

Local Government Funding and Financing Inquiry

Focus group evaluation

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Context

The Inquiry

In July 2018 the Government asked the Productivity Commission to consider whether current funding and financing arrangements for Local Government are efficient, sustainable and affordable. If they are not, what better arrangements would serve these ends? In April the Government asked the Commission to also consider whether a tax on vacant residential land would be a useful mechanism to increase the supply of housing.

The Inquiry was undertaken by a team of six Commission staff, with specialist input from New Zealand and overseas. 271 submissions were received from a diverse range of sector participants, including; councils, business groups, property developers, infrastructure providers, academics and researchers. The Inquiry issues paper was released in November 2018, the draft paper July 2019 and the final report November 2019. Other outputs from the Inquiry can be found here [].

The Productivity Commission wants to know what stakeholders think of its performance in undertaking the Funding and Financing Inquiry. This is important. It provides an element of accountability of the Commission directly back to the community on how well it has exercised its powers and applied its resources. It also provides an opportunity for the Commission to learn so that the performance of future inquiries might benefit.

The focus groups

The Commission arranged two focus groups to get the views of a range of stakeholders on its performance. This document presents the results of those focus groups. Also, the Commission has undertaken a survey of all parties who registered an interest in the Inquiry and has commissioned an independent expert review of the final Inquiry report. The results can be found here [].

The focus groups were asked to consider the Inquiry performance against the key dimensions of the Commission's performance measures for inquiries:

- The right focus – the relevance and materiality of the final Inquiry report in meeting the Terms of Reference (TOR)
- Good process management – the timeliness and quality of the Inquiry process
- High quality work – the quality of the analysis, findings and recommendations
- Effective engagement – how well the Commission engaged with interested parties
- Clear delivery of messages – how well the work is communicated and presented in the final report
- Overall quality – the overall quality of the Inquiry taking into account all factors.

Also, the Commission wanted to know what impact stakeholders felt the Inquiry was likely to have on the quality of the debate and policy decisions relating to improving Local Government funding and financing arrangements.

For the purpose of the focus groups, the performance measures were grouped by inputs; outputs; and expected outcomes (impacts) from the Inquiry.

The focus group participants were selected by the Commission. The Commission sought a representative range of interests and views. The participants were:

Roger Beckett

Porirua Economic Development Group

Simon Bendall

Traverse Environmental Ltd

Jodi Caughley	Engineering Leadership Forum
Nick Clark	Federated Farmers
Eric Crampton	The New Zealand Initiative
Rebecca Heerdegen	Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment (Tourism)
Takeshi Ito	Millennium and Copthorne Hotels New Zealand
Raveen Jaduram	Watercare Services Ltd
Jason Krupp	Local Government New Zealand
Sam MacKinnon	Tourism Industry Aotearoa
Nadine Mehlopt	Hospitality New Zealand
Chris Parker	Treasury
Stephen Selwood	New Zealand Infrastructure Commission
David Wood	Maranui Consulting Ltd

A draft of this report was provided to the participants to correct and add further thoughts to as they felt appropriate.

Executive summary

Strong demand for more

Almost universally people did not like the ToR that were handed to the Commission. It was felt they were too narrow, with too many exclusions. However, some felt there was sufficient scope for the Commission to have still done far more, and pointed out that while the ToR restricted the Commission's recommendations, they did not restrict the analysis and findings. Almost universally, stakeholders wanted to see more, although there was significant divergence of view on how important perceived omission would ultimately be. Other suggestions on why certain topics had not been covered in enough depth included political economy reasons and staff capability. Areas identified by stakeholders that they would have liked to have seen more on included:

- The reasons local government is such a poor performer and options for fixing those problems, with a particular focus on incentives on decision makers;
- Best practice in NZ and o/s and how to promote it across councils
- Institutional form
- Subsidiarity (who should do what)
- Privatisation
- Growing infrastructure deficits and infrastructure management
- Local Government inefficiencies
- Amalgamation
- The lack of progress on co-ordination between councils and direct charges

Some, however, had assumed the ToR were a stronger signal of what the government was interested in engaging in and had felt going significantly beyond what the Commission had done risked wasting resources (the Commission's and stakeholders') and raising expectations –

amalgamation for example was pointed to as something the government was never going to move on.

