



Speech by

HOWARD HOBBS

MEMBER FOR WARREGO

Hansard 11 November 2003

**WESTERN QUEENSLAND LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE;
LOCAL GOVERNMENT FUNDING**

Mr HOBBS (Warrego—NPA) (7.12 p.m.): I advise the House that the Western Queensland Local Government Association conference will be hosted by Waggamba shire at Goondiwindi on 20 and 21 November. Unfortunately, we cannot get a state minister to come to the conference. This has happened in the past, as a matter of fact. At one stage ministers started to come along to these conferences, but we have had apologies from everybody at this stage. It should be a good conference. Councillor Don Stiller, President of the Local Government Association of Queensland Noel Playford, CEO Greg Hallam, Chair of the Murray Darling Committee Mary Woods and a lot of other people will be there.

Mr Lucas: What date is it?

Mr HOBBS: It is 20 and 21 November. We would welcome the minister to that conference, because we cannot get any other ministers to go. Where is the Minister for Local Government? She will be retiring from this game in the very near future and is probably not interested. Where is the Minister for Primary Industries? What about the Minister for Natural Resources? He might come out and talk to us about some of the issues.

An enormous number of issues need to be discussed. It seems as though the National Party is the only party interested in helping local government. I will be there, as will Bruce Scott, the federal member—as we always are—supporting local government. It appears as though the ministers have lost interest. I would certainly welcome the Minister for Innovation and Information Economy. If he wants to come we would love to see him out there.

There are a number of local government issues, particularly federal assistance grants. That issue has not been entirely resolved. Some of the councils are very interested in making sure that the Grants Commission finalises that particular part of it, because it represents the major funding source for local government. It is essential that we get it right. At this stage there has been no announcement from the state government on future grant funding, particularly the capital works subsidy scheme, SCAP, RLIP and RCP. These are vital to local governments. They have not been advised as to whether funding is available.

Public liability is still an issue. Community care underwriting agencies operate in all other states except Queensland. In relation to country racing, Talwood has been closed down. Goondiwindi has also lost a race day. Town plans are due by June 2004, but that deadline will be very hard to meet. We want to talk to the minister about these issues—about how difficult it will be.

Road funding is essential. We are desperately looking for more assistance. We want to ensure the minister is aware of those issues. I refer to natural resource funding in relation to the Murray-Darling Basin. In relation to the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality, the Commonwealth has put its money up, but the states have not put enough money up at this stage. They are far short in their funding—

Time expired.