

210 MANILLA STREET,
MANILLA. N.S.W. 2346.

Reference:
JSH:RF:C32A

Your Reference:



Reply to: **THE GENERAL MANAGER,
P.O. BOX 102,
MANILLA N.S.W. 2346.**

Telephone: (02) 6785 1304

Fax.: (02) 6785 1981

4th November, 1998

MANILLA SHIRE COUNCIL

*Impact of Competition Policy Reforms Inquiry
Productivity Commission
PO Box 80
BELCONNEN ACT 2616*

Dear Commissioners,

Submission

Inquiry - The Impact of Competition Policy Reforms on Rural and Regional Australia

At its October Ordinary meeting, Council was informed of the Commission's inquiry into this subject, and resolved to forward a submission thereto.

Council has noted the Terms of Reference and the scope of this inquiry, and commends the Government on its initiative. Council also notes that the Government wishes to ensure that the benefits of increased competition in the economy flow to all Australians, including those living in rural and regional Australia, together with the expectation that implementation of competition policy will promote efficiency, economic growth and community welfare. Council is hopeful that this present inquiry will reveal that the impact of competition policy reforms on rural and regional Australia has harmed, rather than benefited, those communities.

Manilla Shire Council views economic rationalism as one of the greatest threats to the future security and viability of rural and regional Australia. It also considers that economic rationalism is inextricably linked with implementation of competition policy. Whilst these change drivers may be instrumental in the promotion of efficiency and, perhaps, economic growth Council considers that they are destructive of community welfare.

Formation of that view can be traced to the original processes of "rationalisation" which occurred in rural and regional Australia, usually in the form of the removal/reduction of both government and private sector services and agencies from rural areas. In face of those changes, rural communities became increasingly sceptical concerning the interest of Government, at any level, in their welfare. Communities west of the divide felt more and more alienated as population numbers dwindled and, with that, the economic capacity of small communities to be self sustaining.

At a meeting in Tamworth with the Federal Member for New England, Mr. Ian Sinclair, and the State Member for Tamworth, Mr. Tony Windsor, Manilla Shire Council enquired as to whether either the Federal or State Governments had any structured plan, or vision, for ensuring the long term economic viability and social cohesion of small communities in rural Australia. Mr. Windsor was more forthcoming than was Mr. Sinclair, the former acknowledging that, on the basis of his observation, there was no such vision or plan at either the Federal or State level. Disheartening advice, indeed, and leading ultimately to formation of the Country Summit Task Force, which body continues to be most capably chaired by Mr. Windsor.

Council continues to make representations on behalf of its community through the Country Summit forum, and other lobby groups. Principal among the latter is the Northern Area Regional Organisation of Councils Inc. (NAROC), a body which has been unrelenting in presenting the concerns of its members to government. One recent NAROC initiative was to write to each of the one hundred and thirty nine members of Parliament in NSW, seeking their comments on issues raised by member councils. NAROC has advised that the response to its approach was overwhelming, and the Executive resolved that member councils be provided with copies of those responses considered to be of substance. Photocopies of those same responses have been provided with this submission, for the information of the Commission.

The various responses have been provided as a convenient means of informing the Commission of the range of issues which has been raised, together with advices from Parliamentary representatives. The Commission will be well placed to make its own assessment as to the evidence of any long term vision or plan, for ensuring the future economic viability and social cohesion of communities within rural NSW. Mindful of the specific reporting requirements of the Commission, Council does appreciate that concern raised at the regional and local level, must be viewed in the context of those broader reporting obligations.

Be that as it may, Manilla Shire Council is passionately committed to the preservation of its own community, both socially and economically, and implores the Commission to find, overwhelmingly, that there are many circumstances in which restrictions on competition are justified, in the interests of community welfare. The long term survival of rural communities depends upon the creation of new economic development opportunities, and not the contraction, or removal, of those which already exist. Council therefore exhorts the Commission to find, overwhelmingly, that priority should be given to initiatives which will ensure the preservation and expansion of the established economic and social infrastructure of rural Australia, rather than placing undue emphasis on the "bottom line" obsession of economic rationalism.

Manilla Shire Council considers that this present inquiry provides an excellent opportunity for exposing the sophistry and myopia of economic rationalism. There is emerging evidence which suggests that governments (increasingly) are recognising that rural communities have real relevance in the overall scheme of things and are deserving of support and assistance, accordingly. The Commission enjoys, possibly, a unique opportunity to debunk the myth by exposing the harm which has been done to community welfare by the drivers of economic rationalism. Should that be achieved, it is undoubtedly the case that the Commission will have done a wonderful thing for rural and regional Australia.

Council thanks the Commission for the opportunity to forward this submission, and would be most pleased to participate in one of the informal hearings which are planned.

Yours faithfully,


John S. Hunt
GENERAL MANAGER



PARLIAMENT OF NEW SOUTH WALES
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

MEMBER FOR RIVERSTONE



Electorate Office
2/46 Railway Road
PO Box 138
Marayong NSW 2148

Tel: (02) 9622 6190
Fax: (02) 9831 2795

Mr D Budge
Executive Officer
Northern Area Regional Organisation
Of Councils Inc
PO Box 791
INVERELL NSW 2360

23 OCT 1998

Our Ref: JA:RA/0929

Dear Mr Budge

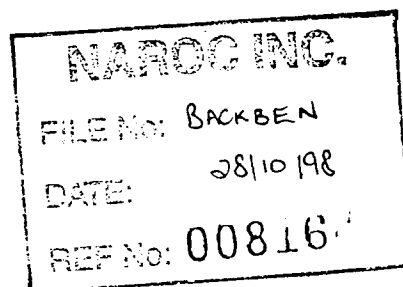
Further to my previous correspondence, please find attached a copy of a reply to the representations I made on your behalf to the Minister for Local Government, the Hon E Page, MP concerning rural services in your region and the effect of government policies on the economic development of country centres.

Yours sincerely

John Aquilina, MP

Minister for Education and Training

Minister Assisting the Premier on Youth Affairs





NEW SOUTH WALES

THE HON ERNIE PAGE, MP
MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

P27716
Af96/0110
Dts 42608

The Hon J J Aquilina MP
Minister for Education and Training and
Minister Assisting the Premier on Youth
Affairs
Level 2
35 Bridge Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Minister,

I am writing in response to your letter of 31 July 1998, regarding correspondence you received from the Northern Area Regional Organisation of Councils (NAROC).

As well as discussing these issues with me in July, I understand that Mr Don Budge, the Executive Officer of NAROC, has written to a number of other Ministers to seek their comments and suggestions on the issues-discussion paper. To assist your response, I can provide advice on the issues which fall within my area of responsibility.

Firstly, the list of issues from NAROC includes the issue 'Local Government amalgamations – no forced amalgamations of local government authorities'. I can confirm that the current government policy is that there will not be any forced amalgamations of local government authorities in NSW.

The NSW Government is committed to encouraging regional cooperation between local government authorities in NSW. In relation to Voluntary Regional Organisations of Councils, such as NAROC, the Government has set out its policy in its March 1995 election policy statement on local government. The commitment is to:

- encourage active roles for VROCs - based upon current successful models;
- further define and resolve organisational issues - VROCs should not duplicate existing arrangements or tasks, and their actual status should be made clear; and
- consult with local government to develop the aims and objectives of VROCs.

To date, my Reform Task Force has produced a Discussion Paper and Summary of Submissions Report focussing on 'Proposals to Encourage Cooperation between Local Government Authorities in NSW'. Copies of both these papers are available on the internet at my Department's homepage: <http://www.dlg.nsw.gov.au>.

Secondly, I can advise that Financial Assistance Grants (FAGs) are paid to councils under the provisions of the Commonwealth Local Government (Financial Assistance) Act 1995. The responsibility for this funding scheme is with the Commonwealth Minister for Regional development, Territories and Local Government.

Prior to 1991/92 local roads funds were paid to councils, through the RTA, as "tied" grants under the provision of the Australian Centennial Roads Development (ACRD) Act 1988. This grant included a bridge replacement subsidy element for which councils applied for funding on a dollar-for-dollar basis. It was decided at the 1990 Special Premiers' Conference that the ACRD funds should be "untied" and paid as general purpose grants via the States' Grants Commissions.

The value of local roads funding remains a separately identified component of the FAGs, however grant does not have to be spent on roads. The method of allocation used by the NSW Grants Commission is similar to that formerly used by the RTA. The Commission introduced a bridge length formula to replace the bridge replacement subsidy provisions of the former "tied" grants.

The principles for the distribution of the local roads component of the FAGs are based on principles which were agreed to by the Local Government and Shires Associations and the Commonwealth. The formula provides surety of funding. The untied nature of the grant means that councils have greater flexibility in the application of the funds.

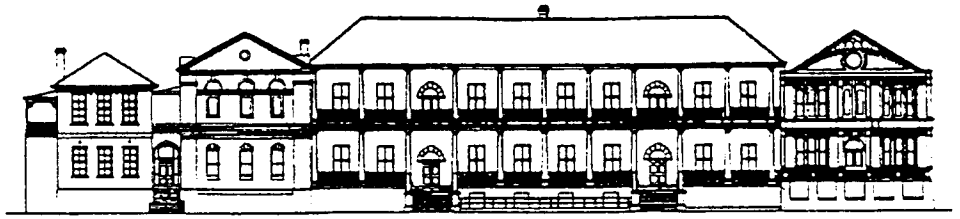
I have noted the NAROC reference to the submission on liability, which has been forwarded to the Attorney-General's Department by Jardine Australian Insurance Brokers.

I trust this information will be of assistance.

Yours sincerely



E. T. Page B.E., B.Comm., M.P.
Minister for Local Government



With Compliments

John Watkins, M.P.

Member for Gladesville

Electorate Office:
Shop 8, 210 Victoria Road
Gladesville, NSW 2111

Tel: (02) 9816 5111
Fax: (02) 9816 5136

98DIR0587



NSW Department
of Industrial Relations

1 Oxford Street
(PO Box 847)
Darlinghurst NSW 2010
Tel: (02) 9243 8888
Fax: (02) 9243 8771
www.dir.nsw.gov.au

Mr J Watkins MP
Member for Gladesville
Shop 8, 210 Victoria Road
Gladesville NSW 2111

BACKBEN

16/10/98

008146

Dear Mr Watkins,

I refer to your representations of 22 July 1998 to the Hon R J Carr MP, Premier, Minister for Arts and Minister for Ethnic Affairs, concerning the report from the Northern Area Regional Organisation of Councils Inc. into the decline in services offered by State Government agencies in the New England and North West regions of NSW. The Premier has referred your representations to the Hon J W Shaw QC MLC, Attorney General, Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Fair Trading, who has requested that I reply to you direct.

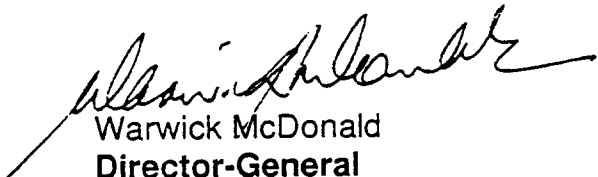
You may be aware that the NSW Department of Industrial Relations provides advice and assistance to more than 400 000 people each year, many of whom are seeking information about awards or industrial relations legislation. I believe that this level of demand shows that the Department's services are relevant and useful to employers and employees throughout NSW. As it is estimated that up to 50% of the Department's customers are from outside the Sydney metropolitan area, the Department has developed and implemented a number of specific initiatives for regional NSW. These initiatives allow better and more equitable access to Departmental services, some of which have not been available previously. The level of access to these services is at least equivalent to that available to people residing in the Sydney metropolitan area.

The services include a state-wide central number (13 16 28) for the Department's Award Enquiry Service (AES), which can be contacted from anywhere in NSW for the cost of a local phone call. This ensures that this service is delivered equitably throughout NSW, regardless of the geographical location of the caller. A second initiative has been the establishment of six Departmental Contact Centres, of which three have a strong regional influence, being located in Coffs Harbour, Newcastle and Wollongong. These Centres provide front-line client service and give assistance to Departmental Industrial Inspectors who are, in addition to the six Contact Centres, located in a further ten locations in NSW outside the Sydney metropolitan area. As with the AES, the Department's Inspectors can be contacted from anywhere in NSW for the cost of a local call by the use of a state-wide central number (13 20 05). Similarly, the newly established Workers Compensation Resolution Service can be contacted from anywhere in NSW by the use of a state-wide central number (1300 368 040).

Other initiatives have assisted in facilitating a greater role for the Department in regional NSW. For instance, the Department has developed and implemented a series of information sessions and workshops to continually inform employers of their industrial responsibilities and opportunities in regional NSW, often in cooperation with community groups such as local Business Enterprise Centres and Chambers of Commerce. Currently, the Department is promoting **Best Employment Practice**, a program which raises awareness amongst small and medium-sized employers of leading practices in the recruitment and development of staff. I have enclosed a copy of the Department's publication at the centre of this program. Seminars covering **Best Employment Practice** have already been held in Tamworth in conjunction with the NSW Master Builders Association.

I have also recently written to Business Enterprise Centres and Chambers of Commerce in Armidale, Inverell, Glen Innes and Tamworth to consider staging similar seminars with the Department. Initiatives such as these demonstrate that the Department is committed to assist employers in regional NSW to become better informed and more able to manage their workplaces. Accordingly, I consider that these examples show that the Department has not only maintained, but improved its regional presence and the equitable delivery of its services.

Yours sincerely,



Warwick McDonald
Director-General
6 October 98



New South Wales

Hon. J. W. Shaw, QC MLC

Attorney General and Minister for Industrial Relations

• Level 20, Goodsell Building, Chifley Square
Sydney NSW 2000

• Facsimile (02) 9228 7301
• Telephone (02) 9228 8188

981634:bjm

Mr John Watkins MP
Member for Gladesville
Shop 8, 210 Victoria Road
GLADESVILLE NSW 2111

- 9 OCT 1998

Dear Mr Watkins

I refer to your letter to the Hon Bob Carr MP, Premier of NSW, regarding Mr Don Budge's representations on behalf of Northern Area Regional Organisation of Councils Inc (NAROC). The letter and NAROC's Discussion Paper have been forwarded to me for response.

The item on Page 6 of the Discussion Paper headed Workers Compensation Premiums, is the item that relates to my portfolio.

The Interim NSW Workers Compensation Advisory Council (a body made up of representatives from the key stakeholders, employers and employees) which I established in September 1997, made recommendations for reform of the NSW workers compensation system. These recommendations formed the basis of the new WorkPlace Injury Management and Workers Compensation Act which commenced on 1 August 1998.

The reforms were introduced to reduce Scheme costs through new injury management procedures, benefit modifications and enhanced dispute resolution processes. As part of the reforms, appropriate incentive fees will be paid to WorkCover Scheme licensed insurers upon achievement of agreed benchmarks for claims cost reduction.

Following the previous Government reform packages in 1996 and 1997, the average workers compensation insurance premium rate was stabilised at 2.8% of wages for the 1997 to 1998 financial years. This rate has also been maintained for the current financial year.

Thank you for your interest on behalf of NAROC in the Government's actions to ensure a sound workers compensation scheme in this State.

Yours sincerely

J W Shaw QC MLC
Attorney General
Minister for Industrial Relations and
Minister for Fair Trading



19

Forwarded with the compliments of

The Hon. Ernie Page, B.E., B.Comm., MP
Minister for Local Government

Ministerial Office
Level 2, 151 Macquarie Street
Sydney 2000
Phone (02) 9251 8498
Fax (02) 9251 1442
www.dlg.nsw.gov.au

Parliament House Office
Macquarie Street
Sydney 2000
Phone (02) 9230 2199
Fax (02) 9231 6371



NEW SOUTH WALES



Tourism
New South Wales

Minister for Tourism

RML M 981244

The Hon E T Page, MP
Minister for Local Government
Level 2, Matrix House
151 Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Minister,

Thank you for your personal representations of 12 August, 1998 on behalf of Mr Don Budge, Executive Officer, Northern Area Regional Organisation of Councils Inc.