Similarly, there was considerable divergence on stakeholder views on the value of the Inquiry. One group (optimists) viewed the Commission's recommendations as useful improvements to the system, and felt the analysis, conversation begun and heightened expectation would prove useful down the track for Inquiries and work streams that would follow. Pessimists, however, considered it a wasted opportunity that would not go much further, and that the recommendations were now being assessed through a political lens with significant positive change now unlikely.

Many were disappointed by the finding that the current system (a predominance of general rates funding) was largely appropriate. Many felt this was wrong, not sufficiently justified, failed to future proof local government funding and financing, or simply poured cold water on the need for change (it made it too easy for both Central and Local Government to ignore the rest of the report).

Interestingly, some felt there was now "fire in the belly" amongst stakeholders to move on to the big issues, using the platform provided by the Inquiry as a base and catalyst; while others felt stakeholders were now feeling deflated by what they saw as more of the same old thinking that had come before.

With respect to process, suggestions included:

- Greater use of subject/sector specialists, in particular earlier in the Inquiry process
- A stronger interface with government agencies early in the process (for example, to reduce duplication/make sure significant gaps are covered off); and at the end (making it easier for officials and Ministers to effectively engage in a timely manner)
- Specialist resource to aid selling of Inquiry to the media and public
- More "circling back" to submitters through the process

The above suggestions/issues need to be viewed in the context of the very strong support for the Commission: its people, processes, independence and analysis and communication, for the most part, are viewed as exemplary across government in the eyes of stakeholders. A strong theme continues to be for the Commission to do more, and for its influence to grow. To this end, there was some discussion on how to grow that influence, for example, on how to promote government accountability with respect to the Inquiries' findings and recommendations. Many felt the aim needed to be to raise it to a level where it was comparable to the Australian Commission, which was perceived as bolder and more influential.

Inputs

Inquiry inputs include, in particular, the people, processes, engagement and research applied to the Inquiry (Inquiry Terms of Reference are discussed immediately below). The mix of inputs are for the most part controlled by the Commission and directly impact on the quality of the Inquiry outputs.

Terms of Reference

Terms of Reference provide the boundaries for an Inquiry and encourage effort on the things believed (ex ante) to matter the most (ex post), helping to align expectations and effort by participating stakeholders. Designed well, they promote effort where the gains will be greatest and help to avoid an Inquiry becoming unmanageable or resources being wasted. Terms of Reference can be shaped by public interest, political and practical considerations, for example.

While the Terms of Reference themselves are treated as an input imposed on the Commission (out of scope), how the Commission chose to interpret and apply the Terms of Reference was a central topic of discussion by the focus groups and is within scope.

There was considerable debate on the Inquiry Terms of Reference. Almost universally participants felt they had been too restrictive, working against a more logical and deeper exploration of key issues impacting performance of the local government sector.

For example, noting the fundamental challenge for the Inquiry, one interviewee felt issues of funding and financing should ideally be preceded by decisions around form and function. This would have led first to a greater exploration of, for example, subsidiarity and amalgamation. “As a consequence, the Inquiry had focussed too much on fiddling with the existing structures at the expense of grappling meaningfully with more fundamental issues.”

Some interviewees, however, noted that while the Terms of Reference had precluded Inquiry *recommendations* in specified areas, they had not precluded related findings and analysis. To this point some acknowledged the Commission had chosen to provide analysis and findings that related to topics covered by the Terms of Reference. However, many interviewees felt the Commission could have and indeed should have gone much further. Examples provided included more analysis and findings related to:

- Who should do what, for example as guided by analysis of comparative institutional form and subsidiarity (a principle guiding decisions on who should undertake what function)
- Privatisation
- Amalgamation

While there was broad agreement that the Inquiry would have been more useful had these (and others topics discussed below under “analysis”) been included in the Inquiry, some caveats were offered by interviewees. For example, one interviewee acknowledged without the exclusions the Inquiry could have easily become unmanageable, and a discussion of amalgamation, for example, would have been a waste of Commission and stakeholder resources. “Why submit on issues for which there is no government appetite for reform?”

[The majority of interviewees commented, in preparing their submissions, they had:

- *followed a narrow interpretation of the Terms of Reference*
- *followed a broad interpretation of the Terms of Reference*
- *largely ignored the Terms of Reference and instead been guided by the breadth of topics covered by the issues paper and draft report*

- *been influenced largely by what topics they thought was important sitting below the broad topic heading]*

People

The capability, professionalism and focus (what needed to be achieved) of the Inquiry team are critical to the success of the Inquiry.

