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22 May 2015

Methodology for Assessment of Council Fit for the Future Proposals,
Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal,
PO BoxK35,
Haymarket Post Shop NSW 1240



Dear Tribunal Secretariat,

Submission re Consultation Paper

Thank you for the opportunity to make a brief submission in response to the IPART Consultation Paper, and in light of discussions held at the Roundtable held in Wagga on Thursday 21st May 2015.

The following matters are submitted by RAMROC for consideration by the Tribunal:-

1. Page 3 – Term of Reference 2 (d) – “ensure local government knowledge and expertise in the technical assessment of each proposal”

Comment:

At the RAMROC meeting held on 6th May 2015 it was resolved that RAMROC suggest to the Minister for Local Government the Hon Paul Toole MP that it would be beneficial for IPART and John Comrie to be assisted in its task of assessing Councils' FFTF proposals, by the appointment of two additional Local Government specialist practitioners with extensive coalface management and financial experience in NSW Metropolitan and Regional/Rural Councils.

A copy of RAMROC's letter forwarded to Minister Paul Toole MP on 11th May 2015 is attached for your information.

2. Page 18 – Box 2.1 - Rural Council Characteristics

Comment

The priority characteristics are considered to be 1,2,3,4 and 5 in the Box 2.1 list.

For example, in the RAMROC region Conargo Shire, which is predominantly an agricultural area, large in area but small in population and with Council headquarters based in Deniliquin, clearly meets the first five criteria as a Rural Council.

However, the characteristics 6,7,8 and 9 probably are not really applicable to Conargo Shire, nor would they be to Murrumbidgee Shire which is located relatively close to Griffith City.

On the other hand, one or two of those last four characteristics would be more applicable in the case of Carrathool, Urana, Jerilderie and Hay Shires.

Page 22 – Joint Organisations – “expected to occur during the next stage of the FFTF reform process”, and

Page 23 – “where possible, create a regional centre with the necessary scale and capacity to anchor a Joint Organisation”

Comment

It is suggested that the scale and capacity of a Joint Organisation will be a critical feature to the success of the FFTF reform package. Joint Organisations are proposed by IILGRP to have an important role to play in the overall reform process and structure within a region or sub-region.

This is particularly relevant as to whether an individual stand-alone Council, or prospective merged Councils, or indeed a Rural Council, will be “fit for the future” and will have the capacity to operate efficiently and effectively in the future, to some extent in concert and collaboration with the Joint Organisation.

The overall effectiveness of Local Government in a particular region or sub-region will very likely be achieved and measured, as a result of the respective capacity and performance of the Councils and their Joint Organisation.

The “Key Elements of Strategic Capacity” as described in Box 3.1 on page 32 of the Discussion Paper are therefor considered to be equally as applicable to a Joint Organisation as they are to the participating Councils themselves, bearing in mind that in Regional and Rural areas it is envisaged that the Joint Organisations will generally embrace the following strategic and operational functions:-

Strategic Functions:

- Regional Leadership and Advocacy
- Intergovernmental Collaboration – Federal, State and Local Governments – Community Strategic Plans, Regional Action Plans, Regional Growth and Infrastructure Plans etc
- Regional Strategic Planning, Infrastructure, Transport, Economic Development, Agriculture, Water and Wastewater, Waste Management, Environment, Health and Education, Social, Economic and Cultural Strategies

Operational Functions:

- Service Delivery of specific regional activities
- Resource Sharing
- Combined Procurement
- Workforce Development and Training
- Information and Technical Networking and Exchanges
- Others as determined from time to time

It would be appreciated if these matters could be considered by IPART in preparation of the Final Methodology for Assessment to be issued in early June

Yours faithfully,



Ray Stubbs
Executive Officer



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11 May 2015

The Hon Paul Toole MP,
Minister for Local Government,
GPO Box 5341,
SYDNEY NSW 2000

COPY ONLY

Dear Minister,

Appointment of Expert Panel to Review Councils' Fit for the Future Submissions

Reference is made to your announcement on 27th April 2015 that the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) has been appointed as the Expert Advisory Panel to review the Fit for the Future submissions to be lodged by Councils by 30th June 2015 and that the Panel will be supported by South Australian LG expert John Comrie.

The Member Councils of RAMROC applaud the appointments that you have made and are pleased that IPART has already issued a Consultation Paper which comprehensively explains its proposed methodology and is in the process of undertaking a number of public hearings throughout the State.

This matter was discussed at the RAMROC Board meeting on 6th May 2015 and the only suggestion of the Member Councils is that IPART and Mr Comrie could well be assisted in the process by the appointment of two additional Local Government specialist practitioners, who would possess extensive coalface management and financial experience in NSW Metropolitan and / or Regional/Rural Councils.

In this regard, RAMROC is of the view that two highly respected former General Managers, possibly two people who have retired from Councils in recent times, would be ideally placed to provide practical knowledge, insight and support to the Expert Panel. This would be of significant value to the process, especially as part of the face to face discussions that will in some instances take place between the Expert Panel and individual Councils.

RAMROC resolved to respectfully suggest that the appointment of two experienced practitioners would be of great assistance to the Panel in the understanding and assessment of the FFTF submissions and would also help the Panel to meet its mid October assessment and report deadline.

Your consideration of this suggestion would be most appreciated and we look forward to your early reply.

Yours faithfully,

Ray Stubbs
EXECUTIVE OFFICER