



# Premier of Queensland

For reply please quote: CS/AT – TF/14/3279 – DOC/14/33563

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Dear Mr Laurie

Thank you for your letter to the Premier of 13 February 2014 enclosing petition 2137-13 which was tabled in the Legislative Assembly on 11 February 2014.

The petitioners have requested that a referendum be held at the next State election asking if North Queensland should become a separate state.

The petitioners may wish to note that the issue of North Queensland becoming a separate state received little mention by the more than 78 000 Queenslanders who contributed to the development of *The Queensland Plan: A 30-year vision for Queensland*. People were more interested in how our regions could achieve more if they worked together for the broader benefit of Queensland, rather than notions of splitting the State.

This Government recognises the valuable contribution that regional Queensland communities, including those in North Queensland, make to the overall fabric of Queensland — both economically and socially. Queensland has strong local governments and we recognise that it is strong councils that are best placed to provide the most practical and appropriate local solutions to local issues.

To support councils in this regard, the Parliament passed amendments to the *Local Government Act 2009* in 2012, to put mayors and councillors back in charge of councils with minimal interference from the State Government. This included reinstating joint local government arrangements to enable local governments to work together to deliver better outcomes. This will allow councils to build on existing local government clusters like the Far North Queensland Regional Organisation of Councils to tackle regional issues collaboratively.

This Government has also taken steps to make sure that regional Queensland gets its due recognition. For example, through our Royalties for Regions initiative, the Government invests in regional community infrastructure, roads and floodplain mitigation projects. This will ensure that regional Queensland receives long-term royalty benefits through targeted infrastructure investment.

In particular, Royalties for Regions supports:

- infrastructure which improves the liveability and amenity of regional communities
- the economic development and resilience of regional communities
- development that is consistent with Queensland regional economic and planning priorities
- increased private sector investment into regional communities.

In 2012, we committed \$495 million over four years for this initiative.

Indeed, a key objective of this government is to support regional development. During the summits to help develop *The Queensland Plan*, the Government got the clear message from Queenslanders that population growth should not just be concentrated in the south east corner of the State. Queenslanders are unanimous in their desire to strengthen regional economies, improve local amenity and support thriving communities. This means we need to tap the economic potential of regional Queensland, and will be investigating strategies to encourage regional population growth into the future.

Strong regional representation within government is also important, and this Government's Ministry and Assistant Ministry includes representatives of regional Queensland including North Queensland, who provide a strong and influential presence in the Government.

Furthermore, we also hold Community Cabinet meetings in regional Queensland. These meetings provide the opportunity to hear a cross-section of views and enable local residents, businesses and community-based organisations to raise issues with Ministers, Assistant Ministers and Directors-General of government departments. Most recently, Community Cabinet was held at Tully and Mission Beach on 23 and 24 February 2014.

As Queenslanders there is much to be proud of. We would lose part of our identity and our combined strength by splitting this great state and, as a Government for all of Queensland, we will continue to work every day to deliver better government for the whole of the State.

While the Government does not support the holding of a referendum on this issue, I appreciate that the petitioners have exercised their right to participate in the democratic process by providing their particular thoughts to the Parliament.

Again, thank you for forwarding this petition to the Premier and I hope this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely



**JEFF SEENEY**  
**ACTING PREMIER**