Of interviewees who commented, nearly all were very positive of the Commission staff engaged on the Inquiry. Typical comments included:

“They were really good, open, wanted to engage and knew what they were talking about.”

“I found them proactive in their engagement, and genuinely wanting to know the views of stakeholders. They are very good, exemplars across government.”

“We provided a rather pointed submission early in the process. Commission staff engaged well and addressed the issues. They are not stuck in their views as can be the case with other government agencies.”

One interviewee, however, wondered if staff always had the necessary capability to understand and engage effectively on the key issues. They mentioned in particular the role of poorly aligned incentives in contributing to poor outcomes in local government, discussed more fully below under the “Analysis” section.

Engagement

Good engagement is necessary to access the information needed to produce a good report, and the challenge of ideas needed for the Commission to develop robust positions. It is also needed for the credibility of the Inquiry findings.

Overall, interviewees were complimentary of the Commission’s engagement, commenting favourably, for example, on comparisons with other government agencies. A typical comment was:

“We enjoyed good meetings with the Commission. We were listened to and they understood the views submitted to them. They were open minded and pro-active.”

There was also considerable discussion on how engagement might have been improved.

The early stages

A number of interviewees noted there were opportunities for the Inquiry to engage with the right people and issues earlier, thereby allowing quicker progress.

One interviewee asked whether the Commission had only spoken to Councils early in the process, noting there would have been considerable benefit from going wider. Another commented that progress may have been quicker had the Commission engaged more with Council staff, in particular for technical policy input. Two interviewees noted Local Government New Zealand had a good oversight of the key people the Commission needed to engage with.

One interviewee reported they had been pro-actively asked by the Commission whom else they needed to engage with.

There was a discussion on the merit of having “subject expert reference panel(s)” available to the Commission as it developed its inquiries. Among other things this would help to quickly weed out

red hearings while ensuring key gaps are addressed. It was noted any panels would need to operate in a way that did not compromise the Commission's independence.

More specifically, it was also suggested there could have been more co-ordination between the Commission and central government early in the process so that resources were not wasted on reinventing the wheel, and to ensure important areas were not left untouched. One person suggested Tourism did not need to be included to the extent that it was.

The middle

The value of getting material "early", for example embargoed copies, was mentioned by a few people. Being given time to manage "bad news" (where the Commission had not acted on submissions) had been appreciated.

One interviewee commented that staff had not responded to their submission by seeking further clarification on a key issue they felt had not been covered adequately in the final report. "I don't know why the Commission didn't pick up the phone more to seek clarification. It would have taken five minutes."

Another commented that for them engagement up to the issues paper had been good, but that they would have valued greater "circling back" between the draft and final reports. They had provided significant input at the issues paper stage. The Interviewee commented that in the tourism area the Commission had changed from a broad welfare analysis to a financial analysis, which in turn significantly altered the Commission's conclusions. "It would have been useful to have been able to engage with that change in focus, in particular in the context of the release of a report by the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment which had taken a broader focus than the Commission." The interviewee suggested their experience might provide an incentive for stakeholders to "hold fire" until later in the Inquiry process.

Another interviewee, however, noted there was a limit to how often the Commission could continue a dialogue across the many stakeholders involved in the review. This interviewee noted they enjoyed a "long established relationship" with the Commission and were very happy with their engagement.

Another commented that seeing the submissions of others was appreciated as, for example, it provided useful context for why PC had changed their minds. Similarly, extracts from submissions valued in explaining how they got to different positions.

Some wondered whether, given the size and complexity of the Inquiry, there may have been merit in "batching" the Inquiry, that is, splitting it into key parts and bringing it together at the end.

The end

Some felt there was too little time for officials in government agencies to add value at the end of the process. There was some discussion of the trade-off between the Commission's independence and greater engagement with Ministers and officials prior to finalising the report.

It was also noted Ministers needed to be sufficiently briefed on the Inquiry reports to engage with and support them when released, which in turn would be of benefit to the Commission.

Research

A good Inquiry will access the most relevant research available and carefully apply it to achieving the Inquiry objectives. On occasion, original research will be needed. This happens where the high cost of original research is justified by the expected benefits of that research.