With regard to the need to attract tourism funding to employ a full time tourist officer and establish tourist centres I can assure you that Tourism New South Wales is very supportive of the development of regional tourism and is committed to maximising the economic benefits of tourism in regional areas.

To achieve this, Tourism New South Wales provides funding for 16 Regional Tourism Organisations (RTOs) which cover all parts of the State. Part of this funding is provided to assist RTOs engage management officers.

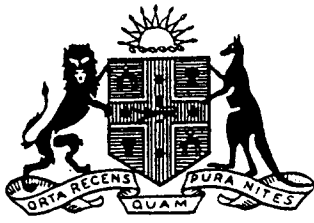
RTOs bring together tourism industry representatives, local Government and State Government Agencies. Local Government participation in the RTOs is strongly encouraged as it has been found to increase the RTOs' level of success. Further assistance is provided through marketing and development programs with Tourism New South Wales' Regional Tourism Strategy.

For further information, Mr Budge should contact the Tourism New South Wales Regional Manager of Northern Rivers and Big Sky Country, Ms Debra McCombie on 018 66 2086.

Yours sincerely,

BOB DEBUS

NAROC INC.
FILE No: BACKBEN
DATE: 13/10/98
REF No: 008131



New South Wales

The Hon. Faye Lo Po' MP

Minister for Community Services
Minister for Ageing
Minister for Disability Services
Minister for Women

24 SEP 1998

Mr Don Budge
Executive Officer
NAROC
PO Box 791
Inverell NSW 2360

Dear Mr Budge

Thank you for your letter highlighting your concerns over the declining economic development of country areas.

Of the concerns you have raised, two are directly relevant to my portfolio. These are the Children (Parental Responsibility) Act, 1994, and the need for Local Government to participate more fully in the political, social and economic development of NSW.

I hope that you take some comfort from the knowledge that the Department of Community Services has always identified Local Government as a key community partner. Therefore, the Department's New England offices are committed to ensuring an inclusive process in planning for services development in the area.

This approach can be seen in the task of implementing the Children (Protection and Parental Responsibility) Act 1997. Here the Department of Community Services is working actively with Local Government to ensure that the best outcomes are achieved from the initiative.

I hope that this addresses some of the concerns in your letter.

Yours sincerely

Faye Lo Po' M.P.
Minister for Community Services
Minister for Ageing,
Minister for Disability Services
Minister for Women

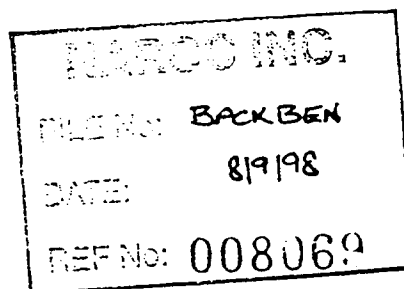
NAROC INC.	
FILE NO:	BACKBEN
DATE:	13/10/98
REF NO:	008137



NEW SOUTH WALES
ATTORNEY GENERAL

Mr Don Budge
Executive Officer
Northern Area Regional Organisation of Councils Inc.
PO Box 791
INVERELL NSW 2360.

P14241 98/4026



Dear Mr Budge

I write in reference to your letter dated 13 July 1998 regarding issues raised by the eleven member councils of the Northern Area Regional Organisations of Councils Inc concerning services to rural communities. I have identified the following issues in your paper as relating to my portfolio responsibilities. These are as follows: powers and sentencing by the courts, the *Children (Parental Responsibility) Act 1994*, fines and penalties, access to court services, workers compensation premiums and, public liability of Local Government. I trust that the following information addresses your concerns.

Sentencing

In the first instance, I can assure you that the Government is concerned about sentencing by the Courts. The NSW Law Reform Commission has been requested to inquire into and report into the laws relating to sentencing. The Law Reform Commission is conducting the review of sentencing law in three phases. The first phase involves an evaluation of the general principles of sentencing law. The final report on this phase has been released. This Report analysed techniques for guiding judicial discretion and identified consistency of approach as a key concern.

In response to this Report, the Government has introduced initiatives such as the Youth Conferencing Scheme and the expansion of home detention. Legislation to implement a number of the recommendations contained in the Report will be introduced in the next session of Parliament. Tougher periodic detention legislation has already been introduced and is expected to commence in the near future.

Children (Protection and Responsibility Act)

The *Children (Protection and Parental Responsibility) Act 1997* commenced on 22 December 1997. As you may be aware, the 1994 *Children (Parental Responsibility) Act*, upon which the 1997 Act is based, had been strongly supported by many rural communities, but had equally been the subject of strong criticism by youth justice organisations and others. In addition, an evaluation committee established to review the 1994 Act was strongly critical of many aspects of the 1994 Act.

The *Children (Protection and Parental Responsibility) Act 1997* represents a substantial revision of the 1994 Act. The new Act contains provisions aimed at encouraging the development of community based crime prevention and support strategies through the facilitation of local crime prevention plans and Safer Community Compacts. In addition, the Act contains a number of safeguards aimed at reducing the potential for the Act to be used in an arbitrary and discriminatory manner.

The provisions introduced by Part 4 of the Act will provide a legislative framework upon which to formalise and foster the development of pro-active local crime prevention measures. These provisions aim to promote a genuine and critical evaluation of local crime issues and the development of positive, appropriate and measured crime prevention and community support initiatives. These relate not only to the development of plans for the prevention of juvenile crime, but to *all* types of crime.

Over the past two years the Crime Prevention Division of the Attorney General's Department has been active in providing training, information and advice to communities throughout NSW about effective community crime prevention and the methods for developing viable local crime prevention plans. To further assist local councils, the Crime Prevention Division has recently released a series of three guides on how to apply for an operational area and on preparing local crime prevention plans and safer community compacts. Copies of these guides are attached for your information. Information about the Act has also been developed for distribution to local communities.

The government recognises that the development of realistic and achievable local crime prevention plans also requires financial support. Accordingly the government has established the safer community development fund to assist communities in the development and implementation of such plans. Recurrent funding of \$1.15 million has been set aside for the purposes of the fund. The assistance afforded by this Part is available to all councils, not just those councils seeking the application of the police powers under Part 3 of the Act.

It is hoped that the new provisions introduced by Part 4 of the Act will encourage local communities to work *in partnership* with the government to respond to anti-social behaviour and crime. At the same time the Act seeks to encourage local initiatives to address the causes of such behaviour *before* the problems arise.

Finally, under section 50 of the Act, the Act is required to be evaluated within 3 years of its operation. Whilst the format of the evaluation is yet to be decided, it will, like the evaluation process for the 1994 Act, involve appropriate consultation with relevant interest groups.

Fines and Councils

I note your concern that Councils are being fined by State Government agencies for infringements of various laws. The decision to enforce such fines is a matter for the agencies concerned and any extenuating circumstances that may be relevant to the situation should be addressed to that agency. Once an agency has determined that it wishes to pursue the enforcement of a fine or penalty, however, the matter will be pursued in accordance with the law.

Court Facilities

Turning to the allocation of court facilities, this is a matter of determining the most efficient manner of delivery of services to the entire community. The reason for the closure of certain courts and the ending of District Court sittings in certain communities was that the caseloads at those locations were not sufficient to warrant the court sitting. Where facilities have been closed down, the resources have, in general, been allocated to the nearest regional centre allowing the wider community a better quality of service overall. This has meant that for people who are prepared to occasionally travel a relatively short distance, access to Court has been increased and the Court has been able to provide a substantially improved service.

Workers Compensation

Regarding your concerns about workers compensation premiums, you may be interested to learn that the NSW workers compensation system has recently been the subject of review and legislative reform resulting in the *Workplace Injury Management and Workers Compensation Act 1998* and the *Workers Compensation Legislation Amendment Act 1998*. The reforms are based on the recommendations of the Interim Workers Compensation Advisory Council, which comprised employer and employee representatives.

The main reforms include:

- the return of ownership and responsibility for the scheme to the workers and employers of NSW through the establishment of a permanent Workers Compensation Advisory Council. The Council will monitor the workers' compensation system and make recommendations for legislative and policy reform;
- the establishment of Industry Reference Groups;
- the introduction from 1 September 1998 of new injury management procedures to promote the early and safe return to work of injured workers;
- enhanced dispute resolution to reduce litigation;
- the transfer to private underwriting from 1 October 1999; and
- the establishment of the Workers Compensation Premiums Rating Bureau to determine industry sector premiums rates and experience rating formulae. Premium rates will require WorkCover approval to ensure that they provide for full funding, minimise cross-subsidisation and are not excessive.

It is hoped that these reforms address your concerns regarding workers' compensation.

Local Government public liability.

As you may be aware, there has been an inter-departmental working party comprising representatives from the Attorney General's Department and the Department of Local Government examining the issues relating to local government public liability and professional indemnity. The working party called for submissions from interested parties and on the basis of the information received a report has been prepared and is currently under consideration.

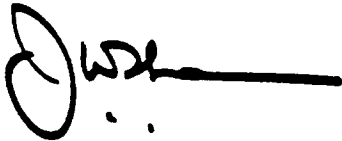
Government Access Centres

In conclusion, the Government is aware of the difficulties faced by rural people with the removal of many services from rural and remote communities. In an attempt to ensure that services are available in these communities the Government has commenced a two year pilot program called the Government Access Program, which has been established to trial flexible methods of improving equity of access to government services for people in rural areas.

Seven Government Access Centres have been established throughout northern and eastern New South Wales to provide information on Government services, facilitate referrals and appointments for visiting agency staff, undertake transactions on behalf of various Government agencies and generally, to provide a "one stop shop" access to Government services. These Government Access Centres are hosted by a number of Government agencies, including Local Councils and are located at Maclean, Grenfell, Oberon, Dorrigo, Gilgandra, Kyogle and Nambucca.

I trust this information is of assistance.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J W Shaw', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

J W Shaw QC, MLC
ATTORNEY GENERAL



NEW SOUTH WALES

DEPUTY PREMIER,
MINISTER FOR HEALTH AND
MINISTER FOR ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mr Don Budge
Executive Officer
Northern Area Regional Organisation of Councils Inc
PO Box 791
INVERELL NSW 2360

B98/962

09 SEP 1998

Dear Mr Budge

I refer to your letter and the issues paper concerning rural health services.

Since coming to office, the Carr Government has increased health spending by a massive \$1.3 billion. The health budget in NSW now stands at a record \$6.6 billion. This enhanced expenditure will provide even greater security and protection for patients and families in an environment of the Howard Government's cuts to health which total over \$200 million in NSW.

Since 1994/95 recurrent health funding to rural Health Services has also increased by a massive \$267 million or 34.3%. This has resulted in the expansion of existing services and the creation of new ones. The rural sector has also had an increase in admissions of 5% which is approximately an additional 15,000 patients per year.

Rural NSW is also benefiting from major capital works projects which total nearly \$250 million. This includes hospital redevelopments at Tweed Heads, Dubbo and Taree, new hospitals at Broken Hill, Coffs Harbour, Lithgow, Taree and West Wyalong and new community health centres at Dareton, Forster, Gunnedah, Iluka, Jindabyne, Narrabri, Narooma, Orange, and Queanbeyan.

The Government shares your concerns about the retention of doctors in rural areas. NSW Health has initiated a Rural Health Workforce Strategy in an attempt to address some of the issues relating to this matter. A copy of the latest update is at Tab A. In all, \$2 million over two years has been allocated to implement the Rural Health Workforce Strategy. A number of the recommendations of the Rural Workforce Strategy Steering Committee are currently being implemented, including:

- a one off allocation of \$30,000 to assist in the recruitment of general practitioners in small rural communities;
- a toll free telephone number for general practitioners to access specialist advice in larger centres; and
- locum and training specialist positions in rural areas.

NATCO INC.	
FILE NO:	BACKBEN
DATE:	14/9/98
REF No:	008089

NSW Health also operates the Area of Need program to recruit suitably qualified overseas trained doctors. Despite the responsible and creative recruitment initiatives and the use of the "Area of Need" status, the Health Services continue to experience difficulties in attracting sufficient numbers of doctors to ensure maximum coverage all year round. The solution rests with both State and Federal Governments working in conjunction with the peak national and state medical bodies.

The issues raised by member councils in relation to health services are noted. The New England Health Service has addressed the issues at Tab B.

Thank you for bringing the issues paper to my attention. Should you wish to discuss any of these issues in greater detail, please contact Christine Kibble, Chief Executive Officer of the New England Area Health Service on 02 6768 3222.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A Refshauge', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Andrew Refshauge MP
Deputy Premier
Minister for Health
Minister for Aboriginal Affairs

SPECIFIC RURAL HEALTH ISSUES RAISED BY NAROC MEMBER COUNCILS:

The Carr Government is committed to the retention and development of health services in the New England area that are accessible and will ensure patient safety, comfort and well being.

Statewide rural health restructure

The restructure of the New England Area Health Service has resulted in improved networking, sharing of resources, including staffing, clinical expertise, sharing of policies and procedures, access to specialised services (ie. engineering) and access to clinical expertise through the Sector Director of Medical Services. This was not previously available.

Barraba

- *Staffing at Barraba Hospital*

The downsizing of the workforce at Barraba occurred during the term of the last Government and a previous District Administration.

Following the statewide rural health restructure the Chief Executive Officer position at Barraba was abolished and a local Health Service Manager appointed to oversee Manilla and Barraba. This position reports to the Sector Manager at Tamworth.

Gunnedah

- *Relocation of community health services to hospital grounds*

The relocation of Community Health to the Hospital grounds has provided an enhanced and improved integration of health services. Community Health Services have benefited from new and improved premises and specialist services are provided in purpose built rooms.

The collocation of Community Health and Hospital staffing allows a sharing of staff resources, i.e. a Community Nurse may work in Community Health in the morning, and work at the Hospital in the afternoon, depending on workload requirements.

Other benefits include better utilisation of Health Service resources, for example: support staff, motor vehicles, stores.

Inverell

- *Services at Inverell Hospital*

Services at Inverell Hospital have not been downgraded. Consistent with the commitment to improving service delivery, the Government has allocated \$1 million for the redevelopment and upgrading of the Emergency Department at Inverell Hospital. The project incorporates a new Emergency Department in the existing building with some new extensions.

Manilla

- *Relocation of the administration of Manilla Health Services*

As indicated above, a Health Service Manager responsible for Manilla and Barraba reports to the Sector Manager at Tamworth.

In fact, the current incumbent of the Health Service Manager's position, resides in Manilla and spends dedicated and scheduled time between Manilla and Barraba (47 km distance). If the Health Service Manager is not physically present at Manilla, then she is readily contactable at Barraba. The Nurse Manager position at Manilla actually has "day to day" responsibility for management of the facility.

Moree

- *Health services in Moree*

There has been no downgrading or decline in health services in Moree. The Government has approved funding of \$500,000 for the redevelopment of Moree Hospital and the sum of \$190,000 for an Aboriginal Mental Community Health Building.

A joint project has been initiated between a private Radiology firm and the Area Health Service for the provision of CT scanning services from the Moree Hospital, which includes Teleradiology. \$32,000 has been allocated for the repair of structurally damaged buildings.

Parry

- *Doctor's surgery - Werris Creek (2 Jobs), Dental Surgery - Kootingal (2 jobs)*

These were private surgeries and their closure does not fall within the jurisdiction of NSW Health.

Quirindi

- *Staffing*

The reduction of five positions at Quirindi Health Service equates to three voluntary redundancies, one position transferred from Quirindi to the Area Finance Department at Tamworth and one position in the kitchen which has not been replaced due to the downturn in meal numbers.

However, Quirindi has gained 6.5 positions with the appointment of a Health Service Manager, three positions in Area Finance (billing) and the addition of a 1.5 Child Protection position.

Tamworth

- *Health services in Tamworth*

There has been no downgrading of health services in Tamworth. Tamworth Base Hospital has a new Acute Care Suite including ICU/Burns Units - funded by the Government together with contributions from the community. A new Diabetes Stabilisation Centre in the grounds of Tamworth Base Hospital has been established with funds raised by the Lions Clubs. The Minister opened the new Nuclear Medicine Department at Tamworth Base Hospital on 10 August 1998. A new Double Headed Variable Gamma Camera was also commissioned with a Government allocation of \$670,000.

