

LGA 36950

Local Government Association of South Australia

LGTAP Review

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1. Executive Summary

Prior to 2004 the distribution of funding under the Special Local Roads Program (SLRP) was undertaken by the Local Roads Advisory Committee; a body established by the South Australian State Government. In 2004, the Local Government Transport Advisory Panel (LGTAP) was established by the Local Government Association of South Australia (LGA) State Executive. The purpose of LGTAP is to propose and monitor a continuing program of projects for the prioritisation of funding under the Special Local Roads Program (SLRP).

LGTAP assesses submissions from Local Government Regional Associations and provides recommendations for projects to the LGA State Executive which in turn makes recommendations to the Federal Minister of Transport and the South Australian Local Government Grants Commission.

LGTAP membership consists of a member of the LGA State Executive, a representative from a country council and a representative from a metropolitan council, a delegate of the Executive Director of the LGA, a nominee of the Minister for State/Local Government Relations, a nominee of the Minister for Transport and representative from the Commonwealth Department of Transport and Regional Services in an advisory capacity.

The LGA provide executive support for the Panel.

In October 2007 the LGA commissioned a review of LGTAP membership and terms of reference, the LGTAP process and engagement of LGA's and Councils regarding the SLRP.

The review methodology involved a telephone survey of LGTAP members, regional LGA's (the regions) and Councils (successful and unsuccessful applicants).

Key findings of review indicate:

- Membership of the LGTAP is fair and reasonable and that the terms of reference are being achieved and panel members are satisfied with both the level of support and information received.
- The applications process is well understood and is considered to be not overly onerous
- There is general satisfaction with the regional selection process, particularly as a result of improvements made by regions
- Views differ with regard to the overall assessment process with the LGTAP considering it works well whilst a considerable number of respondents across other survey groups expressed concern about the decision making process.
- There is dissatisfaction across the survey groups with the notification process.
- There are a number of issues that a considerable number of respondents believe are working well including the overall process, the regional approach, the program itself, the continued funding for long term projects and LGTAP itself.
- Some areas for improvement were identified in particular the notification process and the evaluation process (criteria and categories).

In accordance with the information contained in this report it is recommended that:

- 6.1 The LGA receives the findings of this report.
- 6.2 Training and awareness sessions are provided to councils and the regions on the overall LGTAP assessment process.
- 6.3 A review of the notification process be undertaken in order to make the process more efficient and effective for regions and councils.
- 6.4 LGTAP as part of its assessment process visit councils and the roads in question to get an understanding of the issues.
- 6.5 A policy position is determined with regard to the issue of maintenance versus construction particularly when considering the impact of financial sustainability on councils.
- 6.6 Consideration is given to developing strategies to deal with what is seen as a process that disadvantages Councils with predominantly tourism roads, for example Councils such as Kangaroo Island Council.

2. Introduction

In July 2004, The Local Government Transport Advisory Panel (LGTAP) was established by the Local Government Association of South Australia (LGA) State Executive to propose and monitor a continuing program of projects for the prioritisation of funding under the Special Local Roads Program (SLRP).

The SLRP was established under the joint approvals of the South Australian, Commonwealth and Local Governments. The Program facilitates funding of significant and strategic works throughout South Australia.

The LGTAP assesses submissions from Local Government Regional Associations and provides recommendations for projects to the LGA State Executive, which in turn, makes recommendations to the Federal Minister for Transport in the case of the Roads to Recovery component and to the South Australian Local Government Grants Commission for proposals under the Identified Local Roads Grants.

LGTAP membership consists of:

- A member of the LGA State Executive (Mr Brian Hurn, Mayor of Barossa Council);
- A member from a metropolitan Council (Mr Wally Iasiello, Director of Technical Services, City of Port Adelaide Enfield);
- A representative of a country Council (Mr Kym McHugh, Mayor of Alexandrina Council);
- A delegate of the Executive Director of the LGA (Mr David Hitchcock, Manager Finance and Infrastructure);
- A nominee of the Minister for State/Local Government Relations (Jane Gascoigne, Executive Officer South Australian Grants Commission);
- A nominee of the Minister for Transport (Mark Elford, Director Transport Planning); and
- A representative from the Commonwealth Department of Transport and Regional Services in an advisory capacity. Note: Though invited, no representative from the Commonwealth has attended LGTAP meetings.

Executive support for the Panel is provided by the LGA.

In October 2008, the LGA commissioned Janet Binder from Janet Binder Consulting Pty Ltd to undertake a review of the LGTAP membership and terms of reference. Specifically the review was to consider:

- Membership of the Panel
- The application processes, assessment and notification of recommendations, including adequacy of feedback to regional LGA's
- Engagement of regional LGA's and Councils regarding the SLRP.

This report provides details of the review methodology together with key findings and recommendations.

3. Methodology

The methodology used in undertaking the LGTAP review involved a review of documentation provided by the LGA and a telephone survey of LGTAP members, Local Government Regional Associations, successful funding applicants (one Council from each region) and unsuccessful funding applicants (one Council from each region).