One interviewee asked who had been commissioned to do the earlier work, some of which they considered lacked useful insightful and was too theoretical. "A more practical focus could have been more useful for the Inquiry." Tourist accommodation was cited as an example.

A number of interviewee felt the Commission could have better accessed research into international best practice. The specific example of the non-attendance of Commission staff at overseas conferences was pointed to. It was asked whether the reason they did not attend was because it could have been perceived as a junket? "If this was the case, it would be unfortunate."

Another interviewee questioned whether the research used to support the Inquiry conclusion, that the existing funding and financing system was broadly appropriate, had gone far enough.

Outputs

Outputs are the products produced by the Inquiry, and include the draft and final reports, press releases, supporting analysis and explanatory materials, for example. A list of the main Inquiry outputs can be found here []. The quality of the outputs are central to whether an Inquiry will significantly impact decision-making and make a positive difference to outcomes.

Analysis

The strength of policy advice (recommendations and findings) depend critically on the strength of the supporting analysis. This in turn is a function of, among other factors:

- the matching of appropriate frameworks to issues, and the skill by which those frameworks are applied
- the quality of the information available and accessed, including theoretical and applied research and consultation
- the extent to which the key issues for analysis are identified
- whether the analysis is sufficiently detailed and specific to be of use to decision makers.

What topics the analysis needs to cover and how deep to take the analysis are difficult judgements and may depend on, for example:

- The expectations of the principal (Ministers) as expressed through the Inquiry Terms of Reference and related discussions
- Expectations of capacity, capability and incentives of parties responding and taking forward recommendations and findings
- Available resources, including time
- The quality of the information available on where the key issues are, and how deep the analysis should go
- The quality of the Inquiry decision-making.

The quality of the Commission's analysis was the key issue for the majority of interviewees, in particular as it related to completeness.

Completeness

For the most part, interviewees felt the Inquiry analysis was of a high quality, well grounded and logical, but only as far as the analysis went. Positive comments received included:

- “We were pleased the Inquiry tipped its hat to a number of things outside the Terms of Reference. Also, the Inquiry had more grunt than the Shand review and we were pleased responsibility for what was going to be a difficult project had gone to the Commission.”
- “The Commission’s endorsement of roading and volumetric charging were welcome.”
- “The analysis was useful for shooting down impracticable options, for example, a tax on unused land.”
- “Their support for the beneficiary pays principal was important and supported.”

One commented they expected to draw on the Commission’s analysis in future submissions on local government reform.

However, many interviewees felt the analysis was incomplete, neither deploying useful approaches, covering the topics that needed to be covered nor going into as much detail as needed. A number of interviewees felt there were a number of fundamental problems in local government that could have been more thoroughly addressed in the Inquiry, problems they felt would become more costly to address over time.

With respect to one approach, an interviewee suggested a central question for the Inquiry should have been “Why are we in the mess we are?” that is, why do the same problems continue to arise across the sector? As an example, they asked, “What causes councils not to worry about infrastructure?” The analysis, they argued, needed to be strongly focussed on addressing these “blockages”.

A key blockage, it was felt, was the mismatch between the self-interest of local decision makers and the public interest. More generally, it was suggested the Commission did not fully appreciate the importance and nature of the incentives shaping outcomes in Local Government.

A better understanding of incentives on Local Government, another interviewee commented, should have led to an examination of short term political economy factors (passing the cost to the next generation) and moral hazard risk (if it gets too bad central government will step in and fix it) for example.

Instead, it was felt the Inquiry approach of encouraging local government to try harder, aided by tools to promote Local Government capability and accountability to ratepayers (information dissemination) missed the mark.

Another interviewee offered the example of providing guidance on volumetric charges, observing “This is not likely to achieve anything if key incentives and relationships remain unchanged.” A deeper consideration of the problems, they suggested, would have led to a wider discussion of options, for example, stronger direction from central government.

Similarly, another interviewee commented that the most appropriate “institutional forms” should have been brought out more. They noted the strong independence and credibility of the Productivity Commission meant they were well placed to comment on the merits of comparative institutional arrangements (in particular Local and Central Government undertaking different functions), but the Inquiry did not do this well. There was discussion of, for example, non-beneficiaries paying for services and opportunities for the “tyranny of the majority” incentives to impact the quality of decision making. Within this context it was felt there could have been more discussion of Central

Government requiring appropriate accountability measures for decision makers and, for example, specifying democratic (voting) thresholds for approving funding mechanisms.