Uralla

- *The Bundarra Community Health Centre*

There has been no reduction of health services at Bundarra Community Health Centre. The medical officer left the Bundarra Community Health Centre in 1995. A doctor commenced work at Bundarra, one day per week, from February 1998.

The Area Health Service supports and works with local Councils for the recruitment of General Practitioners.

A new Community Health Centre was established in Uralla in April 1997. This provides a broader range of services to the community.

Walcha

A Special Care Unit for aged and dementia patients has recently been opened at the Walcha Hospital, being the first stage of the redevelopment of the Hospital. Fifty per cent of the project cost amounting to \$30,000 was made up of contributions from the people of Walcha. An amount of \$250,000 has been received through the Rural Minor Capital Works program towards the refurbishment of the Walcha Hospital.

Yallaroi

- *Hospital (2 positions)*

There have been no reductions in staff since the election of the Carr Labor Government.

What Is The Rural Workforce Strategy About?

A Rural Health Workforce Strategy Report was developed in 1996 in response to widespread concerns about the recruitment and retention of health professionals in rural NSW. The NSW Health Department has facilitated the development of the strategy by bringing together key stakeholders groups to implement strategies for the recruitment and retention of rural health staff.

THE STRATEGIES

Rural Allied Health Scholarships and Grants

There were over 200 hits on the Rural Health Support Unit's web site and 170 requests for information were received by phone during the scholarship application period.

64 applications were received and of these, 13 did not meet the selection criteria. Students who were undertaking podiatry studies did not apply because there were no enrollments in the targeted years with a rural background.

In March, 20 students were awarded scholarships of \$5,750. The scholarship recipient details are provided in the accompanying table.

Allied Health students from rural and urban backgrounds were eligible to apply for grants up to \$500 to assist with the travel and accommodation costs of undertaking a rural placement.

A minimum of 50 Rural Allied Health Clinical Placement Grants will be available in 1998, with another 50 offered in 1999. Applications for first semester grants closed on 15 May 1998.

Seventeen grants were awarded from a total of 21 applicants. A majority of clinical placements, including rural placements, occur in the second semester.

Of these, a number are scheduled during the long break between the end of semester two in one academic year, and the beginning of semester one in the next academic year. Consequently, grant funds will be held over for late in 1998.

A focus group meeting will be held in July 1998 to determine the allied health disciplines to be targeted in the 1999 Rural Allied Health

Name	Course	Rural Area
Karen Barrett	Social Work	Armidale
Andrew Davison	Dietetics	Bathurst
Scott Hawthorne	Physiotherapy	Coffs Harbour
Nicole Hockley	Pharmacy	Gunnedah
Alison Howle	Speech Pathology	Tamworth
Fletcher Ivey	Physiotherapy	Wellington
Abigail Johnson	Speech Pathology	Condong
Emma Johnston	Psychology	Kempsey
Kirsty Krieg	Physiotherapy	Grenfell
Kelly Lonergan	Speech Pathology	Muswellbrook
Kerryn Moorhouse	Occupational Therapy	Richmond Hill
Emma Nicholson	Occupational Therapy	Dubbo
Catherine Offner	Dietetics	Braidwood
Susanne Perks	Speech Pathology	Tullamore
Jessica Purches	Social Work	Wagga Wagga
Melanie Rohn	Physiotherapy	Ballina
Tristan Rutland	Pharmacy	Bathurst
Richard Sager	Dietetics	Frogmore
Tracy Sloan	Occupational Therapy	Albury
Carolyn Vere	Psychology	Bathurst

Scholarships and Grants.

An evaluation of the project and the administration process will be undertaken in December 1998 and December 1999.

Scholarship and Placement Grant information can be obtained from the Rural Health Support Unit. Placement Grant guidelines and application forms are also available from the Units web site.

The Internet web-site address for the Rural Health Support Unit is:- www.nor.com.au/community/rhsu

Recruitment of Rural GPs.

One-off funding of \$30,000 was announced in July 1997 to assist small rural communities to recruit GPs to "Area of Need" positions.

International Medical Recruitment was chosen to recruit from

overseas to fill these positions.

Candidates are being assessed for the GP positions at Temora and Wellington.

Vacancies at Tullamore and the Walgett Aboriginal Medical Service have candidates identified and negotiations are proceeding between employers and medical practitioners. These vacancies have remained unfilled for over a year.

Councils, on behalf of the local communities or GPs recruiting, can access a subsidy towards the cost of recruitment.

To access the subsidy, an employment contract with the candidate needs to be signed by the end of June 1998. The level of subsidy will depend on the number of doctors recruited at the conclusion of the project.

Toll Free Telephone Link.

This pilot project is a 24 hour toll free telephone link which will provide support to all rural GPs, enabling them to readily access up to date information from medical specialists.

Expressions of interest were called from teaching hospitals and those received were of a high standard.

A reference group was convened by the Rural Health Support Unit to consider the submissions.

The Prince of Wales Hospital, Sydney, was selected as the host for the pilot in the specialty areas of Endocrinology and Neurology. This service will complement established local specialist networks.

A Prince of Wales Hospital steering committee has been formed and a focus group met in May to develop user guidelines and protocols.

The service will commence in June 1998 and an evaluation will be undertaken at 3 months and 6 months of the utilisation and effectiveness of the pilot.

Pilot Locum Relief for Rural Obstetricians & Gynaecologists.

A locum service to cover short term absences of specialist obstetricians and gynaecologists is to be trialed in 1998. Providing relief to cover the absences of specialists in the public hospital system will result in an improved level of services to patients.

Where there are only one or two specialists, relief is difficult to organise. These practices have been targeted as a priority.

The Southern and Greater Murray Health Services in particular, have a number of one or two person Obstetric and Gynaecology specialty practices.

Central and South Eastern Sydney Health Services between them have a pool of Obstetric and Gynaecology specialists and specialists in training from which

locum relief may be provided. These Health Services have expressed interest in being part of the pilot.

Discussions were held in March 1998 between Greater Murray, Southern, Central Sydney and South Eastern Health Services, the Australian Medical Association and the National Association of Specialist Obstetricians and Gynaecologists.

Operational, legal and industrial issues were identified to be resolved in advance of the pilot commencing. An agreement between the parties has been drafted for further consultation in early June 1998.

It is anticipated that locum relief provision will commence in mid 1998 and an evaluation will be undertaken 4-6 months after commencement of the pilot.

Funding will be dispersed to the Rural Health Services so that the implementation of the pilot for each Health Service can be managed locally.

Medical Specialty Training.

NSW Health has created extra positions by securing Commonwealth funding to augment Rural Health Workforce funding.

Positions have been established in Obstetrics and Gynaecology at Orange Base Hospital; Physician at Tamworth Base Hospital to commence in January 1999 and a Urology position at Orange Base Hospital to commence mid 1998.

The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists have identified one (possibly two) senior registrars to provide psychiatric services to western NSW from Bloomfield Hospital in Mid Western Health Service from July 1998.

Further positions will be identified.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

The Rural Health Workforce Strategy as a Ministerial commitment is sponsored and co-ordinated by NSW Health.

For more information please contact:

Ms Maureen Thomas
Manager

Workforce Planning Unit
Dept of Health
LMB 961

NORTH SYDNEY 2059

Phone: (02) 9391 9380

Fax: (02) 9391 9019

E-mail:

mthos@doh.health.nsw.gov.au

Ms Vicki St Lawrence
Manager

Rural Health Support Unit
PO Box 269

Grafton 2460

Phone: (02) 6640 2302

Fax: (02) 6640 2499

E-mail: rhsu@nor.com.au

Website: [http://](http://www.nor.com.au/community/)

[www.nor.com.au/ community/](http://www.nor.com.au/community/)

Grants to Rural Physicians and Paediatricians for Refresher Training.

The NSW Minister for Health has approved a pilot project to create grants to facilitate access to refresher and up skilling training for rural based physicians and paediatricians.

This pilot is additional to the initiatives announced by the Minister in August 1997. The Royal Australian College of Physicians originated the concept which has been refined by NSW Health in consultation with key stakeholders.

An implementation plan is being finalised and access to grants is anticipated in July 1998.



Ref: 50999
Contact: Paul Collits
Ph (02) 9228 4742

Mr D Budge
Executive Officer
Northern Area Regional Organisation of Councils Inc
P O Box 791
INVERELL NSW 2360

Dear Mr Budge

I refer to your letter of 13 July 1998 concerning issues which the Northern Area Regional Organisation of Councils (NAROC) wanted raised with Members of Parliament.

Your letter covers a wide range of concerns relating to a number of Ministerial portfolios. Undoubtedly relevant Ministers will respond to you on matters which relate to their portfolios.

The Government has responded in detail to many of these issues through consultative processes such as the Regional Communities Consultative Council, the Country Summit Task Force deliberations and in regular Ministerial meetings with representatives of the Country Mayors' Association.

The Government has taken on board the concerns of country councils, for example through the establishment of a Ministry for Regional Development and Rural Affairs.

As the issues raised in NAROC's discussion paper relating to economic development are of greater relevance to the Hon Harry Woods MP, Minister for Regional Development and Minister for Rural Affairs, I have referred your letter to him for reply.

Thank you for bringing NAROC's concerns to the attention of the Government.

Yours sincerely

Michael Egan
MINISTER FOR STATE DEVELOPMENT

17 AUG 1998

NAROC INC.	
FILE NO:	BACKBEN
DATE:	21/8/98
REF No:	008030



New South Wales
Minister for Mineral Resources
Minister for Fisheries

Level 12, 1 Francis Street
DARLINGHURST
NSW 2010
Phone: (02) 339 7109
Fax: (02) 339 7788

MADM980106
M95/0130

Mr Don Budge
Executive Officer
Northern Area Regional
Organisation of Councils Inc.
P O Box 791
INVERELL NSW 2360

Dear Mr Budge

Thank you for your letter of 13 July 1998 enclosing a copy of issues which NAROC's 11 member councils wanted raised with Members of Parliament.

The majority of issues are outside my portfolio but I would like to offer the following comments in respect of mining.

NAROC has raised the issue of mine closures at Preston and Vickery, near Gunnedah. Preston Colliery was more than 100 years old and closed because all coal reserves were mined out. Attempts to find additional reserves close to the colliery were unsuccessful, as coal in the surrounding region has been seriously affected by igneous intrusion. Although there are coal reserves remaining at Vickery, the mining costs were very high and this, added to the extra distance of transport to the port, made the mine uncompetitive. The Government tried hard to find a new operator for the mine but ultimately the economics with the current low price coal market proved untenable.

During my term of office as Minister for Mineral Resources, I have provided every encouragement to the operators at Gunnedah Colliery. Additional areas have been allocated to the mine and a scheme of repayment of previous royalty debt was entered into.

The current downturn in the coal industry is making it extremely difficult for all coal producers. It is hoped that when prices recover, the large open cut deposits at Maules Creek and Boggabri can be developed as large scale, world class mines.

Within the Narrabri region there is currently significant petroleum exploration under way. It is hoped that this exploration will prove up large resources of gas which can ultimately be collected for distribution as pipeline gas.

NAROC INC.	
FILE No:	BACK DR BEN
DATE:	24/8/98
REF No:	008037

Although the load-based licensing system is being introduced by the Environment Protection Authority, there has been widespread consultation with the mining industry. The concept of 'polluter pays' has been accepted by the industry and negotiations are taking place in respect of the level of fees. In this area, the Government has been particularly cognisant of the difficulties faced by rural New South Wales and has not brought farmers under the umbrella of load-based licensing.

I trust this information is useful for your ongoing discussions. If I can be of further assistance, please contact my office through Ms Christine Pedder, Policy Advisor, (phone: 02 9339 7109 or fax: 02 9339 7788).

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bob Martin', written in a cursive style.

**BOB MARTIN MP
MINISTER FOR MINERAL RESOURCES
MINISTER FOR FISHERIES**

18 AUG 1998



MINISTER FOR GAMING AND RACING

Minister Assisting the Premier on Hunter Development

Mr D Budge
Executive Officer
Northern Area Regional Organisation
of Councils Inc
PO Box 791
INVERELL NSW 2360

NAROC
FILE NO: BACKSEN
DATE: 27/8/98
REF NO: 008044

21 AUG 1998

DEP98/8521

Dear Mr Budge

**Issues Raised by NAROC's Member Councils
Function Liquor Licences and Closure of TAB Outlets**

I refer to your letter of 13 July 1998 concerning issues NAROC member councils have raised with all Members of Parliament. I have had the opportunity to study the documents provided and I would appreciate it if you would advise NAROC members of my response.

There are two issues in your Discussion Paper which are specifically relevant to my administration of Gaming and Racing (function licences and the TAB) and I will respond in detail on those matters.

First, however, I would like to make it known to NAROC members that I have personally been a strong advocate of our rural and regional centres over the many years that I have been a State Member of Parliament. I also ensure that I routinely get around the State to as many areas as reasonably possible, so that I can hear about the local issues and problems that are of concern to people. I make it my business to act on the concerns that people tell me about, and my policies and programs are always formulated with consideration given to the potential impacts on country and regional NSW.

Function Licences

On the issue of function licences, I am aware that some organisations have been experiencing a range of problems with the licensing arrangements. I personally intervened in this matter when some of the problems first emerged in 1997, and I have taken direct steps, along with my Department, to remedy the problems.

The background to this is that following the release in early 1997 of a new Licensing Court practice direction (relating to harm minimisation and responsible serving), the Court Registry issued new affidavits, and some licence applicants were given the wrong paperwork by local registries. Coupled with this, police in some areas were insisting on the practice direction's standard security ratio for all functions, without regard to the type or size of the function.

One action taken by my portfolio was that the Director of Liquor and Gaming wrote to all regional and local area commanders of the Police Service to seek their assistance in ensuring that function licence applications were dealt with promptly and appropriately. I attach a copy of the Director's letter for your information.

In addition, all court registries were issued with specific guidance and information to assist them in dealing with function licence applications as efficiently as possible.

I am confident that the problems experienced by function licensees have, in the main, been rectified.

I would comment, however, that the requirements of the licensing laws concerning harm minimisation and responsible service of liquor apply to all liquor licensees, including function licensees. This was a principal conclusion of my portfolio's 1996 review of function licences, which, while acknowledging the importance of function liquor licences across NSW for their contribution to fundraising activities, recommended that efforts continue to be made to ensure that function licence holders and their staff are aware of their responsible serving obligations.

Should any of your members need further information or assistance concerning function licences, they may wish to contact Mr Peter Scanlon, the Principal Registrar of the Licensing Court (on phone (02) 9995 0779) or Mr Neil Stromborg in the Department of Gaming and Racing (on phone (02) 9995 0863).

TAB Outlets (Barraba, Uralla, and Werris Creek)

I am naturally concerned about any reduction in TAB services in country regions and the impacts on local communities, and, in that regard, I have recently written to the Managing Director of TAB Limited requesting that sympathetic consideration be given to the needs of TAB customers in rural areas.

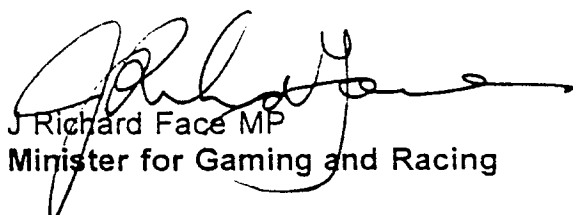
In regard to the closure of the TAB Agencies at Barraba (November 1992), Uralla (June 1993) and Werris Creek (January 1996), I am advised that the TAB resolved to close those Agencies as they had become uneconomic to maintain. However, I understand that in each case, the Agency closure was undertaken in conjunction with the establishment of an alternative PubTab facility.

Consequently, the communities of Barraba, Uralla and Werris Creek continue to have access to a TAB service and in fact it could be said that TAB customers benefit from the additional hours of service and amenities provided on licensed premises. In addition, customers in rural areas also have access to the TAB's Phone TAB service and may conduct their transactions over the telephone for the cost of a local call.

