



Warren Pitt MP
Member for Mulgrave



**Minister for Main Roads and
Local Government**

MC07.6847

05 NOV 2007

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

Dear Mr Laurie

Thank you for providing me with a copy of the wording of petition number 857-07, lodged with the Legislative Assembly of Queensland, regarding local government reform in the Redcliffe City area.

The Government's commitment to implementing local government boundary reform remains steadfast. Queensland is Australia's fastest growing State and all Queenslanders need a contemporary and relevant structure and system of local government to take us forward into the future.

Councils are already well progressed on the transition to new arrangements. A Moreton Bay Regional Council Local Transition Committee has been established and an interim Chief Executive Officer has been appointed to help lead existing councils to the new arrangements.

In the meantime ratepayers will continue to receive the same services from their existing councils until the Moreton Bay Regional Council takes effect after the next local government elections on 15 March 2008.

The process for determining the new local government boundaries has been open and transparent. The Government established the Local Government Reform Commission as the most appropriate vehicle to provide advice and recommendations on the most sustainable structure for local government in Queensland.

The use of an independent commission is the same process used to determine the boundaries within which constituents vote at 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 47,267 submissions, including 3,796 suggestions that contained specific issues for consideration.

In relation to the Moreton Bay Regional Council, the Commission considered a wide range of issues, including bringing communities of interest together, regional planning and consolidating natural resource management areas, such as water catchment areas. Financial sustainability was not the sole determinant for amalgamating Redcliffe City Council with Caboolture and Pine Rivers Shire Councils.

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In examining the region, the Commission found that there are no clear geographic boundaries between Pine Rivers Shire, Caboolture Shire and Redcliffe City councils. Similarly, many of the servicing issues and economic and social interests of the existing local governments overlap.

The Commission thus determined that all three local governments share a number of cross-border local government concerns including water catchment management, regional public transport provision, and employment and economic development opportunities for their resident populations. The Commission recommended that the infrastructure demands of a rapidly growing urban area without any discernable boundaries would be more effectively and efficiently addressed as a core business responsibility of a regional local government.

In determining its recommendations, the Commission gave consideration to the effect of the reforms on individual communities throughout Queensland. In particular, the Commission noted that many of the submissions it received expressed apprehension that a specific community might cease to exist if it were amalgamated with other local governments. The Commission considered that identification with 'place' or area-specific communities exists within the current local government arrangements, and that changes to these boundaries will not extinguish the ability for communities to identify with the particular locality into the future.

Specifically referenced in the Commission's report are the examples of Maleny and Bribie Island. Both of these are distinctive communities within the current borders of Caloundra and Caboolture Shires respectively. There are similar examples across Queensland where distinctive communities thrive within existing local government boundaries, including Kuranda (in Marceba Shire), Babinda (within the boundary of Cairns City Council), Airlie Beach (in Whitsundays Shire) and Magnetic Island (within the boundary of Townsville City Council). These examples demonstrate that an area's unique sense of place is not lost or subsumed by a local government structure that reflects a larger area.

Redcliffe is another example of this. It has a strong sense of community and a proud history. Redcliffe will always be Queensland's first settlement city. This will not be lost because of local government boundary changes. Local government boundary reform is about providing the most efficient local government services, now and into the future.

The Government has accepted the boundary change recommendations of the Commission. These were implemented through the passing of the *Local Government Reform Implementation Act 2007* which became law on 10 August 2007.

I encourage the Redcliffe petitioners to visit the Department of Local Government, Sport and Recreation's website at www.strongercouncils.qld.gov.au for further information.

Yours sincerely

Warren Pitt MP
Minister for Main Roads and Local Government