There were twenty five respondents to the telephone survey; seven LGTAP members, six Executive Officers from regional LGA's (Eyre Peninsula, South East, Murray and Mallee, Southern & Hills, Central Region and Metropolitan), six successful funding applicants and six unsuccessful funding applicants.

3.1 Survey Questions

All participants were asked their views on the following:

- The LGTAP (membership)
- The process involved (the application process, the regional LGA selection process, the overall assessment process and the notification of recommendations process)
- Overall (what was working well, what could be done better)
- Any other suggestions/comments.

LGTAP members were asked additional questions associated with LGTAP including terms of reference, information provided and support provided.

Copies of the survey questionnaires are to be found in Appendix 1 and 2 of this report.

The survey was conducted during October 2007.

4. Key Findings

4.1 All Survey Groups

A review of responses indicates that there were no real differences between survey groups with the exception of one question; the overall assessment process. In this case the views of LGTAP differed considerably from other groups and this has been highlighted in the following key findings.

- **LGTAP Membership**

The majority of respondents considered the membership of LGTAP to be fair and representative of the key stakeholders. In addition some respondents also considered the knowledge that members brought to the panel was beneficial.

- **Application Process**

The SLRP application process was understood by most respondents with most respondents providing positive comments about the application process. In general comments indicate that the process is appropriately robust and not overly onerous to applicants.

- **Regional Selection Process**

The regional selection process is generally well supported. However, it is fair to say that there appears to have been some problems experienced initially with the process in some regions. Indications are that this issue has been addressed through process reviews and the process has improved in most cases. One region indicated a review was currently being conducted.

The benefit of regions having Regional Transport Plans providing more objectivity in the process was highlighted by some together with the view that the strategic basis and rigour of the process has taken the politics out of the process.

Some expressed concern as to the final decision making process with one indicating it was a “bit of a black box process”.

- **Overall Selection Process**

Views on the overall assessment process varied with around two thirds of respondents indicating it worked well, whereas others indicated that how projects were assessed was unclear. Comments included “bit of a black box”, “bit of a grey area”, “bit of a mystery”. This is at odds with comments from all LGTAP members who considered the process was working well. This is likely a reflection of the fact that LGTAP undertakes the process, whereas other respondents having not participated in the process are not necessarily as familiar with what occurs.

Some respondents raised concerns about the selection criteria; the fact that statistics are impacted by seasons and drought, together with the fact that the environment changes. Also it was the view of some respondents that the criteria needed to be reviewed in terms of construction versus maintenance (resealing), when considering the demand on local government to be financially sustainable.

- **Notification of Recommendations**

Most respondents indicated that they were dissatisfied with the length of time taken to advise councils that they have been successful and the subsequent impact this has on councils' budget process. Most indicated they understood the "politics" associated with the Minister announcing the recommendations; however they did question the need.

In the case of the regional LGA's concern was expressed that the notification went to the councils first and then to the region or in the case of one of the regions not at all. It was considered that protocol should be followed. The applications are submitted by the region; therefore regions should be advised first or at least at the same time as the councils.

- **Overall – what works well?**

There were a number of common issues that were identified as working well by most respondents.

- The overall process including the regional selection process; it is well understood, assessed against criteria, it is credible, robust and objective.
- The SLRP – common issues expressed by respondents included:
 - enables money to be directed where it is needed
 - provides assistance for major works that would not be possible without the funding assistance
 - promotes regional cooperation/collaboration
 - provides a strategic/state wide approach.
- Regional approach promotes ownership by Councils and the regions.
- Continued funding assists Councils forward plan
- LGTAP; credibility of Panel members.

- **Overall – What could be done better?**

When asked what could be done better when considering the overall process undoubtedly the key issue was communication; particularly the notification process (timing and advice). Other issues identified by some respondents were the evaluation process including the assessment criteria and policy direction with regard to the categories.

Even though it was not a common issue identified across all survey groups and was not an issue identified by the majority of participants, it is important to note that some respondents expressed the view that the process disadvantaged Kangaroo Island Council and they considered this should be addressed. Note Kangaroo Island Council was not a respondent to the survey.

4.2 LGTAP

In addition to the general questions asked of all participants LGTAP members were asked questions relating to:

- LGTAP Terms of Reference
- Information provided
- Support provided to the Panel

Analysis of the responses from members found the following key findings:

- **LGTAP Terms of Reference**

The overwhelming majority indicated that in their view the Panel is achieving its terms of reference. Some of the respondents raised the issue of financial sustainability and maintenance (resealing) versus construction; an issue raised by some in the general survey.

- **Information Provided**

All LGTAP members indicated they receive enough information to make decisions. Comments included criteria/scoring system really helps, the summary information is comprehensive and helpful, information is good – much more consistent and objective. Improvement in individual council submissions and the provision of supporting documentation by Councils were identified by two respondents as improvements whilst another member said there should be more visits to assist the Panel “get a feel for it”.

- **Support provided to the Panel**

When asked their opinion on the support provided to the Panel all said they were satisfied with the level of support provided. Comments included the summary is essential, it’s in a form that is readily absorbed, really good – very impressed with the work put in.

Development of the model and dealing with the issue of construction of roads versus maintenance, together with reducing the amount of paper provided was identified as opportunities for improvement.

