



**Warren Pitt MP**  
Member for Mulgrave



**Minister for Main Roads and  
Local Government**

MC07.7574

02 OCT 2007

Mr Neil Laurie  
Clerk of the Parliament  
[TableOffice@parliament.qld.gov.au](mailto:TableOffice@parliament.qld.gov.au)

Dear Mr Laurie

Thank you for providing me with a copy of the wording of petition number 893-07, lodged with the Legislative Assembly of Queensland, to the Honourable Andrew Fraser MP, former Minister for Local Government, Planning and Sport regarding local government reform of Cairns Regional Council.

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

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

The State Government established the 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 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 47,267 submissions, including 3,796 suggestions that contained specific issues for consideration.

The Commission gave consideration to the 81 suggestions it received in relation to the Cairns/Douglas region. It subsequently recommended that the existing Cairns City and Douglas Shire Councils be joined to form the Cairns Regional Council.

The Commission reported that the amalgamation of the two existing councils is likely to improve the quality of governance to ratepayers of Douglas Shire, which has been of significant concern in recent years.

It also found that the combined local government would have greater capacity to improve its financial sustainability through its ability to achieve economies of scale through attracting, retaining and developing skilled staff, building capacity of systems; and undertaking regional planning and infrastructure delivery.

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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](http://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**