I would stress that any decision by the TAB to close an outlet is made on a commercial basis. As such, it is an operational decision made by the TAB, not by the Government.

Thank you for referring NAROC's Discussion Paper to me. I appreciate having the opportunity to respond to you on the issues that are relevant to my administration.

Yours sincerely



J Richard Face MP
Minister for Gaming and Racing



A NEW SOUTH WALES GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENT

DEPARTMENT OF GAMING AND RACING

323 CASTLEREAGH STREET, SYDNEY

TELEPHONE (02) 9289 8700 FACSIMILE (02) 9289 8888

All written correspondence to GPO BOX 7060, SYDNEY NSW 2001

E-mail Address dogar@tpgi.com.au

OPEN LETTER TO REGIONAL AND LOCAL AREA COMMANDERS NSW POLICE SERVICE

IMPORTANT ADVICE FROM THE DIRECTOR OF LIQUOR AND GAMING PROCESSING OF FUNCTION LIQUOR LICENCE APPLICATIONS LIQUOR ACT 1982

I am writing to seek your assistance in ensuring that applications for function liquor licences under the NSW Liquor Act are dealt with promptly and appropriately, and in accordance with the law.

The Gaming and Racing portfolio has received a range of complaints from around NSW about how function licence applications are being dealt with. These complaints relate to aspects of Gaming and Racing's procedures, Court procedures and to police procedures and requirements.

This arises largely because of misunderstanding about the licensing requirements that apply to function licences (temporary and permanent). Part of the confusion relates to the Licensing Court's recent Harm Minimisation and Responsible Service Practice Direction, the practical application of that through the court registries, and police requirements in some areas.

Your officers have a critical role in assessing applications for function licences, and under the Act can object to the grant of applications and also seek conditions to be put on grants of licences. Therefore it is important for your officers to be aware of the intention of the Practice Direction and how it should be applied in order to rectify any problems and to ensure some consistency and uniformity.

The Principal Registrar of the Licensing Court has also written to all court registries clarifying the requirements and the procedures, and seeking their assistance in improving the procedures for applicants.

I am also arranging for an article to be circulated in the Police Service Weekly shortly.

Many function licence applicants have contacted the Department with concerns about some of the new conditions they are being required to comply with, and that there is no flexibility for different types of functions. There have also been complaints about delays in processing these applications resulting in functions having to be cancelled.

The Department's review of some of these cases indicates that in some instances the conditions imposed are very severe for the type of function being held, and that there is a lack of consistency in the conditions being required for similar types of functions in different parts of the State.

The Department's advice to applicants is that each

application will be dealt with on individual merit, and it is open to the applicant to discuss any specific concerns about particular conditions with their local police (or the Department) – but that the final decision rests with the Court.

The following issues are the ones which have caused most concern for applicants. I raise them with you so that you are aware of them, and can take any necessary suitable action to assist applicants with the process – in the interests of ensuring an effective licensing process for function licences.

Harm Minimisation and Responsible Service Requirements

Since the introduction of the Harm Minimisation legislation in 1996, much more priority is being given to ensuring licensees comply with their obligations to serve liquor responsibly, not to serve drunks and not to serve minors. As you know, those requirements apply to function licences as well as all other liquor licences.

A feature of the Harm Minimisation object is that it requires police, and others, to have due regard to harm minimisation when carrying out their duties under the liquor laws.

The Licensing Court's 1997 Harm Minimisation Practice Direction and the new Harm Minimisation affidavit require applicants to satisfy the court that responsible serving measures will be place, and refer to a wide range of conditions that may be imposed on a licence. They are certainly not mandatory or to be applied in every case.

Functions licensed under the Act are also wide-ranging, and it is not intended that conditions be mandatory in every case. In terms of efforts to minimise harm, a dinner function of 50 people is quite a different event to a B & S Ball with 500 people.

Security and Supervision at Functions

It is not mandatory for licensees to provide licensed security, or to have a certain ratio of security staff (such as 1 security staff per 100 patrons).

The need for security and/or other adequate supervision has to be assessed in relation to the nature of the function, the venue, size, hours, etc.

Whether security staff – or other supervision for control purposes – are needed depends on the circumstances of each function. In some cases, the organisation's own personnel may be sufficient.

Compulsory Responsible Service of Alcohol (RSA) Training

While responsible service of alcohol training is not compulsory by law – the Court's Practice Direction does make it mandatory for most applicants. However, the Court may waive that requirement.

It is desirable of course that the licensee and all persons involved in the sale of liquor at functions be aware of, and practice, the responsible service of liquor. This includes being able to assess drinkers for intoxication, not serving intoxicated people, not serving minors, refusing admission to intoxicated people, and dealing with intoxicated people.

The key issue is that the applicant demonstrates – if they have not completed an RSA course – they are aware of their responsible service obligations. The size and nature of the function is of course also relevant.

The "Licensed Area"

Some organisations have asked for guidance about their responsibilities for ensuring liquor is not brought onto or taken off the premises of the function. This of course is more difficult the larger the area that is defined as the licensed area.

Applicants are being advised that it may assist them to have a smaller licensed area - and to confine the sale and consumption of liquor to that smaller area.

Therefore, the size of the "licensed area" of the function is an important matter for applicants to determine. This will influence how well they are able to supervise the sale and supply of liquor, ensure responsible serving and prevent intoxication.

The smaller the licensed area, the easier it is to supervise, with a lesser need for security.

Takeaway sales of liquor are not permitted at functions – another reason for the licensee to limit the size of the licensed area in the interests of better supervision.

There is no legislative requirement preventing liquor being brought onto the licensed area by patrons – however from a supervision perspective, it is desirable that the licensee monitor the supply of all liquor consumed in the area. For this reason, the Director may seek a condition on these licences prohibiting liquor being brought onto the "licensed" part of the premises by patrons.

Availability and Accessibility of Food

A common query from applicants concerns availability of food. It is a reasonable requirement that whenever liquor is being sold at a function, food be available and easily

accessible by patrons. Again, there are no statutory rules about this. However, the provision of food is a key strategy to minimise intoxication. It follows that food outlets should be located so they are easily accessible to drinkers.

The type of food provided must be appropriate for the type and hours of the function, and substantial enough to assist in preventing intoxication.

Of course, where the function is a "dinner" (or similar), the food provided must be in keeping with a dinner function.

Persons being able to Stand/Move around with Liquor

Contrary to recent media reports, it is not mandatory (for function licences) that liquor can only be consumed at a table, or that patrons have to be seated at the times they are consuming liquor.

Attendance and Supervision by Licensee

Another common query is about the requirement for licensees to be in attendance at functions to supervise the sale and supply of liquor. This does not mean that the licensee must be in attendance at the bar at all the times the bar is operating. The licensee needs to be generally available throughout the duration of the function to oversee the supply of liquor, to ensure responsible service, and to ensure compliance with the conditions of the licence.

Minors at Functions

Function licensees are subject to the same requirements in the law as apply to other liquor licensees. If minors are in attendance at a function, the licensee must have procedures in place to ensure that proof of age is asked for, that minors are not served liquor, and that other adults at the function do not supply liquor to minors.

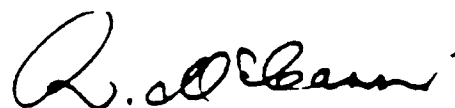
Conclusion

In conclusion, I raise these issues with you so that you are aware of them, and can take any necessary suitable action to assist with the processing of these applications.

In particular, I ask that the individual circumstances (ie. the nature and size etc) of each function be considered in your officers' assessment of applications.

If you need more information about the Department's policies and procedures for these applications, please contact Neil Stromborg on phone (02) 9289 8863.

Thank you for your assistance.



Ron McCann
Director of Liquor and Gaming

9 April 1998



The Hon Harry Woods MP
Minister for Regional Development
Minister for Rural Affairs

Ref: S00840
Contact: Paul Collits
Ph: (02) 9228 4742

Mr D Budge
Executive Officer
Northern Area Regional Organisation of Councils Inc
P O Box 791
INVERELL NSW 2360

Dear Mr Budge

I refer to your letter of 13 July 1998 to Members of Parliament in which you raise a number of matters of concern to the Northern Area Regional Organisation of Councils (NAROC). I have received representations from a number of Ministers and Members concerning those issues which relate to regional development or rural affairs.

Your letter raises many issues across a wide range of Ministerial portfolios. I anticipate that individual Ministers will respond to matters of relevance to them. I also understand that the Premier is also responding to your letter on behalf of the Government generally.

Your letter raises concerns similar to those raised previously by country councils. A number of these have been addressed by the Government in response to proposals brought forward through the Country Summit Taskforce process, through the deliberations of the Government's Regional Communities Consultative Council, and in meetings between the Country Mayors' Association and various Ministers.

The Government has initiated a number of important actions in the area of regional development and rural affairs which have considerably strengthened the position of regional New South Wales. These include an upgrading of existing Government programs to encourage investment in regional New South Wales; the direction of additional resources to key areas; the introduction of new programs; the creation of a Ministry for Regional Development and Rural Affairs; the movement of government jobs to regional locations; and the adoption of new approaches to service delivery and regional coordination.

In addition, in May this year I released a Directions Statement on Regional Growth and Lifestyle, *Rebuilding Country New South Wales*. The Statement acknowledges that regional New South Wales has experienced lower growth than the metropolitan area. It also provides new initiatives which, through targeted and strategic intervention, will secure a better future for regions experiencing economic difficulties.

Level 37, Governor Macquarie Tower, 1 Farrer Place, Sydney, NSW, 2000
Telephone: (02) 9228 5066 Facsimile: (02) 9228 5124

NAROC INC.

FILE NO: **BACK BEN**

DATE: **21/9/98**

REF No: **00809**

The Statement introduced a number of programs. The Regional Economic Transition Scheme will provide funds to country centres suffering sharp economic shocks from structural change in key industries. The Scheme provides \$15m over three years. The Country Growth Centres Strategy will identify and address impediments to, and opportunities for, development in regional centres through a whole-of-government approach. The Country Lifestyles Program (\$3m over three years) will help government and industry to attract skilled labour to country centres to overcome professional and trade skills shortage. The Regional Infrastructure Management Plan will provide a framework for establishing priorities in infrastructure development in regional New South Wales.

Your letter mentions specific issues relating to regional development, including population drift and the need for decentralisation incentives, the loss of services from country areas, rural impact statements, payroll tax concessions, access to Kingsford Smith Airport for regional airlines, and the need for participation of local government in economic development.

Population Drift and the Need for Decentralisation Incentives

There is no doubt that smaller inland towns in particular have experienced out-migration over many years. This has been largely due to the changing farm economy, improved transport and changing consumer preferences, with increased out-shopping in the growing larger regional centres. This has been a long term process and one over which governments have had little direct control.

However, the Government has a role in providing assistance to businesses, industries, communities and regions to create new economic development opportunities, particularly in smaller centres. It is only through the creation of new economic activity that smaller centres will survive and prosper.

The Government is seeking to provide a better business climate generally in regional New South Wales; tailored assistance to communities in formulating locally driven strategic plans for their futures; and help in removing specific impediments to growth. The best kinds of incentives for regional growth are targeted and practical assistance packages which encourage firms to locate and grow in regional New South Wales. The Government's Regional Business Development Scheme (RBDS) in particular provides a significant boost to regional investment.

The Loss of Services from Country Areas

The NSW Government understands the concern of regional communities which have lost services in recent years. While the reasons for lost services generally relate to out-migration of population over time, the Government has a role in assisting communities which have lost services to revitalise their economies. The Government is working with many communities which have experienced decline, for example through the Main Street/ Small Towns Program.

The Government also has a role in ensuring adequate service provision in regional areas, and has introduced a number of mechanisms to ensure that this occurs. Some of the consultative

processes have been referred to above. The Government has also extended the Regional Coordination Program, introduced a pilot Government Access Program with "one stop shops" for government services located in eight country centres, and ensured that Government decisions over levels of service in regional areas take into consideration concerns about their impact.

Rural Impact Statements

In 1997 the Government introduced Rural Communities Impact Statements (RCISs) for Cabinet submissions. This has been an important initiative which ensures that Cabinet has before it information about the likely impact of its decisions on regions and regional communities, particularly where the level of service may be affected. It is now mandatory that RCISs be prepared for all proposals presented to Cabinet which impact on rural communities. The Premier has emphasised that all agencies must ensure that this is an integral part of their decision making.

Payroll Tax Concessions

The Government remains of the view that existing forms of targeted assistance to regional companies, particularly through the RBDS, provide a more effective outcome for regional investment than more expensive, open-ended assistance. Since April 1995 the RBDS has assisted in the creation of 9 423 new jobs and the retention of 1 556 existing jobs through new investment of \$830m. The RBDS provides a range of assistance measures, including payroll tax concessions, for companies relocating, starting up or expanding in a non-metropolitan location.

Access to Kingsford Smith Airport

The NSW Government recognises the importance of access to Kingsford Smith Airport for regional airlines and regional commuters. The Government recently referred to the Legislative Council Standing Committee on State Development a number of issues relating to regional air services, including landing charges and peak hour slot management. The Committee is currently conducting public hearings on these matters. Of course, the Airport is under the control of the Commonwealth. However, it is important that regional people continue to have reasonable access to Kingsford Smith Airport, and the NSW Government will continue to support equality of access. An important way of securing continued access to Sydney Airport for regional airlines would be to charge for landings on a per head basis rather than having a flat fee for all aircraft.

Participation by Local Government in Economic Development

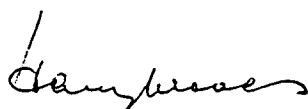
The NSW Government recognises the important and growing role played by local councils in economic development, particularly at the local level. In addition to being an important source of local employment and a customer for local contractors, local councils are increasingly playing a proactive role in economic development. Many councils now employ

economic development officers. Councils are often partners with the NSW Government in the Main Street/ Small Towns Program. A number of Government funded Regional Development Boards are chaired by local councillors. Local government can also assist the development process by having a streamlined, business friendly approvals process which encourages new investment.

The Government views regional development as requiring an element of partnership with strong local ownership of development approaches. The Government therefore welcomes and encourages a proactive role for local councils in economic development.

I trust these comments are helpful to NAROC. Thank you for raising NAROC's concerns with the Government.

Yours sincerely



Harry Woods
**Minister for Regional Development and
Minister for Rural Affairs**

14 Oct 1998



PARLIAMENT OF NEW SOUTH WALES
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

GERRY SULLIVAN
MEMBER FOR WOLLONGONG

Electorate Office
76 King Street
Warrawong 2502
P.O. Box 236
Tel: (042) 76 2900
Fax: (042) 76 3021



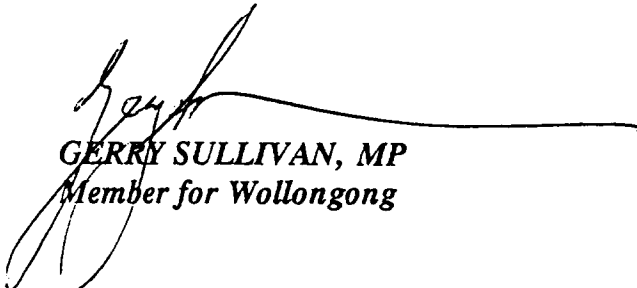
Our Ref: GS.NK.0543

Mr Don Budge
Executive Office
NAROC
Suite 5
18 Sweeney Street
INVERELL 2360

Dear Mr Budge

Further to my earlier representations on your behalf, I have now received the attached reply from the Premier dated 8 September, 1998 and forward a copy for your information.

Yours Sincerely



GERRY SULLIVAN, MP
Member for Wollongong

10 September 1998

Encl.

NAROC INC.	
FILE No:	BACK BEN
DATE:	16/9/98
REF No:	008090



Premier of New South Wales
Australia

- 2 SEP 1998

Mr Gerry Sullivan, MP
Member for Wollongong
PO Box 236
WARRAWONG NSW 2502

Dear Mr Sullivan,

I refer to your recent letter on behalf of Mr Don Budge, Executive Officer of the Northern Area Regional Organisation of Councils Inc (PO Box 791, Inverell 2360) concerning rural services in the North West and New England areas of NSW.

