



# SHIRE OF COOLGARDIE



## COST SHIFTING INQUIRY SUBMISSION

### REPORT FOR SUBMISSION TO THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC FINANCE AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION INTO THE INQUIRY INTO LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND COST SHIFTING

The submission is based on the budget format for Local Government in Western Australia and includes areas of operations that the Federal and State Governments require input and assistance from the Shire of Coolgardie. Where possible the financial contribution of Council has been quantified however most comments are of a general nature.

#### **SCHEDULE 3:**

##### **Local Government (Financial Assistance) Act;**

The establishment of state based Grants Commissions to distribute allocated federal funds has both positive and negative aspects. The positive aspect is that the comparison of Local Governments is done on a state level which may be of benefit rather than trying to 'equalise' payments on a comparative basis Australia wide. The negative impact is the 30% of the funds that are allocated on a population basis which assists major metropolitan population centres. The Grants Commission methodology and the equalisation formulae are almost impossible for the lay person to understand and there needs to be greater accountability in this area.

Another concern of Council is the category of Urban Rural Small (URS) allocated to Council by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. This is due to the population density in the urban centres of Kambalda and Kambalda West despite the Shire having an area in excess of 30,000 square kilometres.

##### **State Agreement Act:**

WMC Resources Ltd operates under a State Agreement Act for their nickel interests in the Kambalda area. The State Act allows WMC a substantial rates concession in return for the provision of services normally provided by the State Governments. This has a detrimental affect on Councils budget.

#### **SCHEDULE 4:**

**Australia Day Awards;** Local Government is encouraged to participate in Australia Day ceremonies and whilst the Australia Day Council provides appropriate Certificates and assists with promotion the cost for the function is borne by Local Government. In the Shire of Coolgardie this means sponsorship of ceremonies in both Coolgardie and Kambalda West. Various functions are held and the swimming pools in both towns offer free entry for the day.

**Citizenship Ceremonies:** The Shire President Cr Sandra Trenowden, participates as the Presiding Officer at Citizenship ceremonies on behalf of the Federal Government. Whilst the expense is minimal (a native plant is usually presented to the new citizen) it is another area of involvement.

**Centenary Celebrations:** Bayley and Ford found gold in Coolgardie in September 1892 and obviously since 1992 council has continually been involved in Centenary Celebrations. In January 2003, the centenary of the C Y O"Connor Coolgardie Water Supply Scheme will be celebrated. A re enactment is planned and the National Trust of Australia (WA) is developing the Golden Pipeline Heritage Trail from Mundaring to Kalgoorlie-Boulder. It is recognised that there will be benefits to Council through tourism and hospitality however there is still an expense to Council both as a one off for the re enactment and a continuing commitment to maintaining the Heritage Trail.

**Traineeship and Apprenticeships:** Council has regularly been involved with traineeships and apprenticeships and is very appreciative of the support given by both the State and Federal governments. It is my belief that there is a need to offer more financial incentives to Local Government to ensure more participation in the various schemes and should include a contribution to wages.

#### **SCHEDULE 5:**

**Fire Control;** Council is responsible for a range of matters by virtue of the States Bush Fires Act. This includes participation in the control of wild fires with the only cost reimbursement being a contribution to fuel used. With substantial nature reserves and the standard gauge railway within the Shire, Council staff are continually called out to fight wild fires. Fire break inspections and fire hazard removal are also Local Government responsibilities.

**Ranger Services;** The Dog Act is State Legislation administered by Local Government. Rangers are involved in many facets of animal control and if a Cat Act is introduced as is proposed by the State more responsibility will be forced onto Local Government. Council is also responsible for administering the Control of Vehicles (Off Road) Areas Act which is State legislation. There is a cost to council through its Ranger Services

## **SCHEDULE 7:**

**Meat Inspections;** As there is a local abattoir operating in Coolgardie, Council is obliged to provide a meat inspection service. The particular officer is based in Kambalda and the cost to Council is approximately \$10,000 per annum.

Should the operator wish to upgrade to export standard there would be a requirement for both a veterinary surgeon and an inspector from the Federal department to be employed.

**Health Issues;** Council is obliged to employ an Environmental Health Officer to administer the provisions of the State legislated Health Act. There is a range of other Acts and Regulations associated with the position including (but not limited to) Bacterolitic Treatment of Sewage and Applications for the installation of septic tanks and other devices for the treatment of sewage have to be submitted to Council for approval.

