

Thank you for providing persons and agencies with the opportunity to comment on the draft report.

The Shire of Bridgetown-Greenbushes is a local government authority located in the South-West Region of Western Australia.

The Western Australian Local Government Association (WALGA) is the representative body for local governments in Western Australia. WALGA estimates that within Western Australia local governments employ an annual spend of over \$3 billion in delivering services and infrastructure to their respective communities. This represents the equivalent effort of approximately 11% of the entire State budget. Leveraging this annual spend with strategically targeted investments enables the State Government to achieve policy and service agendas more effectively and efficiently than if it were to do so without the engagement of local government.

Local Government is therefore a major contributor to the economic performance of Western Australia.

The draft report represents a comprehensive analysis and assessment of various initiatives for improving the efficiency and performance and hence productivity of the Western Australian economy. However **this submission is focused solely on the contents and recommendations in Section 4.2.4 – Royalties for Regions.**

The Shire of Bridgetown-Greenbushes is strongly opposed to Recommendation 4 of the draft report recommending the repeal of Royalties for Regions legislation or alternatively restricting the regional funding to an amount determined annually as part of the budget process and guided by appropriate cost-benefit analysis on a project by project basis.

The objective of the *Royalties for Regions Act 2009* is to promote and facilitate economic, business and social development in regional Western Australia through the operation of the fund and more specifically to:

- (a) to provide infrastructure and services in regional Western Australia;
- (b) to develop and broaden the economic base of regional Western Australia; and
- (c) to maximise job creation and improve career opportunities in regional Western Australia.

The provision of Royalties for Regions funding has achieved significant economic, business and social development in regional Western Australia. The benefits that have flowed into regional Western Australia via the Royalties for Regions program are undisputed. More achievements, particularly in addressing the significant infrastructure backlogs, have been achieved in regional Western Australia since the inception of Royalties for Regions in 2008/09 than in the previous 25 years combined. Repealing the Royalties for Regions legislation will remove the only dedicated funding source available to regional local governments to address their infrastructure backlogs. Historically regional local governments have struggled to obtain funding in a competitive fund against metropolitan local government and State infrastructure projects and proceeding with Recommendation 4 of your draft report will return us to that scenario.

In the last 6 years with access to Royalties for Regions funding the Shire of Bridgetown-Greenbushes has been able to deliver a large number of projects to the benefit of not only our local communities but to the Western Australian community as a whole. The most significant of those projects was a new regional library facility valued at approximately \$4

million (of which approximately \$2 million was funded by Royalties for Regions) but other projects consisted of:

- Road construction and renewal
- Footpath construction and renewal
- Playground and parkland infrastructure upgrades
- Cemetery upgrades
- Construction of new change rooms a sports oval
- Contribution towards construction (renewal) of a community swimming pool
- Contribution towards improvements to existing Shire administration office
- Construction of a disabled ablution block
- Construction of a new car park
- Installation of a lift in a public building to facilitate universal access
- Upgrades to a skate park
- Development of walk trails

These projects would not have been delivered without Royalties for Regions. Without this program the infrastructure backlog in regional Western Australia will continue to grow and this will impede the objectives of the State Government to achieve even population retention let alone population growth in its regions.

The Shire of Bridgetown-Greenbushes recommends that Recommendation 4 of the draft report be amended to recommend the retention of the Royalties for Regions program.

Once again thank you for providing the opportunity to provide comments on the draft report.

Yours faithfully

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