you to tell me five years ago or ten years ago what was the debt in Queensland because when Joe was here we had the same number of people coming to Queensland every week, and we seemed to survive.

Howard Hobbs

Thank you Robert, I’m not sure exactly what the figure is but it certainly was not very high at all. Our debt levels have been very, very low and that’s been one of the great things about Queensland, we didn’t need to borrow. The federal government haven’t needed to borrow in fact, they’ve been putting money away and this is a time of great revenue coming in, I mean record amounts of GST, record amounts of land tax and stamp duty coming in. So this is a time when governments should be putting money away not borrowing like drunken sailors.

Jim Webber, Rockhampton

I just find it a little bit hypocritical that the coalition now is crying foul, when local government had the opportunity to go for a referendum for constitutional recognition, it was first supported by the coalition government and then strenuously voted against and even people were threatened, the President of the Local Government Association at that time, who was a strong National Party member, was called a communist and abused by his colleagues throughout the shires and yet today we’re talking about what this government has done and also the fact that we are looking again at constitutional recognition. We had that opportunity; this debate probably would not be taking place now if we had availed ourselves and had the support of the coalition government at that time.

Howard Hobbs

Thanks Jim, I was on Mike Ahern’s committee way, way back and in fact we recommended that we have constitutional recognition of local government here in Queensland, that was my view then and it’s my view now. What’s happened in the past with other governments, there are many stories that can be told on all sides, the reality is this is 2007 and we’re moving on. No one could even possibly imagine that a government would have made a decision such as they’ve done and take local government virtually apart the way they have. So I think we’re chartering new territory and I very much support local government being enshrined in the federal constitution, which I believe would give us much more power and security.

Donna Stewart, Warroo Shire

Howard you’ve just joined the ranks as a charlatan, because this morning the Minister said that anyone who was giving false to their communities, that the amalgamations weren’t going to happen, should be cast aside. But anyway I guess that’s better than being a martyr seeking a platform for notoriety. Is it possible to have enshrined some sort of legislation that would ensure that this recent attack on our democratic rights to not allow people to have a say, would never, ever happen in the history of Australia, or in this case Queensland, again because the gentlemen who spoke previously was referring to another very famous premier, who it could be claimed to have had tendencies towards a dictatorship, but to my knowledge he never, ever, ever went this far to deny people their right to vote. So is it possible to have that enshrined in legislation that this attack would never happen again.
Howard Hobbs

Thank you Donna, I believe we already have that, in fact the Local Government Association challenge in the court at the present moment is on that very thing and it’s my understanding that they’ve got a very, very strong case and if that is the case it means that it shouldn’t happen. Now it’s my very strong belief that the state government did not seek crown law advice when they put that amendment into the house, in fact it wouldn’t surprise me if the Minister didn’t draft it himself when it came in and I think they’ll find that the Local Government Association will win in the courts and that’s one of the reasons why they withdrew the legislation the other day. I believe we already have that ability and that protection. But if we haven’t, we are happy to put it in place.

Greg Rogers, Maroochy

It is a really sad state of affairs in the fact that I don’t think there would be anybody here who would dispute the fact that what the government of Queensland has done is completely wrong about not having the consultation process. The issue that I have though, is the fact that we keep pushing forward regarding whether we have a plebiscite or referendum, the fact of the matter is there is so much media type and so forth you’re not going to get a true representation, and I’m not talking for amalgamation or against amalgamation, because I honestly believe if you did a detailed survey of the people in this room, you wouldn’t get a concise point of view. So what’s going to happen is with a plebiscite, what’s it going to do for us, what is it going to do, is it going to make our residents feel good, I really don’t know. Maroochy was driven the first week we came into this election period, into this term, they said, you know what happened, when it came out that the government actually drove it, you know what they did, they did a big back flip, they just flipped over and now they’re generating that type amongst the public.

I just wonder what you are going to get from the plebiscite, because I honestly do not believe, you know I can tell you exactly what the results are going to be here now. You’re going to get 80% of the people that vote to say we don’t want amalgamation I really don’t know just what you’re going to get from the plebiscite.

Howard Hobbs

Thanks Greg, at the end of the day the people need to have a say. We’ve got to be able to listen to the people. Now whether they do the plebiscite now or six months time, it doesn’t matter, the question will be put up some time and the rules of plebiscites are through the AEC that the for and against are put up and that’s what their judgment will be. Now they are the umpires, the people out there, and I don’t think we should be afraid of that. I think you’re probably right about the figures, I’m sure it would be but if the people are saying 80% no shouldn’t we be listening to them.

Address: “Fat, Forty and Fired”
Mr Nigel Marsh
Chief Executive Officer
Leo Burnett Australia and Author

Due to copyright laws this speech was unable to be published.
Hon Treasurer’s Report

Cr Brendan McNamara
Treasurer
LGAQ

The LGAQ recorded a net deficit of $284 000 for the year ended 31/05/07. This follows a strong surplus of $311 000 in the 2006 year.

The deficit was a result of the unbudgeted resources needed to respond to the LG Reform Agenda and lower then the budgeted dividends from the LGAQ owned entities. LGAQ will continue to provide resources on the LG Reform Agenda in the current year.

The LGAQ recorded total revenue from ordinary activities of $15.7 million of which $2.8 million or 18% was contributed by member’s subscriptions.

The consolidated group recorded a net deficit of $510 000 for the year ended 31/05/07. Major impact on Consolidation was the $239 000 share of loss in the QPG Shared Services Partnership. The Partnership was expected to generate losses through the start up phase which has been slowed by the LG Reform Process.

All other owned entities and partnerships returned net profit results.

The proposed budget for the 2008 financial year shows a $57 000 surplus. While it would be preferable for the 2007-8 budget to deliver a surplus at least equal to the 2007 year deficit the proposed small surplus reflects the current uncertainty in resource allocations proposed by the LG Reforms.

As part of its 14 point LG Reform Strategy in response to the Council Amalgamations the Association is reviewing its revenue and expenditure basis to ensure it is best positioned to represent the interests of Local Government for 2008 and beyond.

I would like to thank the LGAQ staff for their dedicated work in the past 12 months. Their already full workload has been added to by the State Government Reform Agenda. Your efforts in assisting councils through this reform process to date have been extremely professional and are much appreciated. We all know from our own Councils that the efforts of our staff are what make our councils successful. The LGAQ is no exception so in conclusion I would again like to thank the staff for their efforts over the past year.

Address: “Beaconsfield Mining Rescue”
Mr Paul Featherstone

Due to copyright laws this speech was unable to be published.