**Food Premises – Inspection and Sampling;** Food preparation areas within restaurants etc. are regularly inspected and food samples are forwarded to the Inman and Farrell Laboratories in Perth for which Council is charged a fee.

**Mosquito Control;** Councils Environmental Health Officer regularly carries out inspections and baiting of water areas for the control of Ross River Virus and other mosquito borne diseases.

**Noise Control;** Noise complaints are referred to Council for measurement under State Regulations.

**Microwave Oven Testing;** This is another area of involvement by Local Government on behalf of the State.

**Swimming Pool Inspections;** These are carried out on behalf of the State. A fee is charged.

### **Support for Health Professionals:**

Council provides a residence to the General Practitioner who resides in Kambalda. A second residence is also allocated to a Doctor however this is not being utilised at this stage. Council also reimburses fuel costs for a second General Practitioner to travel from Kalgoorlie-Boulder to Kambalda twice weekly to assist the resident General Practitioner.

The Northern Goldfields Health Service operates facilities in Coolgardie. Two Kalgoorlie-Boulder based General Practitioners hold clinics in Coolgardie on a regular basis and Council reimburses the General Practitioners for rental charged by the Northern Goldfields Health Service.

**Maternal and Infant Health;** Council provides facilities in Kambalda and Kambalda West to allow an Infant Health Service to operate in the towns. Costs include provision of buildings, all outgoing and cleaning costs.

**Ambulance Services;** Council regularly makes donations to both the Coolgardie and Kambalda St John Ambulance Sub Centres to assist with their operations. Staff are also actively supported by management to volunteer their time to assist the service.

## **SCHEDULE 8:**

**Pre-School – June Crosbie Centre;** Council provides facilities for a Pre School under the auspices of the Kambalda West District High School. The rental paid by the Education Department is minimal however the Department does pay for outgoings and most of the internal maintenance on the building.

**Manning Park;** The Education Department through Kambalda West District High School pay 50% of the costs to maintain Manning Park as a grassed area for sports and other activities. The Park is also used by the community.

**Scholarships;** Council provides a scholarship of \$300.00 to a student from year 7 at the Coolgardie, Kambalda and Kambalda West Primary Schools to assist with their further education. Book prizes are also presented to all schools within the Shire.

Council also allocates \$600.00 of work value to each school per year which covers such things a provision of sand for athletics carnivals etc. Councils pools are also made available free of charge for annual school and interschool swimming carnivals.

**Seniors;** Council provides an office for Coolgardie Community Care (Inc) which is the management body of Home and Community Care Services and the delivery of Community Aged Care Packages in both Coolgardie and Kambalda.

Seniors in Coolgardie also utilise the Recreation Centre for some of their activities. A building is also made available in Kambalda West for Seniors activities.

**Disabled Services;** WMC Resources Ltd made a residence available in Kambalda West as respite house for the town. Council accepted the freehold title to the residence and the ongoing maintenance requirements. Council also pays for some of the outgoings eg rubbish service.

**Youth Advisory Council;** There are Youth Advisory Councils in both Coolgardie and Kambalda. The Government Employees Housing Authority has made a residence available in Kambalda West for the use of the Youth Advisory Council. Again Council is responsible for the maintenance of the residence. In Coolgardie the power house building on the former depot site has been made available for youth activities. For the past thirty years (approximately) youth activities have been held in a cellar below the RSL Hall.

## **SCHEDULE 9:**

**Housing:** As previously mentioned housing is made available for Doctors in Kambalda West. Council is also negotiating with Government Employees Housing Authority to construct a suitable residence in Coolgardie for Police and Teachers.

**Aged Persons Housing;** Council has six units in Coolgardie for the use of Aged Person. Negotiations have commenced with the Department of Housing to provide additional houses in Coolgardie and a new development in Kambalda West.

## **SCHEDULE 10**

**Municipal Waste Advisory Committee;** An officer of Council is on a technical committee and Council pays all costs associated with his involvement.

**Litter Control;** Council through its Ranger Services administers the provisions of the Litter Act which is State legislation. Unfortunately even the limited support from the Keep Australia Beautiful Council is also diminishing.

**Town Planning;** The Town Planning and Development Act is also State legislation that places a major burden on Local Government. A full review of a Town Planning Scheme for the Shire of Coolgardie would cost approximately \$20,000.00. Councils Town Planning issues do not warrant a full time employee so expertise has to be purchased from Consultants.

**Cemeteries;** In an historic town like Coolgardie where there are two cemeteries dating back more than a century, the management task is major. The Cemeteries Act is also State legislation imposing responsibility on Local Government.

