



**Hon Desley Boyle MP**  
Member for Cairns



**Queensland  
Government**

MC10/538  
LA/10/3571

16 DEC 2010

**Minister for Local Government and  
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander  
Partnerships**

Mr Neil Laurie  
The Clerk of the Parliament  
Parliament House  
George Street  
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Mr Laurie

Thank you for your letter of 24 November 2010 concerning petition number 1539-10 that refers to 'massive' rate increases by the Townsville City Council and increased Council debt. The petition alleges mismanagement of public funds by the Council and requests that the Queensland Parliament's House of Assembly 'call in' an Administrator so that new elections can be held for the Townsville City Council.

While I acknowledge the concerns expressed in the petition, in Queensland, Local Governments are autonomous bodies charged with taking independent action on a wide range of matters necessary for ensuring the good rule and government of their areas. As Minister for Local Government, I have limited powers under the *Local Government Act 2009* to direct any Council in regards to many of the decisions that they make.

In respect to the dissolution of a Local Government, the legislation does provide the authority for me to do so in certain limited circumstances. These circumstances are:

- if I reasonably believe that a Local Government has seriously or continuously breached the Local Government principles or
- if I reasonably believe that a Local Government is incapable of performing its responsibilities or
- if the Local Government Remuneration and Discipline Tribunal recommends to me that every Councillor be suspended or dismissed.

There is not sufficient cause to warrant exercising this authority.

However, petitioners may be interested to know that to ensure greater transparency in revenue raising by Local Governments, on 25 November 2010, I announced in Parliament that there will now be a mandatory requirement for all Local Governments in Queensland to disclose in their annual budget the percentage change in total rates and utility charges revenue over the year. This one practical figure represents the actual increase in revenue drawn from ratepayers including all general and differential rates, separate and special rates and utility charges including water, sewerage and waste charges. This figure will also include the effects of any changes to discounts and remissions.

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I believe the publication of this figure increases transparency so that ratepayers can better understand what is happening in their Local Government budget from one year to the next.

Should you require any further information in relation to this matter, please contact Ms Jo Stephenson, Regional Director, Northern Regional office of the Department of Infrastructure and Planning on 4799 7195.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Desley Boyle', with a stylized flourish at the end.

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