

GPO Box 2975
SYDNEY NSW 2001



Dear Sir

Re: Revenue Framework for Local Government

I take the opportunity to make comment on your above report.

Firstly, I should state that I have experience in local government in South Australia where I variously held the positions of Councillor, Alderman and Deputy Mayor of the City of Glenelg between the years 1976 and 1988 inclusive. There is one fundamental factor in the South Australian system of local government that makes it a significantly better system than the current NSW system, this is that voting is voluntary (and now carried out entirely by postal ballot). The effect of this is that it is much more difficult to manipulate the system and therefore organised political parties are largely unrepresented in local government politics. While there are often loose coalitions of interests within a council chamber, decisions tend to be made on the merits of the issue independent of the influence of external organised political parties.

I would also suggest that there is therefore also a significantly less likelihood for corrupt behaviour as there tends to be less at stake for external political organisations.

On the issue of the revenue framework for local government in NSW I believe it can be fairly said that the influence of external political parties in various forms including so-called independents parties such as in the City of Sydney makes local government horribly inefficient. I believe that it is quite common for decisions to be made not on the basis of efficiency and effectiveness, nor of ratepayers' interest but often on using public funds to establish expenditure that is effectively publicly funded re-election campaigns. The extraordinary waste of \$300million plus for the stone flagstones in the Sydney CBD has to be a case in point as it generally replaced a perfectly satisfactory concrete slab paver system. The laying is faulty and is now breaking down in many places and accessing service trenches is almost impossible at a reasonable cost.

A similar item of astonishing waste is the Surry Hills Community Centre on Crown Street (made infamous because, through what I consider to have been wholly faulty construction and supervision - which is the area in which I was first professionally trained and worked for the South Australian Government, it caused the Indian restaurant next door to slide into the hole).

These are but two examples that point to an underlying issue that suggests to me that local government in this state should not have unfettered access to funding. Without significant electoral reform local government should continue have its funding severely limited by the Minister for Local Government to limit waste. This process also provides for flexibility where absolute need can be demonstrated.

In many cases local government in NSW is encouraged to venture into areas that duplicate services that are properly the purview of the State or Commonwealth governments because this offers political electoral advantage to elected Councillors.

Without significant electoral reform, including voluntary voting for all local government elections, NSW should not remove the rate capping that has been in force for so many years.

This constraint on funding has prevented further replication of redundant services and waste that seems to be the wont of local government in this state. The suit now has to be cut to the cloth available rather than the cloth expanded to allow all the luxuries Councillors might desire in their most extreme fits of fancy.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Reg. T. Fisk" with a horizontal line underneath. To the right of the signature, the date "14/9/2009" is written in the same ink.

Reg. T. Fisk