**Bonnievale Station Telephone Service;** The Bonnievale Station is situated on the standard gauge railway approximately 15kms from the Coolgardie townsite. The station is unmanned. Passengers who disembark are sometimes unaware of this and do not make arrangements to be picked up. Following a near disaster where a passenger walked away from the townsite in summer a public telephone was placed at the site. Council is responsible for all costs. This is an obvious situation where both Telstra and Westrail have not accepted their responsibilities and thrust them straight onto Local Government.

**State Emergency Services;** Council supports an SES Unit in Coolgardie with the provision of a building (albeit requiring an upgrade) and also contributes to the operations of the unit (\$3,000.00 per annum).

**Emergency Management;** Council is involved in the Local Emergency Management Committee by virtue of state legislation.

## **SCHEDULE 11:**

**Swimming Pool Subsidy;** the State Government has provided an annual subsidy to Local Government of \$3,000.00 per pool for many years. The amount has not increased with inflation.

**Television Retransmission;** Council is obliged to provide television retransmission services to the community. Loan funds were secured four years ago to provide SBS retransmission to Kambalda and tenders have been accepted to provide a retransmission service to Coolgardie. The total cost of the project is in excess of \$80,000.00. Annual charges include the cost of insuring the equipment.

**Libraries;** There are libraries in both Coolgardie and Kambalda. The State Library Service provides the books but all other costs are borne by Local Government. Councils have to pay freight both ways for book exchanges. A recent additional expense was the automation of library services to ensure a supply of books.

### **Heritage Issues;**

**Historic Buildings;** Council was 'forced' to accept responsibility for a number of historic buildings to ensure their future. These include the Post Office/former PMG Complex, the Drill Hall, the former Police Station lockup and quarters as well as the former railway station and goods shed. The former Fire Station is also now a Council 'asset'.

The upkeep of all of these buildings is proving a drain on Council resources although there has been State and Federal support to Council through successful submissions to various funding sources.

Council also sub leases Warden Finnerty's residence from the National Trust of Australia (WA).

There is also a substantial collection of moveable heritage under the care, control and management of council. At this stage none of the moveable heritages is catalogued and Council has recently employed a Curator to assist with this task.

**Municipal Inventories;** The Heritage Council of Western Australia has imposed the responsibility for completing a list of historic/heritage buildings and sites on a Municipal Inventory. This is an obvious impost on Local Government as most Councils have to contract out the work to appropriate Heritage Advisors/Consultants.

**Private Heritage Issues;** Council is also forced to forward plans etc. to a Consultant heritage Architect when owners of listed properties wish to carry out work.

**Support for the Arts;** In both Coolgardie and Kambalda West, Council provides facilities for various Arts and Craft activities. There are also regular requests to Council for donations towards a wide range of arts, crafts and community activities.

## **SCHEDULE 12:**

**Roman Road Maintenance Programme;** To ensure funding is secured for Councils road network Main Roads WA require updated information on the network through the Roman road programs. There is a requirement to continually assess roads and input details of changes.

**Traffic Signs;** Whilst statutory road signs are the responsibility of MRWA Local Governments are required to erect and maintain all other signs. Recent changes to standards cost Council approximately \$10,000.00 to bring signage stocks up to date and there was an additional cost to train employees to ensure compliance.

**Street Lighting;** In an endeavour to reduce vandalism and graffiti most Local Governments are now forced to pay for all night street lighting in townsites. Any extension or upgrading of street lighting within townsites is also at Council expense.

## **Roads General:**

**Regional Roads Groups;** It is acknowledged that the establishment of Regional Roads Groups has been of benefit to Council in that many decisions are made locally. The MRWA bureaucracy does however come at a cost and there may be more funds for actual road works if the Department did not exist. This again must be considered in light of a small remote local authority competing in an Australia wide environment.

## **SCHEDULE 13:**

**Tourism and Area Promotion;** It is recognised that tourism has many benefits for Local Government however there is a cost. There are two Tourist Bureaux in the Shire: one in Coolgardie and one in Kambalda. Council contributes \$25,000.00 to the bureaux to assist them with their operations. Council also budgets \$10,000.00 for area promotion which covers a range of issues from support for the inter-regional Holland Track Project Working Group to joint promotion with Landcorp to promote the sale of land in the Shire.

Council is also involved with an organisation, Australia Unlimited which has a regional focus for tourism promotion particularly self drive trails.

