



MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

Approved for release by: Cr Ken Keith, Chair of Centroc

Date for release: 23 November 2012

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Centroc Councils to tell the State their preferences for local government reform

“Better, Stronger, Local Government is the title of the Independent Local Government Review Panels latest paper, which discussed the need for change in Local Government. We acknowledge the participative approach of the panel and look forward as a region to work with the panel to ensure Local Government delivers the best results for our communities,” said Cr Keith, Mayor of Parkes Shire and newly elected Chair of Centroc.

“It is great to see the emphasis on local communities retaining control over their councils and assets as being central to considerations in the reform process,” said Cr Keith.

“It is easy to get caught up in complaints when we are out there trying to get the best value for our communities, to say things like we have not got enough, but the fact is while we want better roads and services for our communities, local governments is doing a very good job in Central NSW. We do however agree that quality systems and internal audit functions can be improved, providing we dont create another layer of regulation. The Centroc procurement contract for internal auditors has greatly assisted councils in this area,” said Cr Keith.

“The paper does highlight the revenue issues facing local government. As councils have been saying and as indicated in the Henry tax review, councils inability to increase its own source revenue has resulted in a decline in community infrastructure and an increase in infrastructure backlog. NSW LGA's have an average rates per capita income 22% below the other states,” said Cr Keith.

“We appreciate the time being given for consultation and will be holding a regional workshop in the New Year where every Council in the region will be invited to provide advice with one voice on what the region sees as the solutions for better local government in Central NSW where one size does not fit all. The State has lots if ideas on the table like shared services and boundary adjustments where they prefer whole of lga amalgamations. Reading between the lines, this may affect some of our members,” said Cr Keith.

“Of note in the paper is the discussion about Councils in Western NSW. My fellow Mayors on Centroc have expressed concern to me that somehow everything west of the blue mountains is being seen as the same with the exception of a few regional centres. This is simply not true,” said Cr Keith.

“We are concerned that there is this ongoing repetition about rural decline. This is neither going to happen or happening right now. Through the past drought the region has grown. Not just our larger centres but our smaller local government areas. The fact is that of the 16 LGA's in the Centroc region

only two have experienced a decline, and only a very small decline, and that has been during a record drought and the GFC,” said Cr Keith.

“We note that water utilities have been included in the process. We are heartened to see them considered concurrently with discussion about Regional Organisations of Councils. Our Regional Organisation of Councils, Centroc, has been doing innovative and national award winning work recognised by the Productivity Commission, the consequences of which is all councils in the LGA now substantially operating at best practice. We hope to share what we are doing with all of NSW and will hold an event early next year to showcase our work and its outcomes,” said Cr Keith.

“Centroc is a voluntary collaboration of Councils doing great things, achieving substantial cost savings for our members and going from strength to strength. At the same time it answers to our members and delivers what they want, not the other way around. In this way we get the best of both worlds, our members retain their autonomy and at the same time get all the benefits of being part of a bigger entity. At the end of the day this means better, stronger local governments to serve our communities,” said Cr Keith.

ENDS

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