

Darren Ray – LEF RE: Global Financial Crisis, 5 Feb 2009

The positives:

- We are uniquely placed to be the voice for our local communities when all other news on the 'bigger stage paints the picture that we are helpless observers to a bigger game. Or put another way, Local Governments are in the unique position to promote hope in our local communities
- What is the other thing we do best – complex and grass-roots level partnerships. There are countless opportunities for us to promote partnerships at a time when there will be a growing hunger for working together and success stories

The negatives:

- More than ever before, with confidence and mistrust at all-time highs
- Pressure to cap or limit or even reduce rates – ie the story will be cast as big governments harm little people!

Learnings:

- Referring to rates stuff first - so we have to start telling a story now about having to maintain the levels of services – don't leave it to the budget process
- We should not shun the spotlight – nor should we feed the flames of uncertainty and negativity
- This is our time to step up to the plate – we are good communicators and networkers – let's make the most of this!
- Ask yourselves – are our relationships and discussions with service clubs, charities etc who are carrying greater loads as a

- result of the GFC strong? Can we work together more creatively to respond? If not, Sit down and think creatively with Councillors, community leaders, service clubs
- Be adequately equipped to deliver the bad news (service cut-backs or delays in projects) and the good news (celebrating partnerships)
 - Never put out a service story unless it involves real people
 - Cutting back on communication, networking and cultural celebration in the middle of the GFC is a mistake
 - Continue to provide your community with updates whenever something changes that affects them
 - Decide early on the “sticky issues” and think ahead of how you need to announce these and join them with good explanations including prioritizing and protecting other key programs that are going to help residents in these difficult times

Future VLGA Work:

- Continue the discussion from tonight & facilitate discussion among Local Governments about potential responses
- Celebration of good news stories where networking and partnerships are working
- Promotion of City-Rural Relationships (Timor Leste model)
- Live, Work and Play Local Campaign – funding from State and/or Feds?
- Sector-wide advocacy to Prime Minister about infrastructure to Victorian Local Governments