Ordinary Council Meeting
Tuesday 20 November 2012

ATTACHMENTS

MAYORAL MINUTE

10.010/12  Standing Committee Inquiry into closure of Grafton Gaol
Inquiry into the closure or downsizing of Corrective Services NSW facilities

Terms of reference

1. That a select committee be appointed to inquire into and report on the closure or downsizing of Corrective Services NSW facilities and in particular:

   (a) the basis for the decision to close or downsize any facility including the documents and other records that were considered by the Minister, such as any economic or financial analysis,

   (b) each Rural Impact Statement completed before the decision to close or downsize any rural or regional facility,

   (c) all consultation that was undertaken prior to the decision with stakeholders, including local government, chambers of commerce, industrial bodies, prisoner welfare groups and staff,

   (d) the costs associated with the closure or downsizing of each facility and the relocation of the prisoner population to other locations,

   (e) the impact on staff and their families, and on families of Indigenous inmates, of any closure or downsizing,

   (f) the long-term plans of each closed facility including maintenance and/or management arrangements,

   (g) the management of any heritage values for each of the closed facilities,

   (h) the process used to identify any public sector employment opportunities that could be re-located to rural and regional communities to replace job losses due to the closure or down-sizing of a Corrective Services NSW facility, and

   (i) any other related matters.

LC Minutes No 104 (6/9/2012), Item 14.

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

The Hon Paul Green MLC (Chair) Christian Democratic Party
The Hon Robert Borsak MLC (Deputy Chair) The Shooters and Fishers Party
The Hon David Clarke MLC Liberal Party
The Hon Amanda Fazio MLC Australian Labor Party
The Hon Scot MacDonald MLC Liberal Party
The Hon Melinda Pavey MLC The Nationals
The Hon Mick Veitch MLC Australian Labor Party
6 November 2012

The Director
Select Committee on the Closure or Downsizing of
Corrective Services NSW Facilities
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Sir/Madam

Clarence Valley Council Submission into the Closure or Downsizing of Corrective Services Facilities

The terms of reference to the Committee highlight many of the questions Clarence Valley Council has also been asking. How could one of the largest, highest paying employers be taken away from our community without a full economic, social and financial analysis, a Rural Impact Statement and without consultation?

Obviously the community as a whole agrees, given the extent of community outrage, and the week long blockade of the jail which is well documented in the media.

The loss of over 100 jobs has a huge impact in a regional area of high socio-economic disadvantage (the Clarence Valley ranks on the Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage index near the bottom at 934 out of 2,000, compared to Sydney which has indexes well over 1,000) and an average wage income only two thirds of the state average. Input/output modelling conducted by Council shows for every 1 person employed directly by Corrective Services in Grafton, another job was created indirectly. Therefore the loss of 100 employees has a result of losing 200 jobs from the Clarence Valley economy.

The Valley also has a higher then average unemployment rate of 6.6% compared to the state average of around 5%, and a low participation rate of around 50% compared with the NSW average of over 62%. This further accentuates these effects.

The economic impact of over 100 jobs lost in Sydney may hardly be noticed, however in a rural community the effects are much more pronounced. In addition those losing jobs have very few options available and cannot just get the train or bus to the next suburb to find a job. In general they will have to move towns and this is obviously very dramatic for parents and their kids.

Prisoners have been moved a minimum 200 kilometres (2.5 hours car travel) to Kempsey or even worse, to Cessnock or Sydney (7 to 10 hours travel from Grafton by car). This is especially significant as many of the families come from the lowest socio-economic sector and have less ability to afford a move to areas with very high house and rent prices as occurs in mining towns like Cessnock and obviously Sydney. It also
means families from surrounding towns in a radius from Tweed to Moree to Armidale have lost their local corrective centre.

The impacts are even more pronounced on the indigenous population who not only suffer from poor finances but also have to leave country. The Clarence Valley and north coast have an indigenous population of around 5% of the population.

In summary, the downsizing of the Grafton Correctional Centre had no consultation, no account of socio-economic impacts to an already disadvantaged community, no sympathy to impacts on corrective centre staff who in general will be forced to leave Grafton for employment, and definitely no account of the important role this centre had for families of prisoners, who obviously have little or no financial ability to move with their loved ones.

If you require further information please contact me on telephone 02 6643 0245.

Yours faithfully

[Signature]

Richie Williamson
Mayor