

Mr J P Cox,
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8 September, 2009.

Dear Sir,

SUBMISSION ON DRAFT REPORT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT REVENUE.

Although I made an initial submission, I do not appear to have received a copy of the Draft Report. Unfortunately, I am unable to travel to Dubbo to take part in the regional workshop as because of age and infirmity I am restricted to public transport. However, because I am likely to be the only person who is against giving the council's more money, I would like to make a submission based on my eighteen years as a councillor. Without repeating my original submission, I believe that the following points are important.

1. COUNCIL'S WILL NEARLY ALWAYS SPEND TO THE LIMIT OF THE AVAILABLE CASH.

This is because the wishes of the public always exceeds their actual reasonable needs and councillors seek votes of marginal groups who have especial "needs" which often represent very poor value for money as far as the ratepayers are concerned. The councillors do not care as it is not their money being spent on frivolities.

2. COUNCILS WILL ALWAYS NEGLECT BASIC INFRASTRUCTURE IN FAVOUR OF MORE "NEWSWORTHY" FRINGE ITEMS.

This is because as a fellow councillor with fifty years experience once told me "there are no votes in drains or sewers"! Such items are very expensive with benefits that do not become immediately apparent and do not result in as much media coverage as for example a new cultural centre. The voters expect that there will be adequate drains etc. and give little credit to the councillors who ensure that these happen. Also, essential infrastructure can be deferred until at least after the next council election! Though the argument for massive increases in rates is largely based on the need to fund infrastructure, you will note that at the same time, the councils do not want any restrictions placed upon what the money would actually be spent on and it certainly would not be essential infrastructure!

3. COUNCILS REPEATEDLY BREAKING THE LAW.

Some councils are repeatedly breaking the law and misappropriating tens of millions of dollars of revenue raised and Bathurst Regional Council is one of them. It has misappropriated tens of millions of funds from water rates to use on a project which, according to a copy of a confidential memo from the State Water Department that I have obtained, represents an unlawful use of that money. The Department of Local Government corruptly claims that it can change the law (for that council only) so it has refused to take any action in the matter. Also, although the cost of the Aquatic Centre was fully funded from an unlawful increase in the water rates, the council still fraudulently charges \$94 contributions to developers for that item and uses the money for other purposes. (Details were provided in the original submission.) Under the Local Government Act 1993, the Department of Local Government should prevent this happening but has repeatedly corruptly failed to do so.

In summary, in the final report please remember the "battlers" including pensioners for whom the increases sought by councils would be a real hardship. Surely, it would be better to follow the lead of the State Government and introduce more "user pays" for non-essential infrastructure?