

Salisbury Forum – Monday 20 February 2006

Definition Feedback

- Priority should be given to maintaining existing assets.
- The definition should be kept simple.
- What are adequate levels of debt? At what level should a Council be running its debt?
- Needs to be an education for the community, community should be educated on financial sustainability issues.
- Should it be stated the cost and demand of infrastructure in conjunction with a Council's rating structure.
- There is a difference in meaning of substantial in between different Councils.
- The definition is financial definition – with no mention of rate payers in the definition, rate payers being who financial sustainability affects the most.
- This is a complex definition, it needs to have a fresh scope to it.
- The Access Economics report was undertaken with this company having little knowledge of Local Government and its responsibilities.
- There is always going to be a rural versus metro problem.
- There are problems with the reports category ratings of Councils.
- What the definition does, is it defines the scope of service levels and regards these as being adequate.
- Is a uniform rate of depreciation realistic between Councils?
- If the Financial Sustainability inquiry was held 50 years ago, what would have been found?
- What will happen to the Councils that don't perform?
- What resources will be there to help Councils?
- Looking at rate levels, where you have \$40 million in debt if you have this as a Council this means you are moving forward. If Council took their time to save this sort of money to progress in certain areas, then they would be dead. Debt is sometimes a good thing.

- If families had the same debt as Council, what would be the Council equivalent of this level of debt?
- Councils should consider and look closely at ways to generate revenue outside of rates.

Workshop Session

- The Council and the LGA need to keep elected members informed and on side with the Financial Sustainability project. Training and skill sharing should be offered to elected members.
- There needs to be a resource sharing of asset management plans. There is a potential to develop focus groups around these plans.
- There needs to be evaluation and depreciation consistency between Councils.
- There should be regular financial sustainability updates for individual Councils.
- Councils should get to their 10 year plan early and get it up and going.
- A priority should be education, the regional LGA's should take a close look at resource sharing.
- One of the main issues is resources – small Councils may feel inadequate.
- The funds for the project – where do they come from?
- Staffing problems – how do we get quality staff into regional areas.
- Possibly the LGA in conjunction with Councils could forecast the costs for the coming years.
- Smaller Councils often have to pay a premium wage to get staff into rural areas.
- Financial Sustainability creates a huge workload for the LGA.
- There should be a uniform recording code of practice, this could possibly be introduced through legislation.
- There is huge need for consistency across Councils.
- There should be a guide produced to progress in financial sustainability.
- We need to get together detailed asset management plans within our Councils.
- Priority should remain, maintaining and furthering quality staff.
- Council should continue and further their asset management.

- Independent audit committees are needed.
- There should be some workforce planning work completed by the LGA, this should be publicised by the LGA and push for quality staff for Councils through the LGA.