



Warren Pitt MP
Member for Mulgrave



**Minister for Main Roads and
Local Government**

MC07.6849

08 OCT 2007

Mr Neil Laurie
Clerk of the Parliament
TableOffice@parliament.qld.gov.au

Dear Mr Laurie

Thank you for providing the Honourable Andrew Fraser MP, former Minister for Local Government, Planning and Sport with a copy of the wording of petition no. 856-07, lodged with the Legislative Assembly of Queensland, regarding local government reform.

As the newly appointed Minister for Main Roads and Local Government I am responding to you on this matter.

As you are aware, on 27 July 2007 the independent Local Government Reform Commission (the Commission) announced its recommendations on the name, class, boundary and electoral arrangements for each new local government in Queensland.

The use of an independent commission is the same process used to determine the boundaries within which constituents vote at both State and Federal elections. It is appropriate that Queensland's new local government sector be held to the same standards.

All Queenslanders had the opportunity to provide the Commission with their individual views on local government reform in their region during its month-long public consultation. The Commission received more than 47,267 submissions, including more than 3,796 suggestions that contained specific issues for consideration.

The Commission was strongly guided by its Terms of Reference to create local governments with improved financial sustainability.

Many suggestions to the Commission argued for the retention of current boundaries. However, the challenges which local government must confront in the coming decades will require councils that possess: strong balance sheets with the capacity to handle future pressures to cope with growth; and the ability to attract and retain management and other expertise, which is essential if councils are to equip themselves to handle such eventualities. The Commission recommended structural reform in Queensland to remove the inefficiencies resulting from duplication and suboptimal use of assets.

The Commission also considered a number of other factors including bringing communities of interest together, regional planning and consolidating natural resource management areas.

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In relation to reform in other states, this reform process is unique to Queensland and direct comparisons with outcomes from reforms in other States are irrelevant. A series of council amalgamations occurred in Queensland in the early 1990s and the results of these provide a more appropriate benchmark for the benefits that can be achieved in our State. These amalgamations included Cairns City (previously Cairns City and Mulgrave Shire); Mackay City (previously Mackay City and Pioneer Shire); Ipswich City (previously Ipswich City and Moreton Shire); Cooloola Shire (previously Gympie City and Widgee Shire) and Warwick Shire (previously Warwick City, Allora Shire, Rosenthal Shire, Glengallan Shire).

In 2005, the Local Government Association of Queensland commissioned a study into community attitudes towards these amalgamations. This study found that twice as many residents indicated the outcome was successful, than those who said it was not. Furthermore the study found that in relation to service delivery, almost three times as many people felt council performance had improved, than those that thought it had become worse, and only 7% of respondents wanted to 'turn the clock back' to previous local government boundaries.

The local government reform program is about building a stronger, more financially viable system of local government throughout Queensland.

It is envisaged that any new councils will have a greater ability to place more emphasis on frontline services rather than administration, meaning more people working in jobs which deliver local services and infrastructure to the community.

This has to be a good result for the people of Queensland.

I trust this information is of assistance to you. Should you require any further information in relation to this matter, please contact Mr Leigh Spencer, Senior Policy Advisor, of my office on telephone number 322 78820.

Yours sincerely

Warren Pitt MP
Minister for Main Roads and Local Government