



JOBS, SERVICES AT RISK

ROC'S CAMPAIGN TO REGIONALISE SERVICES AND JOBS

In January 2012 ACELG (Australian Centre of Excellence for Local Government) and NSROC (Northern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils) released a report under the heading 'A Comparative Analysis of Regional Organisations of Councils in NSW and Western Australia'.

On reviewing this report it became apparent that the release of the report was clearly timed to lobby the NSW Government and to influence the Government into introducing legislation to allow ROC's to take over Council services and jobs on a regional, rather than a local basis.

The report supports the USU's view that amalgamation of Councils does not deliver the financial benefits promoted by those who support the reduction of NSW Councils and forced amalgamations.

Say No To Outsourcing

The report however promotes options which would, just like forced amalgamations, decimate local jobs, services, and local decision making, but are an even greater threat to the jobs and conditions of the industry's 50,000 plus workers. These options include outsourcing and employing workers under regional or local corporations covered by the extremely inferior conditions of the Federal Industrial Relations System

and the Federal Modern Award for Local Government.

This move would greatly reduce wages, allowances and conditions, including reductions in sick leave and long service leave, loss of award paid maternity leave, workplace flexibilities and protections regarding hours of work and starting and finishing points, to name a few.

The report acknowledges current developments in seeking to have Local Government recognised in the Australian Constitution. This would guarantee Councils and Local Government a more secure and direct funding stream and take the pressure off rates to some degree.

The report does point out that ROC's (Regional Organisation of Councils) play a very small role in all states other than NSW and WA.

Importantly, the report indicates that in Western Australia ROC's are prevented by legislation from becoming corporations, and are limited to 'not for profit' status (just as Local Government should).

Questionable claims

While the report rejects amalgamations, it makes what appear to be very questionable claims that one ROC in NSW saved its member Councils 40 million dollars in one year alone, without

identifying the ROC, or substantiating the savings for commercial reasons.

The report then further makes the claim and assumption that this demonstrates that the ROC's in NSW are delivering hundreds of millions of dollars per year savings at the state level, and savings of tens of millions of dollars annually to individual Councils.

This unsubstantiated claim cannot be relied upon without evidence to support it.

It is hard to fathom that if, according to the report, amalgamation of Councils does not deliver savings to justify amalgamation, regional collaboration alone for procurement of goods could deliver what amalgamation could not.

Recognition of Local Government

Any move by the NSW Government to further empower ROC's as a solution to Local Government's financial problems should be treated with suspicion and opposed, as this report makes claims regarding the benefits of ROC's which appear to be greatly exaggerated and financially unsubstantiated. If implemented by NSW Legislation, this solution could, in fact, impact negatively on the federal and local campaign for constitutional recognition of Local Government, which means Councils and County Councils; not ROC's.

It's more important than ever to safeguard the collective strength of the USU. Make the Switch from payroll deduction today! Visit www.usu.org.au or ring 1300 136 604 today!