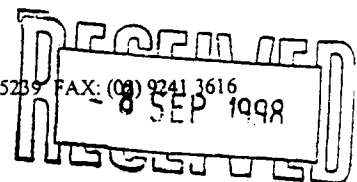
Your concerns have been carefully noted and I appreciate the reasons which prompted you to write to me on this occasion. As Mr Budge has also written to me on this matter, it would be appropriate for you to contact Mr Budge directly about my response to your representations on his behalf.

The NSW Government is firmly committed to providing support for rural areas. As part of the 1998-99 Budget, the NSW Government will provide a total of \$610 million in subsidies for country NSW, including subsidies for country town water supplies and sewerage, drought regional initiatives, school student transport concessions, rural financial counsellors, and freight subsidies to rural industries.

Rebuilding Country NSW is another initiative which demonstrates this Government's commitment to country NSW. This new program will help struggling communities by assisting industry, supporting local initiatives and helping to attract private investment. As part of this scheme, the NSW Government shall provide a Regional Transition Fund (\$15 million over three years) to help country centres whose future is threatened by structural changes in key industries.

My Government is also strongly committed to better services in the bush, and we are constantly working to improve our performance there.

For example, we are working with local health services and local communities to improve country people's access to the highest level of health care. Within the next few months country GPs will have access to a 24 hour toll-free telephone service that gives them direct links with specialists in metropolitan teaching hospitals and instant access to advice and information. That builds on our telemedicine project which is using state of the art technology to enable doctors to exchange information with specialists in other areas.



The possibilities in this technology give us the opportunity to overcome the tyranny of distance which has diminished the quality of life for people in isolated circumstances in New South Wales.

The Regional Coordination Program focuses on better coordinating government resources and activities in rural and regional NSW. Run by my Department, it began in Dubbo and Lismore and has now been extended to cover all of regional NSW, with offices located in Armidale, Newcastle, Wagga Wagga and Goulburn.

We are also trialing the Government Access Program in Western and Northern NSW. Government Access Centres are a new way of providing services in the bush and are located in the business centre of small country towns. They will provide a one-stop-shop for government services and will offer facilities including information on all government services; appointments with the Department of Fisheries; Department of Housing forms and information and Home and Community Care transport bookings. So far we have Government Access Centres in Grenfell, Oberon, Gilgandra, Kyogle, Maclean, Nambucca Heads and Dorrigo.

My Government established the Regional Communities Consultative Council in 1996 to address concerns such as yours about State Government cooperation with local communities. It was established to advise the State Government on the major issues affecting rural and regional communities and to develop future options for managing and improving communication between the Government and the bush.

Finally, all State Government Departments are required to undertake Rural Community Impact Statements (RCIS) to support proposals submitted to Cabinet for decisions or changes which could impact on rural and regional communities.

The aim of Rural Community Impact Statements (RCIS) is to improve the decision making processes of the Government by ensuring the full extent of economic, environmental and social impacts of proposals on rural and regional communities are considered.

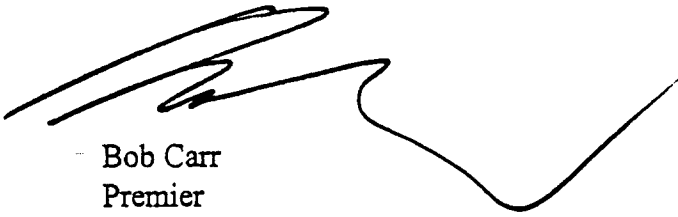
Guidelines for RCIS have been developed as a best practice document and agencies have been encouraged to adopt these procedures as an integral part of internal decision making. The Guidelines identify five main points to be considered in any changes to existing service delivery arrangements:

6. the match between service and demand;
7. options for service delivery;
8. costs and benefits to government and communities;
9. appropriate community consultation; and
10. management of change.

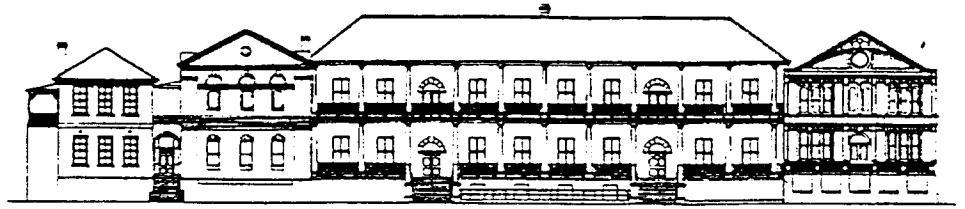
As the particular concerns raised in your letter concern the administrations of a number of Ministers of my Government, I have arranged to bring your correspondence to the attention of my colleagues with responsibilities in these areas.

You may be sure that your comments will receive close consideration.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several fluid, overlapping strokes that form a cursive representation of the name 'Bob Carr'. The signature is positioned to the left of the printed name.

Bob Carr
Premier



With Compliments

John Watkins, M.P.

Member for Gladesville

Electorate Office:
Shop 8, 210 Victoria Road
Gladesville, NSW 2111

Tel: (02) 9816 5111
Fax: (02) 9816 5136



NEW SOUTH WALES

THE HON ERNIE PAGE, MP
MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

P27716
Dts 43748
A196/0110

Mr J A Watkins MP
Member for Gladesville
Shop 8
210-216 Victoria Road
GLADESVILLE NSW 2111

- 3 SEP 1998

Dear Mr Watkins

I am writing in response to your recent letter to the Premier, regarding correspondence you received from the Northern Area Regional Organisation of Councils (NAROC). As the Minister for Local Government, the Premier has asked me to reply on his behalf.

As well as discussing these issues with me in July, I understand that Mr Don Budge, the Executive Officer of NAROC, has written to a number of other Members of Parliament to seek their comments and suggestions on the issues-discussion paper. To assist your response, I can provide advice on the issues which fall within my area of responsibility.

Firstly, the list of issues from NAROC includes the issue 'Local Government amalgamations – no forced amalgamations of local government authorities'. I can confirm that the current government policy is that there will not be any forced amalgamations of local government authorities in NSW.

The NSW Government is committed to encouraging regional cooperation between local government authorities in NSW. In relation to Voluntary Regional Organisations of Councils, such as NAROC, the Government has set out its policy in its March 1995 election policy statement on local government. The commitment is to:

- encourage active roles for VROCs - based upon current successful models;
- further define and resolve organisational issues - VROCs should not duplicate existing arrangements or tasks, and their actual status should be made clear; and
- consult with local government to develop the aims and objectives of VROCs.

NAROC INC.	
FILE NO.	BACKBEN
DATE:	16/9/98
REF NO:	00888

To date, my Reform Task Force has produced a Discussion Paper and Summary of Submissions Report focussing on 'Proposals to Encourage Cooperation between Local Government Authorities in NSW'. Copies of both these papers are available on the internet at my Department's homepage: <http://www.dlg.nsw.gov.au>.

Secondly, I can advise that Financial Assistance Grants (FAGs) are paid to councils under the provisions of the Commonwealth Local Government (Financial Assistance) Act 1995. The responsibility for this funding scheme is with the Commonwealth Minister for Regional development, Territories and Local Government.

Prior to 1991/92 local roads funds were paid to councils, through the RTA, as "tied" grants under the provision of the Australian Centennial Roads Development (ACRD) Act 1988. This grant included a bridge replacement subsidy element for which councils applied for funding on a dollar-for-dollar basis. It was decided at the 1990 Special Premiers' Conference that the ACRD funds should be "untied" and paid as general purpose grants via the States' Grants Commissions.

The value of local roads funding remains a separately identified component of the FAGs, however grant does not have to be spent on roads. The method of allocation used by the NSW Grants Commission is similar to that formerly used by the RTA. The Commission introduced a bridge length formula to replace the bridge replacement subsidy provisions of the former "tied" grants.

The principles for the distribution of the local roads component of the FAGs are based on principles which were agreed to by the Local Government and Shires Associations and the Commonwealth. The formula provides surety of funding. The untied nature of the grant means that councils have greater flexibility in the application of the funds.

I have noted the NAROC reference to the submission on liability, which has been forwarded to the Attorney-General's Department by Jardine Australian Insurance Brokers.

I trust this information will be of assistance.

Yours sincerely



**E. T. Page B.E., B.Comm., M.P.
Minister for Local Government**

31 August 1998



The Hon. John Tingle, M.L.C.
Legislative Council
Parliament House
SYDNEY NSW 2000
Tel. (02) 9230 2111

Mr Don Budge
Executive Officer
NAROC
PO Box 791
INVERELL NSW 2360

Dear Mr Budge

I must apologise for the delay in responding to your letter of July 13 regarding issues that the 11 member councils of NAROC want to place before Members of State Parliament in New South Wales.

I have been away from Sydney, on the road, since the end of the Autumn Session of Parliament and am now catching up with the vast amount of correspondence which has accumulated during my absence.

Let me say simply that having perused the Discussion Paper on the issues which you included with your letter I have to agree entirely with virtually every point.

I myself live at Port Macquarie, and while it is probably better served in some regards than some other areas of the State, because of its geographic location and thriving tourist trade, it is also suffering quite severely from the actions of both Federal and the State Governments.

As a case in point the Northern Regional Office of the RTA was recently closed throwing more than 30 persons at middle management level out of work, despite the protests of the local Council and of local Members of Parliament.

It may interest you to know that it is a policy of the Shooters' Party, which I represent in Parliament, that before either Federal or State Governments makes any alteration in the level of its services to a country town it should issue a Community Impact Statement. This policy which I myself moved into the Policy Paper of the Shooters' Party, is designed to prevent exactly the sort of bleeding of Government services from rural areas which we have seen so frequently in the last few years.

I believe that the Government instrumentality which already exists in the country town becomes an absolutely indispensable part of the economy, social infrastructure and employment resources of that town.

Before there is any reduction of that service, or even its complete withdrawal the Government concerned ought to be obliged to take into account the effect that that change will have on that community. Similarly if a service is being added to a town a similar Impact Statement should be made.

FILE No:	BACK BEN
DATE:	4/9/98
REF No:	00806

I have discussed this with the New South Wales State Government, so far without a great deal of reaction, but I am contemplating in the coming Parliament framing a Bill which would make this a requirement on all Government Departments involved in any kind of rural community in New South Wales.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "John Tingle". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial 'J'.

THE HON. JOHN TINGLE, MLC
Shooters' Party



PARLIAMENT OF NEW SOUTH WALES
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

MEMBER FOR DUBBO

Suite 5, 1st Floor
46 Church Street
(PO Box 968)
Dubbo NSW 2830

Tel: (02) 6882 3577
Fax: (02) 6882 3689

19th August 1998

Don Budge Esq
Executive Office
NAROC
P O Box 791
INVERELL NSW 2360

Dear Mr Budge

Thank you for your letter of 13th ultimo. I apologise for the delay in replying.

Let me say at the outset that your discussion paper on the issues is excellent and I have little argument with any of its content. I am particularly concerned at the decline in rural services and the information contained in your discussion paper is very valuable because the figures can be quoted to back up our proposals to restore these services as a vital element of the growth of country towns and communities. Such things as rural health are of major concern to every part of Country Australia as is road funding particularly in view of the very heavy damage caused by the recent wet weather. As regards law and order you will be aware that myself, Joe Schipp and Tony Windsor are battling to have the situation improved on all fronts in respect to law and order.

I believe that the information collated in your issues paper is so good that it should really be repeated over all local government areas throughout the State and I will certainly try to see that a similar paper is prepared in my electorate. It will be then possible to use the information in the formulation of worthwhile policies for regional development and preservation.

Finally my congratulations on a very excellent effort.

Yours sincerely

G B P Peacocke, MP
Member for Dubbo

NAROC INC.	
FILE No:	BACKBEN
DATE:	24/8/98
REF No:	008040



PARLIAMENT OF NEW SOUTH WALES
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

MEMBER FOR MURRAY

Electorate Office
395 George Street
Deniliquin 2710
PO Box 835
Deniliquin 2710
Tel: (03) 5881 2687
Fax: (03) 5881 3235

5 August, 1998

Mr D Budge
Executive Officer
NAROC
PO Box 791
INVERELL NSW 2360

Dear Don

Thank you for your recent letter and very comprehensive information and details over a very broad range of subjects concerning rural areas of NSW which are generally very similar identification right across the state and certainly with the same ramifications of government loss of services in my electorate of Murray.

The majority of these matters need to be dealt with through answers of future direction specific to coalition for which I am a member with Peter Collins Liberal, Leader and Ian Armstrong, National Party Leader and therefore the answers would need to come from them and the Shadow Ministry.

However all areas that you have raised are completely on the ball and no one could dispute that your group of shires as is a similar situation for MUROC shires in my electorate are supplementary to each other and have grave concern for rural people generally.

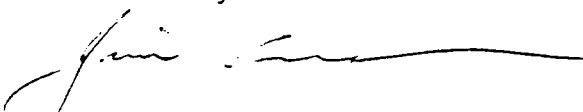
For your benefit I enclose a copy of a letter that I have taken up with shires in the Western area of NSW and as the only member west of the Divide to actually lose an electorate within the redrawn boundaries where the Premier has reduced the number of seats by six in the Legislative Assembly, my electorate has been cut into four and amalgamated with Albury, Wagga Wagga, Murrumbidgee and formerly Broken Hill, now to be called Murray-Darling, but virtually Broken Hill remains the same with the addition of a larger portion of Murray.

I also enclose a copy of a news items with the detailed letter as sent to the Western Shires so that you will appreciate my genuine concerns for the very serious loss of representation within rural NSW and one only has to look at the big picture to appreciate that Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong will continue to run over the rest of our state as population movements are enhanced in that area whilst not diminishing in the west but falling dramatically behind the state average in population growth and nothing could be more telling than when you look at the scenario of cities like Albury and Wagga Wagga which are not keeping up with the state average and have fallen behind and this is very much an awakening message for rural people to get their act together as you are endeavouring to do.

I thank you for your input in writing to me and I concur with the very significant signals and messages that you are identifying with my colleagues throughout country NSW.

Kindest regards and best wishes.

Yours sincerely


Jim Small MP
MEMBER FOR MURRAY

NAROC INC.	
FILE NO:	BACKBEN
DATE:	10/8/98
REF NO:	007J91



PARLIAMENT OF NEW SOUTH WALES
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

MEMBER FOR MURRAY

Electorate Office
395 George Street
Deniliquin 2710

PO Box 835
Deniliquin 2710
Tel: (03) 5881 2687
Fax: (03) 5881 3235

9 July, 1998

Mr D McMillan
General Manager
Wentworth Shire Council
P O Box 81
WENTWORTH NSW 2648

Dear David

Now that the Electoral Boundaries in New South Wales have been finalised, I wish to draw to your attention my concerns about the loss of representation, including the diminishing representation in numbers for voting and voices in State Parliament.

The reason I wish to raise this with you and ask that you please consider my thoughts to ensure that country people in isolated areas can try and protect their interest in the best way possible given the problems that we face and continue to face through rural New South Wales.

I would like you to appreciate this scenario that I place before you in looking at the big picture and forgetting about who is in government, as we do have a major problem that needs addressing because in today's Parliament, depending on where you define the exact line, we have some 71 members representing Wollongong, Sydney and Newcastle, whilst for the remainder of the vast area of our state only 28 members represent rural New South Wales.

This worries me no end, because in particular west of the Divide, even the major centres like Albury and Wagga Wagga are not even keeping up with the average population growth of Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong extending into the Blue Mountains and some areas of the coastal belt, whilst the far west is finding it difficult to even retain population let alone growth.

This is obvious within present electorates we have where Broken Hill is more than 13% under quota of equal numbers for constituents and electorates like Murray, Murrumbidgee, Lachlan are all in the area of some 7% or 8% under quota whilst Wagga Wagga and Albury are 1% or 2% under quota which really does identify the problems we are facing and therefore the electorates are going to become bigger and bigger in size as time progresses.

