

## **Comparative Information New South Wales Councils 2005/06**

### **Mayoral Column DEX 9<sup>th</sup> February 2008**

The Department of Local Government report "Comparative Information on NSW Local Government Councils 2005/2006" allows Council to compare its performance with that of other NSW councils. The report is also designed to enhance transparency and public accountability and to assist in developing performance benchmarking and industry best practice models.

The data sets for Clarence Valley Council as a separate local government entity only commenced in 2004/05. This comparative information is for 05/06 so that there is only two years data for Clarence Valley Council. Thus it has limited value thus far but I trust it will be of interest to constituents.

Your Council is classified by the Department of Local Government as urban medium, 30,000 – 70,000 population with a regional town or city (URM 4). Councils across NSW are grouped into a total of 11 separate classifications. Most data from the report is favourable and backs the solid achievements of the new council.

The average rates per assessment 05/06 in NSW (excluding water, sewerage and domestic waste) are \$666 and Clarence Valley Council is \$641. For farmland rates, Council was \$956 per assessment compared to the average of \$1194. Clarence Valley Council Business rates averaged \$1943 with a State average of \$2444.

Clarence Valley Council's reliance on rates and charges was 33.46% of income compared to the State average of 41.46%, a statistic which may on its own, indicate some capacity to increase rates and thereby service levels.

At 30 June 2006 Council's outstanding rates stood at a council acknowledged unsatisfactory 13.3% compared to the average of 6.07%. In the following fiscal year Council's position had improved to approximately 10% and Council is determined to reduce the arrears to not more than 7%.

Also at 30 June 2006, some of Council's ratios and especially its unrestricted or current ratio, were less than satisfactory. However Council has since taken action to improve these areas and our auditor noted these improvements in his October 2007 report.

Council's average charge for domestic waste management in 2005/06 of \$178 compared favourably to the state average of \$222 but we trail in terms of recyclables in providing 107kg per household compared to a State average of 170kg. The message here is we all need to focus more on recycling with less waste to landfill.

Turning to expenditure, Council's employee costs at 33.81% of total expenditure in 2005/06 compared favourably to the State average of 35.4% whilst material costs at 27.39% also was less than the average of 30.74%.

Council's total expenditure of \$79.907 million dollars ranked as the twenty first largest Council in NSW in terms of general fund expenditure.

In 2005/06 Clarence Valley Council determined 1153 development applications which was well above the State average of 705 and indicates accelerated levels of development across the Valley. Our development applications were approved in an average of 33 days in 2005/06, a very pleasing result and well below the NSW average of 51 days. At the present time Clarence Valley Council's approval time is down to less than 30 days. Council's legal expenses to total planning and development costs was .77 of 1% which compares very well against the NSW mean of 9%, and indicates that our staff are providing sound advice which Council is supporting and has meant very little litigation costs against Council.

In other expenditure areas the Department's report shows that Council is spending well above State average, for example, in net recreation and leisure expenses per capita (Clarence Valley Council \$70, State \$64) and in Community Services expenses per capita where Clarence Valley Council is at \$96 per capita and way above the State average of \$54. I suggest that these statistics point to the clear synergies of amalgamation and greater service levels.

Undoubtedly the comparative data for 2006/07 will be more meaningful and afford some better comparisons against other NSW councils and best practice models.

In summary, your Council is performing well but as a new Council we have much more hard work and challenges ahead.

Ian Tiley  
Mayor  
2 February 2008