



384 Amosfield Rd
Stanthorpe Q 4380
Phone: 07 46810871
Email: lumeah@halenet.com.au

The Honourable Campbell Newman,
Premier of Queensland,
PO Box 15185
City East
Queensland 4002

03 August 2013

Subject: Minister Crisafulli's response to request for a Commission of Review.

Dear Sir,

We are writing to you under the auspices of the newly formalised Queensland Local Government Reform Alliance (QLGRA). We wrote to the Minister for Local Government, the Honourable David Crisafulli on 16 July 2013 to request a Commission of Review into amalgamated councils. To date we have not received a response.

We are now advised that there is overwhelming evidence that several amalgamated councils are in a poorer financial position than before amalgamation. We also have empirical evidence based on extensive research that in general the scale economies upon which State governments are depending upon for improved council viability and sustainability have not occurred in Queensland and elsewhere. In that letter to Minister Crisafulli (copied below), we requested the following be included in the 2013 Budget's Estimates:

Copy of Letter to Minister Crisafulli

We request that the government provide funding in the 2013 Budget Estimates for the Department of Local Government to carry out and assist the following processes:

- (1) A full Public Inquiry or a Commission of Review into the Reasons for the forced Council amalgamations in 2007/8 and considering also those amalgamations carried out in 1991/92, to include the following (but not to the exclusion of other important matters):*
 - a) Investigate the Reasons for the then State Government's lack of consultation with affected councils and the communities in the process and total exclusion of the democratic processes such as referenda;*
 - b) Carry out a full and proper detailed accounting of all the costs associated with and involved in that amalgamation process, council by council and in toto, with all results to be on public record;*

- c) Investigate subsequent costs, rate increases and loss of services that are due in part or in their entirety to the amalgamation of councils, all results to be on public record;*
- d) Forecast expected future ongoing and new costs arising from council amalgamation, findings and results to be on public record;*
- (2) Carry out a full and thorough review of any savings that can be properly attributed to the 2007/08 (and if possible, the 1990's) Council amalgamations and in conjunction with the item (1) above, carry out a proper Cost - Benefit analysis of the amalgamations and put the findings on public record;*
- (3) Enable referenda in all areas affected by the amalgamations which call for boundary change including demerger, or reforms of other forms (e.g. community councils or equivalent) to enable better representation, proper community consultation and service delivery;*
- (4) State funding to cover all the costs for the reforms, demergers or boundary change referred to in item (3) above preferably in total or at least provided in the approximate same ratio as the funding of costs of the 2007/08 amalgamations. (i.e. Government to Community = 10 to 1 approximately.)*
- (5) Grants and subsidies to Councils in the current and future years to be returned to pre 2007 levels (in terms of percentage of Council budget) to provide funding for important infrastructure capital and maintenance works including: Roads and bridges, Community Health, Water, Sewerage, Waste management and any other works which generally serve users from outside the area and the State and Commonwealth, as well as residents and businesses within the Council boundaries.*

END.

Mr Premier, we request that you review this failure to reply as a matter of urgency, and provide assurances that the matters will be attended to democratically. With the Federal election campaign now in progress, information from all parties is that Queensland will be one of the main areas of attention in the campaign.

With that knowledge, communities campaigning for local government reforms, e.g, boundary changes, demergers and other means of reform that see the re-empowering of communities and a return to viability, will be focussing on the other political parties for support in this matter. They know that they do not have your support.

There is an opportunity now for you and your government to tell those communities throughout Queensland that want and need this, that you will give them the opportunity to properly address the undemocratic process that Peter Beattie's government put in place, which the LNP government has not properly redressed. While this is a State and not a Federal issue, such an offer will make a big difference to how the voters outside Brisbane will think of your party.

Yours faithfully,

R.N Johnson C Eng.(ret),

Chairman, Queensland Local Government Reform Alliance.

cc. Director General, Premiers Department, Queensland, Jon Grayson.

cc Local Members for QLGRA membership electorates