One person suggested the issue of privatisation might have been more thoroughly dealt with in the final report by presenting the issues in terms of changing the structure of Local Government balance sheets to favour more of some activities and less of others.

Another interviewee suggested co-ordination between Local Authorities (an alternative to amalgamation) had progressed little over the years and the Commission could usefully have pushed this harder.

Another interviewee suggested there would have been value in identifying successful models from New Zealand and overseas and identifying options for how these models might be replicated.

It was suggested the final report had overplayed the administrative costs related to a bed tax, and underplayed the relative benefit (compared to other options). Some options, it was felt, were discounted too quickly.

One person felt the Commission over-estimated the quality of Council laws, and as a consequence went too easy on them, in particular with respect to poorly performing Councils.

As well as additional topics and approaches, a number of interviewees commented the analysis could have usefully gone deeper, for example:

- in how Government should approach the reforms and recommendations (the chapter on ...),
- providing more technical direction
- being more specific with respect to terms that sometimes appeared vague, for example, how should one think about what a “modest levy” is?
- identifying what key options there might be to address problems highlighted in the report.

Another interviewee commented on the need to strike a balance between the value of taking the analysis further versus, for example, getting the analysis wrong, thereby impacting credibility.

Findings and recommendations

A key Inquiry conclusion was that the existing tools for Local Government funding remained broadly appropriate (see for example F6.1 and F6.7 of the final report) and captured by the comment:

“The current main funding tools of Local Government in New Zealand measure up well against the principles of a good revenue-raising system, including simplicity, efficiency and revenue stability.”¹

Most interviewees challenged this conclusion, with one commenting:

“The model needs to move on, away from general tax, to one grounded more on economic signals and incentives” (the New Zealand Initiative’s submission was cited in support of this point).

“The big conclusion was wrong, and fiddling with the current system to make it a little better might not be the best approach.”

Another suggested the Commission had come up with an answer, but not necessarily the right answer. “They seem to have played it too safe.”

¹ Taken from “At a Glance”, the Productivity Commission’s four page summary of the final report.

Another commented that the Inquiry “could have looked more at alternatives to rates in the event Local Government “goes big” in response to relaxing legislative constraints on activities they can undertake.” They asked whether the Commission had had sufficient time to consider carefully the extent to which Local Government might expand its activities going forward.

Another interviewee also felt the conclusion needed to be challenged, but suggested it had not been a surprise given the narrowness of the terms of reference.

Presentation

Overall, presentation of the products was considered very good, being well written, logical and clear:

- “The reports produced were very readable, with good use of quotes charts and tables.”
- “The issues paper was a good high level scene setter.”
- “The draft report attracted the lightning. By the time the final report arrived people were ready for it.”
- “The draft report clearly addressed the pressure points in the system.”

Having available the submissions of others was appreciated, with it offering useful context on why the Commission had changed positions on some issues.

Some felt the final report could have been shorter, with one interviewee suggested it was verbose in places and more repetitive than it needed to be. Others disagreed, however, with one commenting it could not have been completed in fewer pages.

Some felt clarity would have been aided if the final report had given a sense of the priority of the recommendations.

Outcomes

An Inquiry that is ignored by government and the community is a missed opportunity. The purpose of inquiries is to either confirm the current policy approach or, more likely, to identify changes to that approach likely to benefit the community. There are a number of avenues through which an Inquiry might facilitate positive change, including directly on government decision making, changing the behaviours of relevant stakeholders including the community more widely, and providing a stronger foundation for further debate and decisions in the future.

There were divergent views on the impact the Inquiry would have. Some felt it had provided useful recommendations and findings for government to take forward, and an important foundation for further needed reforms. Others, however, felt it had been a missed opportunity.

A useful foundation for going forward

Many interviewees felt the Inquiry had provided a solid foundation for future reforms. These people focussed in particular on the analysis over the findings and recommendations; and on future reform initiatives over the impact of the Inquiry as a discrete product.

A number felt the final report represented a beginning of an important conversation and new conversation. There was “fire is in the belly” to take it further. Expectations were high that it would be taken further and the problems were well understood by the main stakeholders. “Opportunities to have these discussions don’t happen often and should not be wasted.”

