

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Local Government Electoral Boundaries

Hon. N. I. CUNNINGHAM (Bundaberg ALP) (Minister for Local Government and Planning) (10.06 a.m.): With 12 months to go before the local government elections in Queensland, I have so far received submissions for electoral change from 26 councils. All councils that are divided for electoral purposes had to advise me before 1 March this year as to the status of their electoral quotas. I am now in the process of referring those councils that do not meet the requirements of the Local Government Act 1993 to the Electoral Commissioner of Queensland for independent review. Any divided local government that failed to advise me by 1 March 2003 must also be referred to the Electoral Commissioner. As well, any council, whether divided or not, may submit a voluntary proposal for change to their electoral arrangements.

All councils requesting me to refer a voluntary change to the Electoral Commissioner for review must supply their reasons for seeking the change. Upon receipt of the reference, the Electoral Commissioner must constitute a local government electoral and boundaries review commission to independently review the matter. Under the statutory review process, the commission must make inquiries as it considers appropriate and then publish its proposed determination for public submissions. The commission must then consider all submissions made before finally determining the matter. The final determination of the commission must then be implemented by regulation as soon as practicable.

I am aware of some instances where a local government is considering changes to their electoral arrangements that have raised the concerns of their communities. For example, I have received a copy of a petition from 800 electors of Bowen shire opposed to a proposal to abolish electoral divisions within the shire area. I have also received many letters from electors of Banana shire expressing concern at a proposal to abolish electoral divisions in that shire. I am advised that the Esk Shire Council received a copy of a petition containing 528 signatures seeking the reintroduction of electoral divisions. That petition was tabled in this Parliament on 26 February this year.

I have since been advised that the Esk council noted the petition representing 5.5 per cent of its electors but resolved to make no changes to its electoral arrangements for the 2004 local government elections. The approach I have decided to take in referring matters where I have received submissions from the electors of a local government is that I will forward all such material to the Electoral Commissioner for consideration by the review commission constituted to determine that review. The commission is the independent review body and it is entirely appropriate that the commission should decide what relevance and weight it places on such material.



Hon Nita Cunningham MP
Member for Bundaberg

**Minister for
Local Government and Planning**

MIN/47031.03-LAA/2281

Mr Neil Laurie
The Clerk of the Parliament
CENTRAL DOCUMENT EXCHANGE M29

Dear Mr Laurie

I refer to your letter of 28 February 2003 referring to me a petition lodged by Ms Royalin M Denning regarding the decision of the Esk Shire Council to abolish electoral divisions for the 2004 local government elections

I have responded directly to Ms Denning and have enclosed a copy of my response for your information.

Yours sincerely

Minister for Local Government and Planning

4/4/03.

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MIN/47031.03 - LAA/2281

27 MAR 2003

Ms Royalin Denning
Fairneyview-Fernvale Road
FERNVALE Q 4306

Dear Ms Denning

I refer to a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Queensland requesting that the House re-introduce electoral divisions for the area of the Shire of Esk for the purposes of the 2004 local government elections.

I note that, in 1993, the then Local Government Commissioner undertook a review of the electoral arrangements for the Shire of Esk and, following public consultation, recommended that the electoral divisions be abolished. The Governor in Council, by the *Local Government (Electoral Matters) Regulation 1993*, subsequently approved the abolition of electoral divisions for Esk Shire on 26 November 1993.

The re-introduction of electoral divisions in a local government area is a reviewable local government matter under the provisions of the *Local Government Act 1993* and, as such, must be referred by me as Minister for Local Government to the Electoral Commissioner of Queensland for independent review. In accordance with present Government policy, such references are only issued where the Council has resolved to seek a change to its existing electoral arrangements.

I am informed that following consideration of your petition, the Council resolved not to change its electoral arrangements for the purposes of the 2004 local government elections. In the circumstances, the 2004 local government elections for the Shire of Esk will be based on the existing electoral arrangements.

I regret I am unable to be of further assistance on this occasion.

Yours sincerely

SIGNED BY MINISTER

Nita Cunningham MP
Minister for Local Government and Planning

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