

Shire of Pingelly

Submission to the Road Resiliency Inquiry



Background

The Shire of Pingelly is responsible for 587km of roads, of which 211km are sealed. These roads equate to an asset value of approximately \$150,000,000 in their current condition. The income and matching expenditure for the Shire is approximately \$5,800,000 per year and road renewal and maintenance is approximately \$2,900,000 per year.

has long been extremely concerned regarding the Department of Transport's Student Transport Policy in relation to student transport as it has significant impacts for the Shire and residents in relation to student outcomes, equity and economic development. These impacts are articulated in the below sections.

Increased Burden from Severe Weather Events

The Shire is experiencing increasingly severe and frequent weather events, particularly storms during the winter months. For example, the Shire of Pingelly experienced a declared weather event which severely impacted our roads and required our gravel roads to be shut both in 2022 and 2021.

These storms increase the burden placed on the already stretched road crews to maintain the roads. As a result, the Shire's roads are falling into a state of disrepair. The only lever that the Shire has, is to increase the funding allocated to roads is to increase rates. A 10% rate rise would equate to only \$230,000 which would only renew 1km or 2kms of road, depending on the price of bitumen.

Added to this, the increasingly severe weather events are necessitating a higher standard of road construction, particularly for culverts; bridges; verge drainage; and lower sections of roads. Anecdotally, what previously was considered to be a 1:100 storm now is occurring at a 1:10 frequency which means roads must now be designed and built to that standard. This places a far greater burden on the Shire than ever before. Alternative source(s) of income must be found for the Shire to construct these roads to the higher standard.

Note that increased road engineering and construction standards such as may arise from this Inquiry must be costed and be accompanied by suitable funding source(s).

Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements

The current DRFA are not suitable for smaller local governments in particular. These arrangements have a number of unworkable issues resulting in extended timelines – it is not uncommon for local governments to only receive this funding 8 – 10 years after first applying.

The standard of proof required to access this funding is unreasonable. Photographs of the road immediately prior to the storm are required so that the prior condition of the road can be assessed. This is not realistic and results in the delays mentioned above; claims being refused; and being underpaid. This timing and result is unconscionable. Larger claims may run to the millions of dollars. A smaller local government like the Shire of Pingelly (with current assets of \$150M and turnover of \$5.8M) cannot carry that cost for any length of time. Claims should be resolved in a maximum time limit of 3 months. To achieve this, the staff should visit the local government and assist them as they are also carrying out recovery for their local community at the same time.

In addition, these arrangements only allow a like for like replacement. Local governments are not permitted to build back better even if they put additional money into the project or if there is a more efficient method of construction. This means that there are instances of a road or bridge being washed out every year and being replaced every year as they are constructed to a standard that is no longer

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suitable due to the increased severity of weather events in the locality. This also means that projects may not meet the construction current standards.

The Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements must be looked at urgently as they are an example of backward thinking, bureaucratic red tape and are stifling the implementation the enhancement of road resilience through modern materials and construction methods.

Conclusion

The Shire of Pingelly and other regional local governments are currently bearing the brunt of the changing climate in relation to our roads. This is adding a financial burden on small local governments through repair. Financial assistance to upgrade these roads is required to accommodate the new climate normal.

A review into the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements is also required to allow flexibility for road resilience to be factored into the reconstruction following severe weather events.

Signed for the Shire of Pingelly and on behalf of the residents of Pingelly:

Mr. Andrew Dover
Chief Executive Officer
Date

Cr. William Mulrone
Shire President
Date