Of course this has been greatly increased now by the removal of an extra six seats within the state increasing each electorate with another 2,500 electors and remembering that every eight years or second election there has to be a redistribution or realignment of boundaries to have an equal quota per electorate within a 3% tolerance up or down.

The new seat of Murray-Darling is an example as to why I approach you to see if in unity we can try and help protect our interest for the future, given that it will cover a land mass of approximately 45% of New South Wales and also approximately 360,000 square kilometres and one electorate with only one representative.

This I believe is totally unreasonable for those people living in the far west and in fact for the one individual person whoever is elected to represent that area will always face extreme difficulty not only in servicing the electorate but trying to have others support their need as well, and in particular achieving support from the Sydney base area.



- 2 -

One must also appreciate that country electorates will keep growing in size whilst I do not believe that we will ever be able to change the quota system of equal numbers of constituents within each electorate regardless of size, and even though some metropolitan electorates in the heart of Sydney may be only 13 square kilometres and can be driven across within perhaps a maximum of 20 minutes even in busy traffic, I do not believe such circumstances to be equitable, and this is the very reason I approach you in consideration of supporting an agenda to try and achieve greater representation for the country region.

My suggestion would be perhaps in an electorate like Murray-Darling we should look at land mass and as a suggestion no electorate exceed 100,000 square kilometres in size and that would mean three parliamentary representatives in the Lower House being identified in the huge electorate and providing there is a main town base as well as the rural population, one could consider the southern area taking in all the towns along the Murray River with approximately a land mass of over 100,000 square kilometres then with Broken Hill reaching east and under similar circumstances and then in the north with those country towns reaching from the west to the east along the Queensland border and coming south to a defined line above Broken Hill.

This is my suggestion, however you might have a better idea of how we can seek and secure more voting voices in Parliament on behalf of isolated areas and rural constituencies, the hard facts are that forever and a day we are going to have less and less voices and votes if the present format continues, and therefore we need to find a satisfactory way of creating a fair and justifiable method that can be sold and will be workable.

Because I am retiring at the end of this parliamentary term and have been looking after an electorate of slightly less than 100,000 square kilometres I know how difficult it can be in travelling and with the lack of resources in the western region with no commercial air services, no train services, and limited funding for charter travel it is extremely difficult.

I believe I can look at it from a perspective for those in the future who have to face these difficulties and then be prepared to consider this from an independent point of view of relevance to all parliamentarians whether in government or in opposition, because if we do not try to develop an area of constitutional enhancement for the diminishing rural areas of our state then we unfortunately will continue down the track of losing more services and inputs that frankly our state cannot afford to allow happen, because these are the areas where such a large proportion of our economy exists and must continue to be a driving force of benefit for all.

I look forward to your input on this matter and would be grateful for any suggestions as it may be even necessary to hold a meeting in a central area where shire representatives could all attend to discuss the viability of what we can do and how we can arrest the decline but in fact improve the position, and I enclose a copy of my recent news item expressing concern on this matter, and would appreciate your thoughts on this important issue and where we should go from here.

Yours sincerely

Jim Small MP
MEMBER FOR MURRAY

Encl:



PARLIAMENT OF NEW SOUTH WALES
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

MEMBER FOR MURRAY

Electorate Office
395 George Street
Deniliquin 2710
PO Box 835
Deniliquin 2710
Tel: (03) 5881 2687
Fax: (03) 5881 3235

18 June 1998

NEWS RELEASE

FROM JIM SMALL, MP - MEMBER FOR MURRAY

MURRAY DARLING TOO BIG FOR ONE MEMBER?

New South Wales State Member for Murray has taken up the fight to have electorates like that of the new Murray-Darling to be addressed for greater representation.

Mr Small said it is not good enough that one electorate can cover in excess of 45% of the entire state!

It is totally unfair on the new Member whoever he or she may be, endeavouring to cover such a huge area that can be so dangerous in rural outback areas with so much wildlife and unsealed roads to travel over on behalf of constituents.

Mr Small is anxious to have this matter reviewed where one elected Member is expected to cover a massive 360,000 square kilometres whilst at present several members in Sydney only have approximately 13 square kilometres to cover in their electorates.

During the National Party State Conference held at Orange recently Mr Small moved a motion on behalf of branches within his own seat of Murray "That the National Party investigate to establish smaller geographical rural electorates, and thereby enhance the capacity of Members to represent their electorates."

This motion was fully supported and Mr Small pointed out he personally believes an area of 100,000 square kilometres should be the maximum for an elected Member to look after, providing there are suitable guidelines identifying a rural base with established towns.



PARLIAMENT OF NEW SOUTH WALES
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

THE HON. GEORGE SOURIS, M.P.
DEPUTY LEADER OF THE NATIONAL PARTY
SHADOW MINISTER FOR PUBLIC WORKS AND ROADS

Electorate Office
98 Bridge Street
Muswellbrook 2333

Parliament House
Macquarie Street
Sydney 2000

PO Box 493

Tel: (02) 6543 1065

Fax: (02) 6543 1416

Tel: (02) 9230 2196

Fax: (02) 9230 2601

12 August, 1998

Mr. Don Budge,
Executive Director,
N.A.R.O.C.,
P.O. Box 791,
INVERELL NSW 2360

Dear Mr. Budge,

Thank you for forwarding your digest of impacts in the N.A.R.O.C. area of decisions taken by Governments and other parties in recent times.

I note that you have already presented your paper to the Coalition's Shadow Minister for Local Government, The Hon. Duncan Gay, M.L.C.

In respect of my portfolio interest I would like to comment as follows:-

1. Road Funding:

The Coalition will restore 100% of road taxes becoming roads expenditure and in addition a component of fines revenue becoming part of a road safety black spot programme. The 3x3 levy would be restored to full hypothecation including a 60:40 split of city/country.

Unsealed sections of important State roads such as the Bruxner Highway and the Mungindi-Moree road would receive high priority for sealing.

2. Rail Freight:

To the extent that the Coalition will be targeting rail freight the impact will be of considerable improvement to road safety.

3. Bridge Subsidy Scheme:

The Bridge Subsidy Scheme is intended for re-introduction by an in-coming Coalition Government.

NAROC INC.	
FILE No:	BACK/2 3EN
DATE:	7/8/98
REF No:	008J00

4. R.T.A. Offices:

The centralisation of the R.T.A. by the Carr Government will be reversed. There will be an increased involvement of Shire Depots in our decentralisation plans. In this way decentralisation can reach more localised communities.

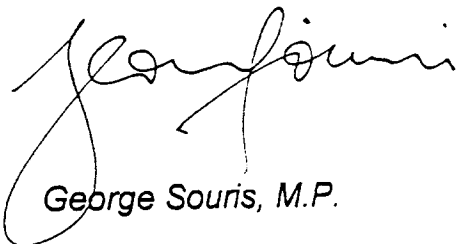
5. Cost/Benefit Analysis:

In future, under a Coalition Government, in the preparation of benefit/cost analyses there will be a greater emphasis on economic value which will be of significant benefit to regional roads that play a major role in the local economy.

Likewise a new category of roads (Heritage Roads) will help to target tourism in regional areas.

Many thanks for this opportunity. The Coalition is in the process of preparing its policies for government at present and these and other aspects of your paper will be incorporated.

Yours sincerely,



George Souris, M.P.



PARLIAMENT OF NEW SOUTH WALES
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
MEMBER FOR THE HILLS



Michael Richardson, MP

Electorate Office
Suite 11
Mileto House
2-4 Old Castle Hill Road
Castle Hill NSW 2154

All correspondence to:
PO Box 298, Castle Hill 2154
Tel: 9634 7474
Fax: 9899 3340

28 July 1998

Mr Don Budge,
Executive Officer,
NAROC,
PO Box 791,
INVERELL NSW 2360

Dear Mr Budge,

Thank-you for writing to me alerting me to the issues of concern to your constituent councils. I personally found the letter very revealing and will bear its contents in mind when these issues are raised in the Party room and in the Parliament.

While some of the issues outlined are specific to the country, many are common to much of NSW, including my electorate. For example, the National Australia Bank in Kellyville recently closed - even though Kellyville is one of the fastest growing suburbs in Sydney. The post office closed in Beecroft; the CES shut in Castle Hill (but was replaced with another agency); and the Carr Government has slashed our roads funding to almost zero.

What we have not experienced is the loss of jobs shown by your survey of your members, which has clearly proved devastating to many country towns.

Members of the NSW Coalition are very mindful of the problems being experienced by many people in rural NSW and I can assure you we are taking very strong and definite steps to address them in our policies for the next election.

Yours sincerely,

Michael Richardson MP
Member for The Hills

NAROC INC.	
FILE NO:	BACKBEN
DATE:	31/7/98
REF No:	007362



*The Honourable Edward Obeid, O.A.M., M.L.C.
Legislative Council,
(State Senate),
Parliament House,
Macquarie Street,
Sydney NSW 2000 Australia
Telephone: (02) 230 2581
Fax: (02) 223 7392*

27 July 1998

Mr Don Budge
Executive Officer
NAROC
PO Box 791
INVERELL NSW 2360

Dear Mr Budge,

Thank you for sending me the Issues Discussion Paper for the New England region.

As the Government Member responsible for the electorate of Northern Tablelands I am very concerned for the welfare of the New England area. I have noted the extensive and detailed list of issues confronting the region. The issues range across a number of areas and levels of government responsibility, from local to State to Federal, as well as the private sector.

I have spoken to the office of the Minister for Local Government, Mr Ernie Page, who is discussing with Government Ministers the issues for which the State Government has responsibility.

I would appreciate being updated on progress from NAROC's end as it occurs.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Edward Obeid'.

THE HON EDWARD OBEID OAM, MLC
Chair of Parliamentary Standing Committee
on Small Business

NAROC INC.	
FILE No:	BACKBEN
DATE:	3/8/98
REF No:	00737



The Honourable Richard Jones, M.L.C.
Legislative Council.
Parliament House,
SYDNEY, N.S.W. 2000.
Telephone: (02) 230 2858

03 September 1998

Ref:Budge.998/je

Mr Don Budge
Executive Officer
NAROC
PO Box 791
INVERELL NSW 2360

Dear Mr Budge,

I must apologise for having taken a while to reply to your letter to me enclosing the Discussion Paper.

I have been overseas for a while and am now just catching up with my correspondence.

I do hope that all other Members of Parliament read this Discussion Paper as I just have and realise what an extraordinary impact that economic rationalism is having in rural areas.

The list of jobs lost in both the public and private sector is stunning and really saddening.

Looking at these job losses in these towns makes me realise why so many rural people are thinking of voting for One Nation as a protest against both major parties.

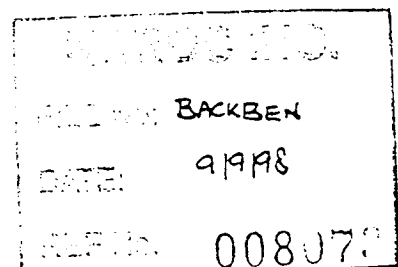
I do hope that the message sinks in to metropolitan Members of Parliament so that they realise what an enormous impact withdrawal of services has in country towns.

I presume that this would also have been sent to Harry Woods and would be interested to know what his comments are on these issues. I do know that he has a genuine interest in regional and rural Australia and would hope that he and the Carr Government will introduce a program to slow and hopefully, in some cases, reverse the loss of jobs in rural areas.

I will use this document to ask questions of Ministers, particularly when we have our next estimates meetings.

Yours sincerely,

RICHARD JONES





PARLIAMENT OF NEW SOUTH WALES
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

THE HON. K. ROZZOLI, M.P.
MEMBER FOR HAWKESBURY

Room 1014
10th Floor
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
Sydney NSW 2000
Tel: (02) 9230 2420
Fax: (02) 9230 3092

7 August, 1998

Mr Don Budge
Executive Officer
NAROC
Suite 5, 18 Sweeney Street
INVERELL NSW 2360

Dear Mr Budge

Thank you for your letter of July 13 1998 enclosing information relating to a number of issues which the eleven member councils of NAROC wanted raised with members of the New South Wales Parliament.

I understand the Opposition Shadow Minister for Local Government, the Hon. Duncan Gay MLC is preparing a detailed response to the various issues you raised which will be forwarded to you in due course.

Notwithstanding that official response, I wish to advise that as a member of the Liberal Party's Parliamentary Rural Committee, I am keenly interested in the issues you raise. The Committee is conducting its own investigation into most of these matters and will have input into Opposition policy process in due course. I shall certainly raise all these issues with the Rural Committee at its next meeting.

Yours faithfully,

The Hon. Kevin Rozzoli, M.P.,
Member for Hawkesbury

NAROC INC.	
FILE NO:	BACKBEN
DATE:	11/8/98
REF No:	007395



Legislative Council Parliament House
 Macquarie Street SYDNEY NSW 2000
 Tel: (02) 9230 2397 Fax: (02) 9230 2980
 E-mail: cbull@parliament.nsw.gov.au

The Hon. Richard Bull, M.L.C.
 Deputy Leader of the Opposition and
 Leader of the National Party in the Legislative Council
 Shadow Minister for Agriculture &
 Shadow Minister for Racing and Gaming

23 July 1998

Mr Don Budge
 Executive Officer
 Northern Area Regional Organisation of Councils Inc.
 PO Box 791
 INVERELL NSW 2360

Dear Mr Budge

Thankyou for your letter dated 13 July regarding the issues raised by NAROC's eleven member councils. I have read your document with great interest and I will carefully address the issues pertaining to my agriculture and gaming and racing portfolios.

Firstly, the Carr Government's closure of the regional Veterinary Laboratory in Armidale was a grave mistake on their behalf and I would like to assure you that the Coalition plans to restore government services to the Armidale Veterinary Laboratory. The Coalition believes veterinary laboratories play a vital role in protecting the State's rural industries and safeguarding the spread of exotic diseases. It is imperative that we have in place mechanisms to prove to our trading partners that we are 'clean and disease free' and that other countries are not using non-tariff barriers such as quarantine, to block the export of goods into overseas markets. We need to have the scientific technical data to prove to the world the facts, not the suppositions. This is precisely why the Coalition will restore government services to the regional veterinary laboratories at Armidale upon re-election in 1999. We believe the former arrangements of locating veterinary laboratories in a regional network were effective and we plan to return to this model with the Elizabeth Macarthur Institute providing specialist testing when needed.

Secondly, function licences have been an ongoing problem since the Carr Government ruined the ease of holding a function by introducing a number of over zealous regulations which imposed conditions such as the requirement of security guards and ropes for the purpose of segregating an area. The Coalition mounted a campaign against these regulations and applied a great deal of pressure on the Carr Government which has forced them to back down on the severity of the regulations. Please find enclosed a letter from the Minister for gaming and Racing, Richard Face, MP which outlines the details of his backdown. It is still the case that each function is susceptible to different conditions depending on the type of function. You can be assured that if the Coalition becomes the Government, we would review any existing regulations that make it difficult to hold a good fundraiser as has been held in the past.

I shall forward this response to the Shadow Minister for Local Government, The Hon Duncan Gay, MLC whom I understand you have already met. Please be assured that the Coalition is taking your concerns most seriously and thankyou for taking the time to bring these important matters to my attention. Congratulations for generating such a comprehensive discussion paper which is very helpful in gaining a greater understanding of the issues in your area.

Yours sincerely

The Hon Richard Bull, MLC

NAROC INC.	
FILE NO:	BACKBEN
DATE:	30/7/98
REF No:	007961



NATIONALS

COUNTRY

first



MINISTER FOR GAMING AND RACING

Minister Assisting the Premier on Hunter Development

LETTER TO MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
AND MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

FUNCTION LIQUOR LICENCES

27 MAY 1998

Dear Member

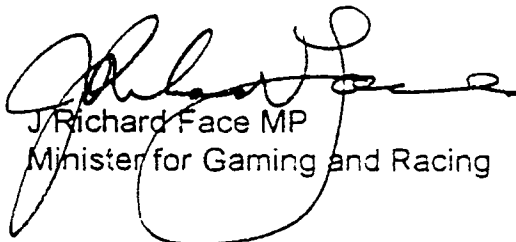
You will be aware of various concerns that have been reported in the media and raised by community organisations and individual function licensees over recent months concerning function licences and the requirements of the licensing laws that apply to function licences.