Two areas of concern to Council in relation to the Western Australian Tourism Commission is the Partnership 21 project and Brand WA. In both instances monies flow from small towns and regions to the Western Australian Tourism Commission where as in the past the Western Australian Tourism Commission has provided funds to the regions.

**Information Bays;** Main Roads WA provide major truck stops on main roads however it is left to Local Government to provide the information to the travelling public. Again there are positives in doing this from a tourism and visitor experience but there is a cost involved.

**Goldfields Travel Association;** Council is a member of the Goldfields Travel Association which receives state funds to promote the region however more specific promotions are the responsibility of Local Government. There is a cost involved in being a member of the Goldfields Travel Association.

**Building Control;** Council is a collection agent for the Builders Registration Board and the Building and Construction Industry Training Fund and also provides advice to the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

### **GENERAL:**

There are many other areas that have an impact on Council and some that in the future will be quite frightening in their cost and complexity. Some of these are summarised below:

**Mobile Telephone Coverage;** Local Governments have been requested to contribute to the roll out of the Telstra CDMA coverage. Many have accepted the challenge to ensure adequate coverage for residents within their boundaries who may never have had cover. The Shire of Coolgardie was requested to contribute to three facilities, two on Great Eastern Highway and one on the Coolgardie-Esperance Highway under the Wireless West Project. The project requested a \$35,000.00 contribution. Council refused to contribute to the two sites on Great Eastern Highway however to recognise the substantial contribution made to the Shire by the Miiitel Joint Venture partners agreed to contribute \$5,000.00 to a site on the Coolgardie–Esperance Highway. The Shire had the geographical misfortune to have approximately 250 kilometres of highway frontage within our boundaries.

I feel for the Shire of Dundas when the mobile telephone coverage is extended to the Eyre Highway.

**Mt Walton Intractable Waste Disposal Facility;** The Shire of Coolgardie is the only local authority in Australia with an Intractable Waste Facility capable of handling low level radiation waste. Whilst there is not a significant cost in having the facility there is the constant need to monitor operations and to ensure the general public that the facility is being managed correctly.

Council does receive a payment of \$5.00 per tonne from proponents which is normally allocated to youth activities.

**Reports and Studies;** There is more pressure being placed on Local Government to undertake reports and studies prior to applying for grants. This places a burden on smaller Councils as these functions have to be contracted out. Examples in the Shire of Coolgardie are the Tourism Co-Ordinates study into tourism, the Sarah Murphy report into heritage and the Lesley Solly report into a Community and Recreational Needs Assessment.

**Native Title Act and Aboriginal Heritage Act;** Both these Acts have the potential to cost Local Government many thousands of dollars. The State Aboriginal Heritage Act has already impacted on Council. In one instance a study was required prior to constructing a



new road linking two significant land forms; Burra Rocks and Cave Hill. The other instance was a requirement from the Department of Land Administration to carry out a full heritage study on a road should major new works (eg realignment) be required. All Council is trying to achieve is a formal name for the road which has been in existence for nearly fifty years.

Council along with other Councils in the regions is developing a set of principles in relation to Aboriginal Heritage issues and anecdotal evidence from other Shires indicates there are major problems particularly in trying to identify which parties Local Governments are required to consult with.

The Native Title Act also has the capacity to impede development within the Shire through a reduction in mineral exploration activities. There are also significant costs to Council to ensure that both staff and Councilors are adequately trained and aware of issues.

**Government Departments and Charitable Institutions;** Local Government is not able to rate government departments (with the exception of trading undertaking and charitable institutions. This places an unfair burden on other ratepayers as the Departments and Agencies and their employees are able to access all facilities provided by Local Government.

There are several major conservation reserves within the Shire and fortunately Council has an excellent working relationship with the Department of Conservation and Land Management. Despite this there is a potential cost to Council in joint ventures and the loss of rates from their land holdings.

## **CONCLUSION:**

When the scope of responsibilities imposed on Local Government by the various Acts, Statutes and Regulations is assessed there is no doubt that Local Government is a creature of the state. There are many instances where I believe that Local Government could perform tasks and accept responsibilities from the other two tiers of government provided adequate funding was provided.

There is scope on a regional basis for increased cooperation between Local Governments particularly in relation to resource sharing. Regional centres have to develop a maturity to accept a leadership role and both the State and Federal Governments have to ensure that decentralization doesn't become centralised on regional centres.

Unfortunately the greatest export from the bush to the cities is our youth and all tiers of government have to co operate to provide opportunities for future generations to be able to live and work in rural, remote and regional Australia.

H J (Jim) Fraser  
Chief Executive Officer