



Legislative Council Economy and Infrastructure Committee

Inquiry: Inquiry into Local Government funding and services

Hearing Date: 8 October 2024

Question[s] taken on notice

Directed to: Australian Services Union

Received Date: 6 November 2024

1. **Gaelle BROAD, Pages 23 & 24**

Question asked:

Gaelle BROAD: Seeing in your submission '50,000 local council workers' – and when I look at 79 councils, that is about 633 staff each – is that council-employed workers? What is the average, and what is a reasonable number of staff to be employed by a local council?

Tash WARK: It is very variable. I mean, take somewhere like the City of Greater Geelong: it is massive compared to some of our really regional and rural councils that are obviously pretty tiny.

Gaelle BROAD: What is the difference in the numbers? What are you aware of from your research? You are not sure?

Tash WARK: I would need to take that on notice – what the range of workplace sizes is. Sorry, your question was about the numbers. Do you mind just repeating it?

Gaelle BROAD: I guess just when you talk about local council workers, are you saying there are 50,000 employed directly by local councils?

Tash WARK: Yes. What is not mapped in that is workers who may come in on a labour-hire or agency kind of arrangement – so any kind of third-party arrangement will not be mapped in that, and there is no obligation for councils to report on that currently on a workforce, like in a head count or EFT kind of manner, which we say there should be. If you have got people who are part of delivering services to communities, then they should be counted. If people are working in jobs that are outsourced, there is no compulsion for councils to report on, again, the headcount or the EFT that is involved.

Response:

What is the average, and what is a reasonable number of staff to be employed by a local council?

Average numbers of staff – and like measures

- 200 – 299 as a range is the highest frequency of total council employees
- 705 is the average amount of total council employees
- 540 is the median amount of total council employees
- 56,000 is the total amount of total council employees
- 60 is the lowest recorded amount of total council employees, in the Borough of Queenscliffe
- 2961 is the highest recorded amount of total council employees, in the City of Melbourne

All data above is based on headcount.

As stated in the hearing, this data is all directly employed employees and do not include workers who are performing local government work who may be employed by a third party arrangements, for instance labour hire or agency, where the host is local government; or where services are contracted out, for instance waste collection or leisure contracts to an external service provider; nor where independent contractors are engaged.

What is a reasonable number of staff to be employed by a local council?

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to this: depends on size of council, population and the democratically identified priorities of local communities. Whatever the numbers, staff should be directly employed, and staffing numbers reported on in their entirety, so that there is transparency for ratepayers, communities and workforces.