The Gaming and Racing portfolio and the Licensing Court Registry have acted to address the concerns of licensees and applicants in a number of ways, and to remedy any problems being incurred in the licensing process.

The Director of Liquor and Gaming has also provided advice to all Regional and Local Area Commanders of the Police Service, and has sought police assistance in ensuring that applications for function liquor licences are dealt with promptly and appropriately, and in accordance with the law. I attach for your information a copy of the Director's letter.

I trust the letter will be of assistance to you in responding to local issues concerning function licences.

Yours sincerely



J. Richard Face MP
Minister for Gaming and Racing



A NEW SOUTH WALES GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENT

DEPARTMENT OF GAMING AND RACING
323 CASTLEREAGH STREET, SYDNEY
TELEPHONE (02) 9289 9700 FACSIMILE (02) 9289 8888
All written correspondence to GPO BOX 7060, SYDNEY NSW 2001
E-mail Address dogar@tpgi.com.au

OPEN LETTER TO REGIONAL AND LOCAL AREA COMMANDERS NSW POLICE SERVICE

IMPORTANT ADVICE FROM THE DIRECTOR OF LIQUOR AND GAMING PROCESSING OF FUNCTION LIQUOR LICENCE APPLICATIONS LIQUOR ACT 1982

I am writing to seek your assistance in ensuring that applications for function liquor licences under the NSW Liquor Act are dealt with promptly and appropriately, and in accordance with the law.

The Gaming and Racing portfolio has received a range of complaints from around NSW about how function licence applications are being dealt with. These complaints relate to aspects of Gaming and Racing's procedures, Court procedures and to police procedures and requirements.

This arises largely because of misunderstanding about the licensing requirements that apply to function licences (temporary and permanent). Part of the confusion relates to the Licensing Court's recent Harm Minimisation and Responsible Service Practice Direction, the practical application of that through the court registries, and police requirements in some areas.

Your officers have a critical role in assessing applications for function licences, and under the Act can object to the grant of applications and also seek conditions to be put on grants of licences. Therefore it is important for your officers to be aware of the intention of the Practice Direction and how it should be applied in order to rectify any problems and to ensure some consistency and uniformity.

The Principal Registrar of the Licensing Court has also written to all court registries clarifying the requirements and the procedures, and seeking their assistance in improving the procedures for applicants.

I am also arranging for an article to be circulated in the Police Service Weekly shortly.

Many function licence applicants have contacted the Department with concerns about some of the new conditions they are being required to comply with, and that there is no flexibility for different types of functions. There have also been complaints about delays in processing these applications resulting in functions having to be cancelled.

The Department's review of some of these cases indicates that in some instances the conditions imposed are very severe for the type of function being held, and that there is a lack of consistency in the conditions being required for similar types of functions in different parts of the State.

The Department's advice to applicants is that each

application will be dealt with on individual merit, and it is open to the applicant to discuss any specific concerns about particular conditions with their local police (or the Department) – but that the final decision rests with the Court.

The following issues are the ones which have caused most concern for applicants. I raise them with you so that you are aware of them, and can take any necessary suitable action to assist applicants with the process – in the interests of ensuring an effective licensing process for function licences.

Harm Minimisation and Responsible Service Requirements

Since the introduction of the Harm Minimisation legislation in 1996, much more priority is being given to ensuring licensees comply with their obligations to serve liquor responsibly, not to serve drunks and not to serve minors. As you know, those requirements apply to function licences as well as all other liquor licences.

A feature of the Harm Minimisation object is that it requires police, and others, to have due regard to harm minimisation when carrying out their duties under the liquor laws.

The Licensing Court's 1997 Harm Minimisation Practice Direction and the new Harm Minimisation affidavit require applicants to satisfy the court that responsible serving measures will be place, and refer to a wide range of conditions that may be imposed on a licence. They are certainly not mandatory or to be applied in every case.

Functions licensed under the Act are also wide-ranging, and it is not intended that conditions be mandatory in every case. In terms of efforts to minimise harm, a dinner function of 50 people is quite a different event to a B & S Ball with 500 people.

Security and Supervision at Functions

It is not mandatory for licensees to provide licensed security, or to have a certain ratio of security staff (such as 1 security staff per 100 patrons).

The need for security and/or other adequate supervision has to be assessed in relation to the nature of the function, the venue, size, hours, etc.

Whether security staff – or other supervision for control purposes – are needed depends on the circumstances of each function. In some cases, the organisation's own personnel may be sufficient.

Compulsory Responsible Service of Alcohol (RSA) Training

While responsible service of alcohol training is not compulsory by law – the Court's Practice Direction does make it mandatory for most applicants. However, the Court may waive that requirement.

It is desirable of course that the licensee and all persons involved in the sale of liquor at functions be aware of, and practice, the responsible service of liquor. This includes being able to assess drinkers for intoxication, not serving intoxicated people, not serving minors, refusing admission to intoxicated people, and dealing with intoxicated people.

The key issue is that the applicant demonstrates – if they have not completed an RSA course – they are aware of their responsible service obligations. The size and nature of the function is of course also relevant.

The "Licensed Area"

Some organisations have asked for guidance about their responsibilities for ensuring liquor is not brought onto or taken off the premises of the function. This of course is more difficult the larger the area that is defined as the licensed area.

Applicants are being advised that it may assist them to have a smaller licensed area - and to confine the sale and consumption of liquor to that smaller area.

Therefore, the size of the "licensed area" of the function is an important matter for applicants to determine. This will influence how well they are able to supervise the sale and supply of liquor, ensure responsible serving and prevent intoxication.

The smaller the licensed area, the easier it is to supervise, with a lesser need for security.

Takeaway sales of liquor are not permitted at functions – another reason for the licensee to limit the size of the licensed area in the interests of better supervision.

There is no legislative requirement preventing liquor being brought onto the licensed area by patrons – however from a supervision perspective, it is desirable that the licensee monitor the supply of all liquor consumed in the area. For this reason, the Director may seek a condition on these licences prohibiting liquor being brought onto the "licensed" part of the premises by patrons.

Availability and Accessibility of Food

A common query from applicants concerns availability of food. It is a reasonable requirement that whenever liquor is being sold at a function, food be available and easily

accessible by patrons. Again, there are no statutory rules about this. However, the provision of food is a key strategy to minimise intoxication. It follows that food outlets should be located so they are easily accessible to drinkers.

The type of food provided must be appropriate for the type and hours of the function, and substantial enough to assist in preventing intoxication.

Of course, where the function is a "dinner" (or similar), the food provided must be in keeping with a dinner function.

Persons being able to Stand/Move around with Liquor

Contrary to recent media reports, it is not mandatory (for function licences) that liquor can only be consumed at a table, or that patrons have to be seated at the times they are consuming liquor.

Attendance and Supervision by Licensee

Another common query is about the requirement for licensees to be in attendance at functions to supervise the sale and supply of liquor. This does not mean that the licensee must be in attendance at the bar at all the times the bar is operating. The licensee needs to be generally available throughout the duration of the function to oversee the supply of liquor, to ensure responsible service, and to ensure compliance with the conditions of the licence.

Minors at Functions

Function licensees are subject to the same requirements in the law as apply to other liquor licensees. If minors are in attendance at a function, the licensee must have procedures in place to ensure that proof of age is asked for, that minors are not served liquor, and that other adults at the function do not supply liquor to minors.

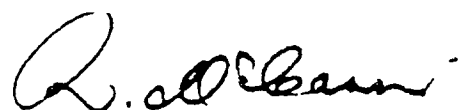
Conclusion

In conclusion, I raise these issues with you so that you are aware of them, and can take any necessary suitable action to assist with the processing of these applications.

In particular, I ask that the individual circumstances (ie. the nature and size etc) of each function be considered in your officers' assessment of applications.

If you need more information about the Department's policies and procedures for these applications, please contact Neil Stromberg on phone (02) 9289 8863.

Thank you for your assistance



Ron McCann
Director of Liquor and Gaming

9 April 1998



Forwarded with the compliments of

The Hon. Ernie Page, B.E., B.Comm., MP
Minister for Local Government

Ministerial Office
Level 2, 151 Macquarie Street
Sydney 2000
Phone (02) 9251 8498
Fax (02) 9251 1442
www.dlg.nsw.gov.au

Parliament House Office
Macquarie Street
Sydney 2000
Phone (02) 9230 2199
Fax (02) 9231 6371



MINISTER FOR EDUCATION AND TRAINING

MINISTER ASSISTING THE PREMIER
ON YOUTH AFFAIRS

Level 2, 35 Bridge Street, Sydney NSW 2000
GPO Box 33, Sydney 2001

Tel: (02) 9561 8100 Fax: (02) 9561 8185



06/10/98

RML 98/5236

The Hon E T Page MP
Minister for Local Government
Suite 113
29 Newland Street
BONDI JUNCTION NSW 2022

Ernie,
Dear Minister

I refer to your personal representations on behalf of the Northern Area Regional Organisation of Councils Inc (NAROC), (Mr D Budge, Executive Officer), concerning the centralisation of Department of Education and Training services.

The former Department of Training and Education Co-ordination (DTEC), TAFE NSW and the Department of School Education were merged into a single agency, the Department of Education and Training, to ensure greater integration and co-ordination in the delivery of education and training services across the State while providing better economies of scale and eliminating waste.

The new Department is placed better to respond to increased student needs and provide flexibility in the provision of programs and student services than the three separate departments it replaces.

At a time when education and training are crucial to improve job and life opportunities, it is essential that NSW students can access integrated education and training. The new department is ensuring a smooth transition between school, further education, training and work for the people of NSW.

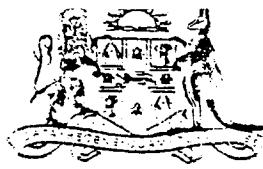
Throughout former restructures and this current amalgamation country jobs have been retained and marginally increased in the education portfolio. The Department already has one of the largest rural and regional infrastructures of any NSW government agency with 18 district offices, four industry training services centres, four TAFE institutes and one state office in rural NSW, in addition to similar facilities in Newcastle and Wollongong.

District offices at the regional centres of Armidale, Moree and Tamworth and the industry training services centre at Tamworth provide employment for around 100 staff. The establishment of the Armidale and Moree District Offices and the strong educational presence that has been maintained in Tamworth has had a significant positive impact on the rural economies included in the Northern Area Regional Organisation of Councils.

Yours sincerely

John Aquilina
John Aquilina, MP
Minister

NAROC INC.	
FILE NO:	BURKBEH
DATE:	06/10/98
REF NO:	008167



Minister for Agriculture
Minister for Land and Water Conservation

D98/2410
(57075)

20 OCT 1998

Mr Don Budge
Executive Officer
Northern Area Regional Organisation of Councils Inc.
PO Box 791
INVERELL NSW 2360

Thank you for your letter of 13 July 1998 expressing the concerns of the 11 member councils of the Northern Area Regional Organisation of Councils Inc. (NAROC).

The following comments are provided under the headings which appear in your Issues - Discussion Paper:

Water Resource Allocation - Water Act, 1912 is outdated and needs revision.

As you would agree, the Water Act is an important piece of water legislation. It was first enacted in 1912 and has been continually amended over the years in an attempt to modernise its scope and intent.

We cannot escape the fact, however, that the Act was written in a different time and for a different purpose than is required today. Its original intention was to facilitate the orderly development of rivers and groundwater for rural purposes. However, today's environment presents much more complex problems associated with sharing scarce resources.

While I agree that the Act does need to be reviewed, I also believe that we need to resolve a number of policy issues before we undertake such a review. Most of these policy issues are discussed in the recently released paper *Water Sharing in NSW - Access and Use*. The discussion paper is now out for public consultation and I would invite your organisation to consider the implications of the issues it raises and provide a submission to the Department of Land and Water Conservation (DLWC) by the closing date of 31 October 1998. A copy of the paper is attached.

REF NO: 81800
DATE: 26/10/98
FILE NO: BUCKEN 101571d
FACSIMILE (02) 9372 0199

Sewerage and Water Maintenance

Your submission presumably refers to the maintenance of water supply and sewerage assets and the cost of replacement at the end of their service life. The DLWC, in conjunction with local government, is developing guidelines to assist councils in developing a cost-effective renewals program for their water infrastructure. A draft of the guidelines has been prepared and is being reviewed in conjunction with a group of councils.

Expenditure on maintenance and renewals of water supply and sewerage infrastructure in urban areas of country NSW has always been a matter for councils. However, you would be aware that the Government does provide an increased level of assistance for the provision of sewerage services to country towns. An amount of \$168M is provided for this program and priority is given to towns with a high risk or urgent need. Through the Country Towns Water Supply and Sewage Program assistance is available for strategic business planning, asset management and for approved infrastructure projects.

Changes to the program for financial assistance were introduced in July 1996. The changes followed lengthy consultations with local government on future directions of the program. They include Government financial assistance being directed to "backlog" works to overcome public health, environmental and operational problems and to serve areas presently under-served. Councils would generally be expected to self-fund works to meet growth needs from sources such as developer charges and part of the annual income from new developments.

The Government is committed to providing financial assistance to complete the program of backlog water supply and sewerage works to meet community needs in urban areas of country NSW and this assistance will be needed for some time to come.

Manilla Shire Council Water and Sewerage

Manilla Shire Council recently requested Government financial assistance to construct improvements to Manilla Sewerage Scheme and extend the scheme to North Manilla.

As foreshadowed in the NAROC submission, I have recently offered Manilla Council \$1,179,200 (equivalent to 47%) Government financial assistance to enable the completion of the Manilla Sewerage Augmentation Scheme.

Concerning your reference to the decline in rural services I make the following comments:

Moree - Restructure of Department of Land and Water Conservation (DLWC)

As a result of the merger of the former Department of Conservation and Land Management with the Department of Water Resources in 1995, approximately 15 positions from the Moree office were transferred to Tamworth to create the DLWC's Barwon regional office. As at June 1998, however, there are 42 DLWC positions located in Moree.

The DLWC has undergone major structural realignment to ensure it can deliver integrated natural resource services to the people of NSW in the most efficient and effective manner. The primary focus of the re-alignment has been to improve service delivery to its customers throughout NSW and to achieve a demonstrable improvement to the quality and sustainability of our natural resources.

Yallaroi - DLWC Catchment Management office changed to joint appointment

As a result of the acceptance of an offer of voluntary redundancy, the position of Catchment Manager at Inverell was combined with the position of Catchment Manager at Warialda. The new position covers both catchment areas and the manager works from the Department's Inverell office.

Valuer General's Office (Moree/Tamworth)

In line with the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) competition policy reforms, the former Valuer-General's Office was separated into two new organisations namely the Valuer-General's Department, being a Regulatory body, and the State Valuation Office which is a commercial organisation. The Valuer General's Department supervises an open tendering process for contracts for mass valuation services in the Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong metropolitan areas and both private valuers and the State Valuation Office can complete for these contracts. In the Country areas the State Valuation Office undertakes the valuation services for the Valuer General's Department by way of uncontested contracts.

The former Valuer General's Office had one valuer at Moree, that officer having been in that location for a number of years. He requested and was granted a transfer in July 1996. Following the realignment, the valuation work for the Moree Plains Council area is now undertaken by the State Valuation Office from its Tamworth Office under contract to the Valuer General's Department, and the Valuer General's Department has maintained a field office at Moree to use if visiting the area as part of its Department's regulatory role.

As a result of the realignment, the majority of the staff at Tamworth are employed by the State Valuation Office. The Valuer General's Department has five roll maintenance staff at Tamworth to carry out those functions which are part of its regulatory role.

Development of New South Wales

Concerning your reference to the development of New South Wales, I would point out that the Carr Government, recognising that a strong rural economy and viable rural communities go hand in hand, provides important assistance to farmers and agricultural industries through NSW Agriculture and the Department of Land and Water Conservation.