5 Conclusions

In conclusion results of the LGTAP review telephone survey indicate that there is support for the process and the LGTAP.

Most of the respondents across the total survey group believed that the membership of LGTAP was fair and representative and the knowledge of panel members was beneficial to the tasks undertaken by the Panel. LGTAP members considered they were achieving the terms of reference and

considered they received enough information to make decisions. In addition they were also satisfied with the level of support provided to the Panel.

In terms of the process itself the majority of respondents indicated that in their view the application process was well understood and not overly onerous and the regional selection process, whilst acknowledging there had been some problems and difficulties in the past, improvements in the process and the development of regional transport plans had provided objectivity and rigour in the process. However, an area of contention appears to be that of the overall assessment process, with LGTAP members indicating it was working well, whilst views expressed by about a third of respondents across all other survey groups indicated there was some concern about the decision making process.

The one area where there was clear dissatisfaction with the process was that of the notification process with a majority of survey participants across all groups indicating they were unhappy with the length of time and the subsequent impact on Councils budgeting process.

The majority of respondents indicated that there were a number of issues that were working well in terms of the overall process including the process itself, the regional approach, the continued funding for long term projects, the SLRP (its strategic, state wide approach; ability to direct the money where it is most needed and to fund projects that Councils/regions could never afford). In addition very positive comments were received in regard to LGTAP.

Some areas for improvement were also identified by participants; in particular the notification process and evaluation process (criteria and categories).

6 Recommendations

In accordance with the information provided in this report it is recommended that:

- 6.1 The LGA receives the findings of this report.
- 6.2 Training and awareness sessions are provided to councils and the regions on the overall LGTAP assessment process.
- 6.3 A review of the notification process be undertaken in order to make the process more efficient and effective for regions and councils.
- 6.4 LGTAP as part of its assessment process visit councils and the roads in question to get an understanding of the issues.
- 6.5 A policy position is determined with regard to the issue of maintenance versus construction particularly when considering the impact of financial sustainability on councils.
- 6.6 Consideration is given to developing strategies to deal with what is seen as a process that disadvantages Councils with predominantly tourism roads, for example Councils such as Kangaroo Island Council.

LGTAP REVIEW SURVEY

NAME:

ORGANISATION:

POSITION:

Undertaking a review of the Local Government Transport Advisory Panel. The principal role of LGTAP is to provide recommendations to the Australian Government on the distribution of the Special Local Roads Program and other related roads funding.

Interest in views about the following:

1 LGTAP

Panel consists of three local representatives (1 of which is a State Exec member), 1 representative from the Local Government Grants Commission, 1 representative from Department of Transport and Energy with executive support being provided by the LGA)

Members of the LGTAP are: 3 Local Government Representatives including 1 State Exec Representative, 1 Metro Council and 1 rural Council Representative - Brian Hurn (Chair & Mayor of Barossa – State Exec Member) Wally Iasiello (City of Port Adelaide Enfield - metro), Kym McHugh (Alexandrina Council - rural) Jane Gasgoine (Grants Commission) Mark Elford (Dept of Transport and Energy) David Hitchcock (Executive – provides Admin & Support).

- What are your views on the membership of the LGTAP – eg Do you think it is fair/representative?

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2 Process

- Are you aware/familiar with the Special Local Roads Program application process?

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- What is your view of the application process – eg is it easy/hard, is it clear to follow, what about the time involved, are the time realistic?

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- What do you think about the regional LGA selection process?

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- What is your view on the overall assessment process?

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- What about the process of notification of recommendation? – eg is it timely, do you receive enough information/too much information?

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3 Overall Comments

- Overall - What do you think works well?

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- What do you think could be done better?

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- Do you have any other comment/suggestions that should be noted in this review?

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Thank you for taking part in the survey. The information will be collated and a report provided to the LGA by the end of this month.

LGTAP REVIEW SURVEY

NAME:

ORGANISATION:

POSITION:

Interest in views about the following:

1 LGTAP

Members of the LGTAP are: Brian Hurn (Chair & Mayor of Barossa) Wally Iasiello (City of Port Adelaide Enfield - metro), Kym McHugh (Alexandrina Council - rural) Jane Gasgoine (Grants Commission) Mark Elford (Dept of Transport and Energy) David Hitchcock (Executive – provides Admin & Support).

- What are your views on the membership of the Panel – eg Do you think it is fair/representative?

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- In your opinion is the Panel achieving its Terms of Reference? If no why not?

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- Are you provided with enough information to make decisions? If no what how can this be improved?

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- What is your view on the support provided to the Panel? Good/Adequate/not sufficient?

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2 Process

- Are you aware/familiar with the Special Local Roads Program application process?

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- What is your view of the application process – eg is it easy/hard, is it clear to follow, what about the time involved, are the time realistic?

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- What do you think about the regional LGA selection process?

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- What is your view on the overall assessment process?

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3 Overall Comments

- Overall - What do you think works well?

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- What do you think could be done better?

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Do you have any other comment/suggestions that should be noted in this review?

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Thank you for taking part in the survey. The information will be collated and a report provided to the LGA by the end of this month.