

With Compliments

John Watkins, M.P.

Member for Gladesville

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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 that reads "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

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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

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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.

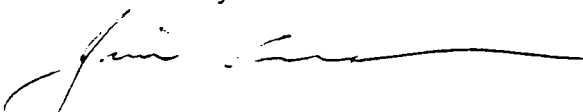
For your benefit I enclose a copy of a letter that I have taken up with shires in the Western area of NSW and as the only member west of the Divide to actually lose an electorate within the redrawn boundaries where the Premier has reduced the number of seats by six in the Legislative Assembly, my electorate 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

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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

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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

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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.	
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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.

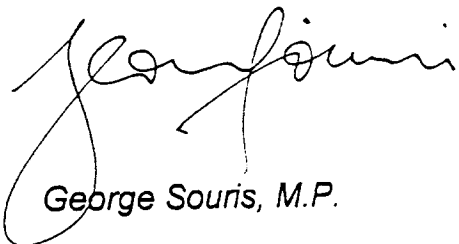
5. Cost/Benefit Analysis:

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

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Castle Hill NSW 2154

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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,
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Sydney NSW 2000 Australia
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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.

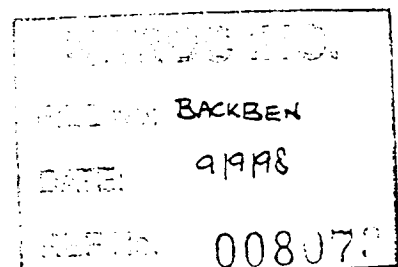
I do hope that the message sinks in to metropolitan Members of Parliament so that they realise what an enormous impact withdrawal of services has in country towns.

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

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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

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



Legislative Council Parliament House
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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

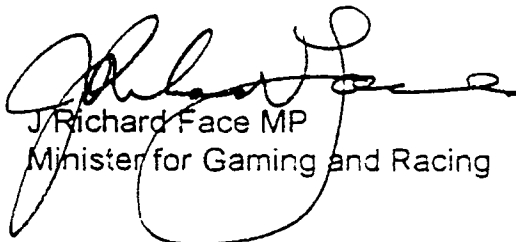
You will be aware of various concerns that have been reported in the media and raised by community organisations and individual function licensees over recent months concerning function licences and the requirements of the licensing laws that apply to function licences.

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
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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.

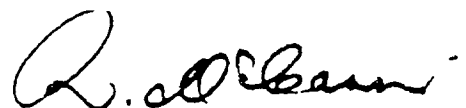
Conclusion

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

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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.

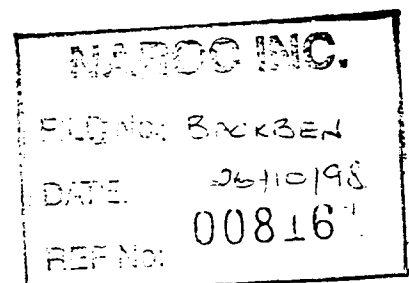
At a time when education and training are crucial to improve job and life opportunities, it is essential that NSW students can access integrated education and training. The new department is ensuring a smooth transition between school, further education, training and work for the people of NSW.

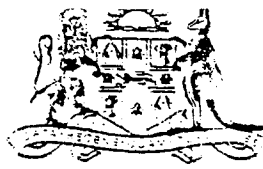
Throughout former restructures and this current amalgamation country jobs have been retained and marginally increased in the education portfolio. The Department already has one of the largest rural and regional infrastructures of any NSW government agency with 18 district offices, four industry training 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





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.

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DATE: 26/10/98
FILE NO: BUCKEN 101571d
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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.
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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.