As well as agricultural extension and advisory services, grants and loan-based programs are provided to encourage primary producers to invest in their future. Some of these are mentioned below for your information.

Special Conservation Loans

Special Conservation Loans aim to encourage improved land management practices by providing low interest loans for the following works:

- soil conservation, including woody weed control;
- stock and domestic water supply;
- up-grading of existing irrigation systems;
- tile drainage;
- serrated tussock control; and
- livestock effluent control.

Drought Regional Initiatives Program

The Drought Regional Initiatives Program is a joint NSW/Commonwealth Government program which is administered in NSW by the Department of Land and Water Conservation and NSW Agriculture. The program was introduced in March 1997 to provide grants for specific drought-proofing activities on farming properties, including:

- capping and piping of artesian bores;
- improving on-farm water storage water storage and reticulation;
- piping water around properties;
- fodder conservation; and
- purchase of new conservation tillage equipment, or modification of existing equipment.

In April this year, in recognition of the very dry conditions which prevailed at the time, an additional \$3.7 million was made available for drought assistance. Of this, \$2 million was allocated to the Drought Regional Initiatives Program. It should be noted that, in spite of the fact that the Drought Regional Initiatives Program is a joint Commonwealth/State program, the Commonwealth declined a request to

match this additional \$2 million. A further \$1 million was provided to charities to enable them assist drought-affected farming families.

Special Relief Scheme

For producers and small businesses affected by natural disasters, the NSW Government also provides Special Relief Scheme carry-on loans at concessional interest rates which are fixed for up to ten years. The interest rate for these loans was recently reduced from 6 per cent per annum to 4 per cent. This further improved this valuable form of assistance which is generally available to farmers and small businesses affected by wind, hail storms and floods.

FarmBis

Training and education also play an important part in assisting farmers to remain competitive and self-reliant. In recognition of this, the NSW Government's commitment to FarmBis is being increased from less than \$1 million to \$3.5 million annually. This figure will be matched on a dollar for dollar basis by the Commonwealth providing a total of \$7 million annually for individual and group training. Information on these programs can be obtained from the NSW Rural Assistance Authority, toll free, on 1800 678 593.

Weed Control

To counter the adverse impact of weeds on farm productivity, the NSW government assists communities by providing funding for weed control programs. In the current financial year, \$6.4 million was provided for this purpose. This is an increase of \$0.4 million on the amount provided in the previous budget.

The above primary industry-assistance measures need to be seen in the context of Commonwealth tax assistance to primary producers including:

- concessions and rebates for land degradation control and water storage and reticulation systems;
- a Farm Management Deposits Scheme which assists farmers to even out their income between good and bad years and spread their taxation liabilities accordingly;
- concessions which allow farmers to spread the proceeds of forced stock sales to meet de-stocking requirements of disease control programs over a number of years.

More information on these Commonwealth arrangements can be obtained from Mr Noel Beynon, Commonwealth Department of Primary Industries and Energy (02 6272 4669).

I trust the above information is helpful.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R Amery', written in a cursive style.

**RICHARD AMERY MP
MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE
MINISTER FOR LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION**

Attach.



Minister for Agriculture
Minister for Land and Water Conservation

(57075)

20 OCT 1998

Mr Don Budge
Executive Officer
Northern Area Regional Organisation of Councils Inc.
PO Box 791
INVERELL NSW 2360

Dear Mr Budge

Thank you for your letter of 13 July 1998, expressing the concerns of the 11 member councils of the Northern Area Regional Organisation of Councils Inc. (NAROC).

In relation to investment in the primary sector, the NSW Government has in place a number of assistance schemes for primary producers to encourage investment. These include the Special Conservation Scheme which is an incentive based Scheme which aims to facilitate and encourage improved land management practices. Assistance is available for the following capital programs:

- soil conservation, including woody weed control;
- stock and domestic water supply;
- up-grading of existing irrigation systems;
- tile drainage;
- serrated tussock control; and
- livestock effluent control.

The Drought Regional Initiatives scheme was introduced in March 1997. The scheme involved the provision of grants for specific drought-proofing activities on farming properties, including:

- capping and piping of artesian bores;
- water storage and reticulation;
- fodder conservation; and
- purchase of new conservation tillage equipment, or modification of existing equipment.

In addition, Rural Partnership Programs (RPP) provide assistance measures developed specifically to address the identified requirements of rural communities. The two RPP's operating in NSW are WEST2000 which covers the Western Division of the State, and Sunrise21 which covers the irrigation

NAROC INC.
FILE No: BACKBEN
DATE: 26/10/98
REF No: 008160

districts in the NSW-Victoria border regions. The types of activities for which support is provided include:

- interest subsidies for property build-up, productivity improvement and property re-development;
- whole farm business planning;
- training and professional advice; and
- alternative industries.

For further information on these programs producers can contact the Rural Assistance Authority, toll free, on 1800 678 593.

There is also a range of Commonwealth taxation arrangements in place that provide tax relief for primary producers. These measures include:

- tax concessions for land degradation control and water storage and reticulation systems; and
- the new Farm Management Deposits which assist in the spreading of taxation liabilities over time.

More information on these arrangements can be obtained from the Commonwealth Department of Primary Industries and Energy.

Finally, your letter made specific mention of the removal of payroll tax for rural businesses. Payroll tax is a state tax paid by businesses with payrolls above a threshold level of \$600,000. This would generally not be a concern for primary producers or small businesses in rural towns.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Amery', written in a cursive style.

**RICHARD AMERY MP
MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE
MINISTER FOR LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION**

Issues - Discussion Paper

• **Withdrawal of Government Services from Rural Areas**

- The need for Rural Community Impact assessments and effective community consultation prior to the removal or downgrading of any government agencies.
- The centralisation of Government services including NorthPower, the Education Department, the Roads and Traffic Authority and the State Rail.
- Deterioration of electricity distribution infrastructure and service.
- Local Government amalgamations - no forced amalgamations of local government authorities.

• **Rural Health**

- The crisis in the country health system, both in the level of service as well as the critical budgetary situation.
- Level of funding of rural health services.
- Retention of rural doctors.

• **Road Funding**

- As road transport is the most important means of transport in rural areas and in many instances the only means of transport it is vital that it be maintained to an appropriate standard.

The regional Road Network provides an important service to other centres. Throughout the State there are small sections of the network that remain unsealed. It would be appropriate for Construction Grants to be re-introduced to facilitate the sealing of the whole network. For example 11km of the Bruxner Highway remains unsealed. The road forms an important link between Southwest Queensland and the North Coast.

• **Law & Order**

- The need for more Police Officers in country areas. No doubt, this should also include the addition of resources for those officers currently located in country areas to perform their duties in an effective manner.
- Including police numbers and powers and sentencing by the Courts.

- **Population Drift**

- Provision of State Government assistance for decentralisation of industry to rural areas.
- What initiatives does either the State Government or Opposition have for the revitalisation of country regional areas?

- **Olympic Building Program**

- The impact of the governments strategy in relation to the Olympic Building Program which is having a significant influence on grant funding for essential country community infrastructure.

- **Communication**

- When will there be a full blanket coverage of the digital telecommunications system right across country New South Wales. It is acknowledged that this is a Federal Government issue (sale of Telstra) but important issues such as:-
 - extent (and future extension of) the current system,
 - cost effectiveness for the service (not pricing country businesses higher than their city counterparts), and
 - community service obligations,

should be pressed by the State Government in the interest of regional Australia.

- The vital need for extension of the Mobile Net Service to cater for increasing demands and expectations in activities including tourism, emergency services provision and local and regional economic development.

- **Investment in the Primary Sector**

- What incentives are, or can be put in place by the government to encourage investment in the primary sector. For example, taxation incentives for “drought proofing” farms, removal of payroll tax for rural businesses, to name just a few.

- **Rail Freight**

- Incentives to encourage bulk freight to be transported by rail.

- **Natural Resource Management**

- Water Resource Allocation - Water Act, 1912 is outdated and needs revision.
- EPA for garbage for disposal.
- Load Base Licences
- Sewerage and water maintenance

- **Social Impact Statements** (the reality versus the intention).

The State Government gave an undertaking last year, that Social Impact Statements would be carried out prior to any final decision by the Government concerning the removal/rationalisation of services in rural NSW.

The intention of this process was to ensure that the Government gave proper consideration to the social/economic consequence of such decisions in prospect, rather than in retrospect. Present evidence suggests that this process is more honoured in the breach, than the observance.

- **Kingsford Smith Airport**

- Continuing access to Kingsford Smith Airport by regional travellers.

- **Tourism Funding**

It is most unlikely that small rural Councils will be able to attract tourism funding, having regard to the current onerous requirements which have been put in place by both Federal and State Government funding agencies. Examples include:-

- The requirement for Councils to employ a full-time tourist officer places a significant financial burden on local ratepayers, without any realistic opportunity for recovery of equivalent costs. Small tourist centres endeavour to make ends meet by extensive use of volunteers for associated activities, including the selling of memorabilia and the promotion of tourist destinations in the Council area. In such circumstances, publicly funded activities are simply not capable of securing commensurate returns on investment. Government funding would greatly enhance the success of such undertakings.

- Seeding Grants for the establishment of tourist centres, in the form of Capital Construction Grants, are usually only available where there is a large regional or international content and market. In the specific case of Manilla Shire, it is questionable as to whether an area of 2542 square kilometres is of sufficient size to warrant being described as a region, by the relevant tourism agencies. Specifically, Council's application for a Tourist Centre Seeding Grant in 1993/94 failed largely on that basis, and required statistical information could not be provided, due to the absence of tourism support activity in the data collection area. Council's 1993/94 grant application sought assistance in the sum of \$6,000, for the upgrading of an existing building to incorporate a Tourist Information Centre.

- **Financial Assistance Grants**

- Most Councils in Australia are heavily reliant upon the untied annual grant provided by the Federal Government through the respective State Grants Commissions, and entitled "Financial Assistance Grants". Such grants may be expended at the discretion of Councils and, in the case of Manilla Shire, the annual grant equates to approximately one third of Council's total income.

Clearly, any decline in the level of such grants will force Councils to look elsewhere to recover those losses, and even "Blind Freddy" understands the extreme difficulty of exacting additional rate revenue from communities which are increasingly hard pressed to remain viable.

Consequently, the maintenance, in real terms, of Commonwealth Financial Assistance Grants to local Councils lies at the heart of their very survival.

- **Unused State Rail Authority Land**

- In Manilla, there is a large and very conspicuous area of land owned by the State Rail Authority, and which raises the following two issues, at least.
 - Maintenance of this property, and especially grass mowing, is neglected and it is fair to say that the land presents a less than attractive vista to those approaching Manilla from the south.
 - Council considers that this unused land could be put to better use, including light industrial development, but understands that such property, if it is available for purchase must be acquired at Valuer General's valuation.

Council seeks clarification of the issues of responsibility for maintenance of this land, and whether it may be available for alternative development by means other than purchase at Valuer General's valuation. In desiring this action, Council is of the view that the circumstances at Manilla are by no means unique.

- **Reduction in State Rail Authority Services**

- The SRA has closed the toilet facilities at the Walcha Road Railway Station and refuse to provide them. This is a third world standard and a disgrace. There are many passengers utilising the Walcha Road Railway Station who are either elderly or very young and the nearest toilet facilities are located at the Walcha Road Hotel, some 600-700 metres from the Station. Council has heard many people complaining about the lack of toilets at the Station and have made representations in the past to have them reinstated.

- **Children (Parental Responsibility) Act, 1994**

- Implementation of the Children (Parental Responsibility) Act, 1994 with attendant implications for youth in rural areas.

- **Recycling**

- Recycling and the disposal of classified waste including truck and tractor tyres, chemicals and chemical containers - the extent of State Government commitment to this activity.

- **Fines/Penalties**

- There was a time in our history when one level of Government refrained from imposing fines or penalties upon other levels of Government. In the last year, this Council has been twice fined by a State Government agency, one occasion involving exhaust emissions from a virtually brand new truck, and the other having to do with unavoidable late submission of a licence renewal. The total sum involved is approximately \$650.

As you might imagine, Council was less than entirely thrilled by these imposts, and considers that some degree of leniency should apply, in circumstances where a reasonable explanation is available, and offered.

- **Water & Sewerage**

- Manilla Shire Councils is in process, jointly with relevant State Government Departments, of implementing a Sewerage Augmentation Scheme. In the absence of State Government financial assistance, it is highly unlikely that this Scheme would have proceeded, having regard to the limited capacity of the community to pay.

At the present time, Council remains confident that the Minister will offer the highest available level of subsidy, being 47% of total estimated scheme cost. It has been said that the State Government may consider progressively reducing this subsidy, until it is eventually phased out, altogether.

Given the increasing age of water and sewerage infrastructure throughout rural NSW, together with the more and more parlous state of the rural economy, Councils is concerned, on the basis of its own recent experience, that small communities which require to upgrade their water and/or sewerage infrastructure assets will not be able to do so, in the absence of substantial State Government financial assistance.

- **Bridge Subsidy Scheme**

- Re-introduction of the Bridge Subsidy Scheme, or equivalent. (Under previous arrangements, new bridges could be constructed from funding derived substantially from sources other than local councils.)

- **Development of NSW**

- A commitment from the State Government to examine the ways and means by which Local Government, having the potential to do so, may participate more fully in the political, social and economic development of NSW.

- **The Future of Local Government**

- **Workers Compensation Premiums**

- This scheme requires reforms to more equitably balance the interests of the worker and the wider community as does the third party registration costs (greenslips). The costs of the scheme must be paid for and it is equitable that claims experience by a key factor in the determination of claims. The costs of administering claims and the ability of the legal profession to be a key player in the determination of claims requires close scrutiny

- **Public Liability**

- Jardine Australian Insurance Brokers, on behalf of Local Government have made a submission to the Attorney-General's Department seeking to limit Local Government's exposure to public liability claims, particularly in the trip and fall area. Local Government, under the present system is exposed to an increasing number of claims as a result of ageing infrastructure, an increasing litigious society and a pro-active legal fraternity.

Claimants no longer wish to negotiate a level of compensation which more adequately reflects the level of injury sustained and presumably on the advice of their lawyer immediately lodge a Statement of Claim.

As soon as this is done Council's lawyers must lodge a Notice of Defence and the legal costs meter starts turning at an alarming rate. It would be extremely positive for NAROC to lend its support to achieving a positive response in the Attorney-General's report for limiting the liability exposure of Councils and any subsequent legislation required to put this into effect.

- **Transfer of Shires and Electorates**

- Manilla Shire has been transferred from the Tamworth Electorate, to the State Seat of Barwon. As Tamworth is dramatically closure to Manilla than Wee Waa, this is creating access difficulties for residents of the Manilla Shire wishing to consult with their Local Member.

- **Function Licences**

- Many organisation within the Walcha Shire hold major functions throughout the year and also run bars that sell alcohol. Problems have been experienced, since October 1997, by organisations obtaining Function Licences. These problems are associated with new conditions being imposed by the Licensing Court, e.g., the need for certified security around bar areas, adequate signposting for under-age drinkers, intoxicated patrons, not being able to sell more than four glasses/bottles at any one time, etc.

Arising from the imposition of new conditions, organisation have had difficulty in being able to contact someone from either the Licensing Court, Liquor Administration Board or Department of Gaming & Racing who can give them information relevant to such function licences.

There is also a problem being associated with the time to process applications. Applications are being lodged with the Licensing Court approximately six to eight weeks prior to an event. In many circumstances approval is not being given to Licences until a week before an event and in one instance approval was received by an organisation 24 hours prior to their event commencing. The time factor is causing problems as organisations do not have sufficient time to arrange to have the conditions of the licence brought into force.

Many community organisations hold events once a year and rely on the profit from bar sales to boost their bank balances. Rodeo Committees are renowned for donating the bulk of their profits to local charities and schools and with tighter restrictions being brought into place for liquor licences, these profits are fast disappearing. Many of these organisations have a very good history with local Police for not being major problem areas during the running of events.