



THE COUNTRY MAYORS ASSOCIATION OF NSW INC

"What we want is nothing more than equity"

MEDIA RELEASE

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Country Councils respond to State Government Report on their financial capacities

"The Country Mayors Association of NSW (CMA) Executive Board and members warmly welcome the release of the NSW Legislative Council Standing Committee report on "Ability of Local Government to fund infrastructure and Services," CMA Chairman and Temora Shire Mayor Cr. Rick Firman OAM said. "Financial sustainability is consistently a top priority concern of rural and regional Councils in NSW. Our submission to this inquiry comprehensively covered the broad range of barriers to financial sustainability in rural and regional councils in NSW."

"From our initial reading of the report and recommendations, the CMA is certainly encouraged," he said. The inquiry received 129 submissions and held 10 public hearings, half of which were in regional locations.

"It appears that the Standing Committee Chair the Hon. Emily Suvaal and her fellow members have obviously listened to, read and absorbed the testimonies presented to them."

"The 17 recommendations that the Standing Committee have determined, on the surface, reflect what the CMA and countless others have advocated for consistently."

"It is particularly encouraging for the CMA to see a proposed redesigning of our local government rating system is being referred to the NSW Government," said Mayor Firman. "Above all, it was also pleasing to see the Committee's recommendation that the NSW Government advocate to our Commonwealth Government to increase its Financial Assistance Grants to Local Government (known as FAGs) from .5% to one 1% of Commonwealth taxation revenue (which it was originally)."

"It is particularly pleasing to see the Committee's recommendation that the NSW Government seek to amend the Rural Fire Service Act 1997, that RFS assets are rested in the RFS. This is particularly what our CMA Board and members have been consistently and strongly advocating for."

Successive NSW Governments have made RFS assets the on-paper responsibility of Local Government. The collection of assets Councils do not actually own but negatively impact their financials has been known as 'the Red Fleet'.

"The CMA will also be formally writing to our Premier the Hon. Chris Minns, to support the Standing Committee's recommendations in full."



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"We take our collective hats off to the members of the Standing Committee. They've done a thorough and fair-dinkum job, in our view. We thank them for their efforts."

"Let's hope and pray the Government backs the report and we see its recommendations promptly adopted and implemented by the NSW Government," Mayor Firman said.

CMA Deputy Chairman and Bega Valley Shire Mayor, Cr. Russell Fitzpatrick also welcomed the report. "I congratulate the committee on their recommendations. It supports all the points that the Country Mayors Association have put to The State and Federal Enquiries," he said.

"I just hope the time from recommendation to implementation is short", Mayor Fitzpatrick added.

Caption:

Country Mayors Association of NSW Deputy Chairman Cr. Russell Fitzpatrick and Chairman Cr. Rick Firman OAM.

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