



Warren Pitt MP
Member for Mulgrave



**Queensland
Government**

MC07.7574

**Minister for Main Roads and
Local Government**

02 OCT 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 no. 895-07, lodged with the Legislative Assembly of Queensland, to the Honourable Andrew Fraser MP, former Minister for Local Government, Planning and Sport regarding the amalgamation of the Atherton, Eacham, Herberton and Mareeba areas into the Tableland Regional Council.

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.

The Commission proposed a reduction in the number of councils from 157 to 73.

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

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.

The Commission gave consideration to all 168 suggestions it received in relation to local government administration on the Tablelands.

The Commission determined that amalgamating the four local governments to form Tablelands Regional Council offers the potential for improving the quality of governance across the region.

The Commission stated that the continuation of separate local governments would not facilitate optimum service delivery for the region, and will ultimately impair each local government's ability to develop capacity to address social, environmental and economic development issues facing the region. The benefits arising from amalgamation include improved economies of scale, capacity to develop the skills base and undertake broader regional planning which are considered to sufficiently outweigh any negatives put forward by the local governments.

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In arriving at the recommendation for a Tablelands Regional Council, the Commission examined shared characteristics of the region's communities of interest. It noted that the major towns and settlements of the Atherton, Eacham, Herberton and Mareeba Shire Councils are in relatively close proximity and all major towns are on the Kennedy Highway with the exception of Malanda. Additionally, the Atherton Tablelands is a unique geographic area with no natural barriers between the various communities.

A Tablelands Regional Council Local Transition Committee has been established to help guide existing councils to new arrangements.

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

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

I acknowledge that change may not come easily to all, however the Government is committed to providing a smooth transition to a more appropriate local government structure.

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

It is envisaged that 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.

Thank you again for your comments.

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