

AUSTRALIAN RURAL ROADS GROUP

EXECUTIVE MEETING MINUTES

11.05 am (EST)

MONDAY 30TH AUGUST 2010

TELECONFERENCE

Present online: Members:

Cr. John Coulton – NSW Gwydir Shire Council (Chairperson)
Mr Max Eastcott – NSW Gwydir Shire Council (Secretary/Public Officer)
Cr. Sue Price - NSW Moree Plains Shire Council (Treasurer)
Cr. Lyn Russell – VIC Colac Otway Shire Council
Cr. David Hood – SA Naracoorte Lucindale Council

Observers:

Mr Sean Fletcher (CEO) representing Cr Andrew Walker – WA Lake Grace Council (Invited from Executive to participate)
Mr Luke Fraser – Juturna Consultant

Apology Cr. Tom Gilmour – QLD Tablelands Regional Council

The Chair welcomed the attendees and invited Mr Frazer to address the group.

Consultant's Report – Luke Fraser – Juturna Consulting

Mr Fraser outlined the progress to date including that he had conducted a literature review of the available public documentation, which revealed that the member Councils account for \$18.5 Billion (approximately 50%) of Australia's agricultural production, represent around 1.5 Million residents (approximately 8% of Australia's population and are responsible for one third of the local government road network.

The following particular issues were then discussed:

1. Role of the 5 Peri-Urban Councils that qualify for group membership

The issue of whether Hawkesbury City Council (NSW); City of Playford (SA); City of Casey Council, Yarra Ranges Shire Council (Vic); and Wanneroo Shire Council (WA) should be included was discussed. The inclusion of these Councils tends to distort the information due to the relative population numbers of these areas.

It was noted that none of these Councils has sought membership to date. The meeting was informed that reminder letters have recently been posted. The exclusion of these peri-urban Councils will impact upon the statistics outlined above in relation to the population figure but the agricultural production figure will still exceed \$18 Billion.

Decision

THAT membership will not be denied but no further active follow up of these five Councils will be undertaken.

2. Overall 'backlog' funding issues

The meeting was advised that the Consultant is preparing a draft survey document for circulation to the member Councils, excluding the peri-urban Councils. The survey instrument will be circulated shortly for feedback and comment.

3. Allocation of funding priorities

The issue of the ever increasing budgetary pressures on all Councils to provide a wider range of 'human services' from their budgets was discussed. This re-direction of priorities is the direct result of cost-shifting by other levels of government. This re-allocation of priorities has, in part, resulted in a reduced allocation to the maintenance of each Councils asset base. This could become an issue from the Federal Government as the Group endeavours to seek additional funding.

4. Road Safety

The meeting was advised that the Consultant intends to address this issue within his report. The implications on road safety issues are quite important.

5. Indemnity from negligence claims

The Consultant suggested that the submission from the group should seek indemnity from negligence actions when the Councils have been acting in accordance with pre-defined standards of asset maintenance and where non-feasance applies.

Decision

THAT this aspect should be included.

6. Asset transfer to State Governments

The Consultant raised the possibility of seeking a transfer of additional regionally significant roads back to State government funding responsibility. The pros and cons of this approach were discussed.

7. Economic Case Study

The Consultant advised the meeting that Mr John Zeitsch, an economist, will be working with Moree Plains Shire Council to develop an economic model that will explore the relationship between the amount of road life consumed against the return on income generated.

Hopefully this modelling may be financed by Infrastructure Australia.

National Local Roads and Transport Congress

The Chair advised the meeting that he and Sue Price will be making a presentation regarding the ARRG at this Congress to be held in Bunbury WA on 13th – 15th October 2010.

The Consultant's report may be ready to launch at this event.

Infrastructure Australia

The meeting was advised that the Chair has written to Infrastructure Australia seeking its support for the study been undertaken by the group. A reply is awaited but it looks promising that we will receive the support requested.

Close of Meeting

Prior to closing the meeting the Chair thanked Mr Fraser for his work to date.

Next Meeting

To be advised.

Meeting closed 12.25 pm (EST)