Some felt it was only a matter of time before the Commission again looked at local government, and the Inquiry would be a useful foundation to build from. Others also suggested other parts of Government needed to and would take advantage of the positive opportunities created by the

Inquiry. “The Inquiry has ignited interest in the big issues across many stakeholders, the conversations are happening, and the timing is right to take these issues forward.”

A missed opportunity

Many interviewees were not so positive, feeling the Inquiry would have little impact, directly or indirectly.

One interviewee commented “the hunger and capability to use the report are not there.” Some questioned the political appetite for the significant reform needed to grapple with the big issues. “The government is simply reviewing the recommendations against a political acceptability lens” said one.

Referring to the Inquiry conclusion that the existing system is largely appropriate, one interviewee commented that “Overall, the big picture work was a little underwhelming. We are concerned, for example, that Central Government and Councils could read the final report and easily decide they don’t need to do anything.”

Another commented that there was not sufficient in the final report to provide the needed base for significant reform. “The report was a bit “damp” and the recommendations did not rise to the level of future proofing.” They described the Inquiry as “the Shand Report” with add-ons, such as, climate change.

Selling the final report

There was a concern that if the Commission did not facilitate further conversations, opportunities for addressing important issues would be lost.

There were different views on how well the final report was promoted.

Some felt it was not naturally a topic that either the media or general public would get excited about. Another commented that the ToR signalled the final report would be more of the same – a bit ho hum, making it more difficult to sell. It was suggested the Minister needed to be more active in selling the final report.

Some felt the main stakeholders who could reasonably be expected to engage with the report had done so, and that further efforts to sell it would achieve little. A different view was that the public (from a political economy perspective) needed to engage with the key issues if progress was to be achieved, and for that reason greater efforts needed to be taken to build awareness.

Some counselled against the Commission being more aggressive in the media, commenting it could be counter-productive both with respect to achieving the Inquiry objectives, and the long term sustainability of the Commission.

One person noted the use of social media. But Local Government Funding and Financing was a dry area and it would be difficult to get the media and excited by the Inquiry. To this end it was noted Ministers didn’t appear excited/engaged with the Inquiry and this may impact the willingness of stakeholders to expend further limited resources in contributing further.

Would have been useful for the Commission to point to more work required, even if that work was out of scope of the Inquiry (Terms of Reference on recommendations), ie, the “Pulling it together” chapter could have gone a lot further.

One person commented it would have been good to have additional and targeted materials for the media and public to reinforce the education component of the Commission's findings. It was further suggested the Commission could benefit from having media savvy resources available to it.

Future Inquiries: Making sure the Commission is listened to

There was considerable discussion at both focus groups with respect to getting maximum leverage from Commission Inquiries. One person commented Government needed to be more accountable for its response to Commission Inquiries. One suggestion was that in its annual report the Commission report on the response of Government to its Inquiries, for example, recommendations accepted.

A strong theme was that more was wanted from the Commission Inquiries. The Australian Productivity Commission was pointed to as where the New Zealand Commission needed to get to. In particular it was felt the Australian Commission engenders a "fear of God" when they engage in Inquiries, and this was still missing in the New Zealand context. Possible reasons for this included differences in the scale, comparative politics, confidence and the time the New Zealand Commission has been operating. However, it was felt this question needed to be given greater attention to speed the New Zealand Commission's transmission to a position of comparable influence.

There needed to be a conversation around where the New Zealand Commission wanted to be, and how to get there. It was felt currently the Commission was too cautious re taking up the fight. It was commented stakeholders mostly wanted action, not just awareness building.

The Government doesn't want a Productivity Commission that will beat it with a stick. Government not necessarily unhappy with lack of noise. But lot of work for potentially little impact.

There needs to be more accountability on government to do something in response to PC recommendations and findings. Stakeholders could also play a role here.

The Commission is impartial, but is aware of political realities. Need to be able to get balance right. These judgements are difficult. Are viewed as having good judgement here.

Stakeholders (Auckland) commented they had not been engaged by government agencies preparing the government response to the Inquiry.

Would like to see more political buy-in to their great work. Is acknowledged there is a role for stakeholders here.

- Outside a local government inquiry, some felt the Commission should address infrastructure, a growing problem (the infrastructure deficit and waste) where the relevant players are not well aligned to getting the right results.
- Another interviewee felt issues relating to the escalating cost of infrastructure and asset management were too nuanced.
- Waste and inefficiency would be good to look at with respect to the next Commission Inquiry.