



Communiqué – 18 August 2011 – Dubbo

Destination 2036 Workshop - Mapping the future for better local government

The leaders from NSW local government came together for an historic meeting in Dubbo on 17 and 18 August 2011 to begin the process of creating a strong and viable local government sector.

Over 350 representatives from every council in the State worked cooperatively and constructively over the two days to lay down a shared vision for the sector and develop a set of clear actions to achieve that vision.

Representatives at the Destination 2036 Workshop recognised the need to reshape the structure, governance and financing arrangements, functions and capacity of the sector to better enable councils to serve their communities in a challenging and rapidly changing environment.

The two-day workshop represented the first stage in a significant process of reform for the sector and a new era in State/Local Government relations. It sets the stage for the biggest reforms to local government in its history.

The Minister for Local Government, the Hon Don Page MP, the President of the Local Government Association, Councillor Keith Rhoades, the President of the Shires Association, Councillor Ray Donald, and the President of Local Government Managers Australia (NSW Branch) Mr Mark Ferguson, joined together at the end of the workshop to praise participants and to share their commitment to jointly pursuing this reform process.

Challenges for the future

Representatives at the workshop acknowledged that there will be a number of challenges in the short, medium and longer term that will impact on the capacity of councils to meet the needs of their communities. The key challenges identified and discussed at the workshop include:

- Demographic change
- Increasing community expectations
- Technological change
- Economic, financial and industry change
- Environmental change
- Social change

The Vision for NSW Local Government

During the course of the two day event a working draft of a future vision statement was developed for further consultation.

Vision 2036

Strong Communities through Partnerships

- *By 2036, all NSW communities will be healthy and prosperous – led and served by strong, effective and democratically elected local government*
- *Through leadership, local knowledge and partnerships with community, government and other sectors, we will plan our futures and deliver quality services and infrastructure*
- *We will be recognised, respected and responsible for:*
 - *Upholding the highest ethical standards*
 - *Sound financial management*
 - *Sensitive environmental stewardship*
 - *Meaningful community engagement, advocacy and leadership*
 - *Our adaptability, innovation and learning*
 - *Developing the full potential of our people*
 - *Responding to our diverse cultures and environments*
 - *Creating places that people value*

Achieving the vision – a roadmap for Local Government

There was broad consensus among representatives that change and reform is needed within the sector to meet changing community needs; this will be achieved through the pursuit of the following strategic initiatives (the “roadmap”).

- The development of a new vision for local government based on a working draft
- Continue to improve the relationship between state and local government, including a review of the intergovernmental agreement
- Commitment to review the legislative framework to ensure that local government can meet the needs and challenges facing communities in the future
- Commitment to clarify the key functions, roles and responsibilities of councils
- Recognition that a variety of operating models for local government are needed that can be applied in the differing circumstances of remote, regional, rural and Sydney basin councils, because one size does not fit all.
- The need to develop new funding models to ensure the financial viability of councils
- Strong endorsement to strengthen regional collaboration and resource sharing
- Commitment to improve the process by which voluntary boundary alterations can be accommodated
- Pilot programs with volunteer councils to test new models

Next steps

Steering Committee to oversee implementation of the Action Plan

Who

An Implementation Steering Committee (ISC), consisting of the Chief Executive of the Division of Local Government (Chair) the Presidents of the Local Government and Shires Associations and the President of the LGMA has been established to build on the work of the Destination 2036 workshop.

How

The ISC will meet on 2 September to consider the workshop outcomes. The ISC will refine the list of actions into a draft action plan that will be distributed around the end of September for consultation.

Feedback will be considered and incorporated into the final action plan by the end of the year so that implementation by the two tiers of government can commence in 2012.