

A MONTH OF ACTION.

Welcome to the September newsletter. Thanks to all those who responded to our first newsletter.

We have had a busy month with a few steps forward, but of course the usual backward ones too! The highlight is that the Palmer United Party has indicated that it will support the aims of the QLGRA and support de-amalgamation for those who want it. This was the result of work from the Redcliffe and Caboolture groups. Palmer's strong performance bodes well for our group given their policy on this issue.

We have also had a new group join us from Peak Downs – and we welcome the whole group and Enid Bailey and Tony Richmond as their voting delegates. If you would like to put people in touch with this group – based in Capella – please contact Enid on 07 4984952 between 5pm and 7pm.

We also made a press release concerning Minister Crisafulli's round table investigating ways to make Councils more financially stable. The press release is attached as well as the link to the original press release from the Minister.

The backward steps were: A negative response from Minister Crisafulli to our request for a Commission of Review; but his rejection can be used in our favour in the media. We also received a negative response from the Local Government Association Qld in regard to our wish to establish a working relationship with them.

We are determined to fight on as the overwhelming evidence of the difficulties faced by amalgamated councils continues to mount. Eventually governments must see the error of their ways.

STOP PRESS

For those who are interested – the Queenslanders for a Constitutional Monarchy are holding a free evening on Thursday 19th Sept at the Premiers Hall, Queensland Parliamentary Building. The main speaker Attorney General Jarrod Bleijie will speak on "Constitutional History of Queensland." Other's will address "Return of the Upper House" & "Rule of Law" The evening begins with registration at 6.00pm and then Speakers commence at 6.30pm. For information/registration please contact: Merv Goldstiver 33595875 Don Sisson 3263 1871. (This may present an opportunity to recruit an ally who will assist in achieving Goal.No. II)

QLGRA

Primary goals:

I. To promote community acceptable natural Local Government boundaries that reflect locally held beliefs about community and identity, and provide local amenity and service;

II. Recognition in the State Constitution of Local Government as a legal entity with a clearly articulated role in governing, such that it can only be changed after a majority vote in a properly constituted referendum;

III. Retention and maintenance of reasonable levels of State and Federal Grants and Subsidies to support the necessary and important role of Local Government in providing and supporting rural and regional infrastructure serving not only local communities but also the state and the nation.

Strategic goals:

IV. To promote the benefits of effective, community based 'local' government throughout the general public and as an area of learning and study in tertiary institutions;

V. To share the commonality of our cause with all amalgamated shires and promote the sharing of strategy and resources to overcome barriers to de-amalgamation and boundary changes.

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PETITION

The QLGRA has a parliamentary petition circulating. The purpose of this petition is to demonstrate to the Queensland Government and Minister Crisafulli that across Queensland there is widespread disquiet with the lack of action on the promised de-amalgamation. We are hoping to get as many Queensland registered voters as possible to sign the petition in the last two weeks of September. Please feel free to use this petition in your group activities, and amongst your friends.

The petition has to be returned to Sue Johnson by 18th October 2013. Her address is on the petition.

If you have any suggestion for getting others to sign please do not hesitate to contact a member of the management committee (listed below) with your idea.

Email Link: <http://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/work-of-assembly/petitions/e-petition?PetNum=2112>

CABOOLTURE FORUM

RECLAIM CABOOLTURE SHIRE Inc is a community organisation working towards the de-amalgamation of Caboolture Shire from Moreton Bay Regional Council.

Their next major event is a local government forum at Caboolture on Saturday 19th October. The keynote speakers will be Professor Scott Prasser and Dr Michael Kortt, both internationally recognised researchers and commentators on local government issues. The Premier, Minister and five local state MPs are being invited together with all of the Moreton Bay Councillors. Seating is limited to 200. Contact Basil Jeffreys 5429 5060 or Ken Park 3408 8648 for more details.

THE QLGRA urges all members to attend and meet with others who agree with the goals of the Alliance. With a strong network across Queensland we can make a difference.

FUTURE NEWSLETTERS

It is hoped to produce this newsletter on a monthly basis. Your contributions and ideas are welcome. Please send any items to Joanna at joeandjoanna@bigpond.com by Friday 4th October for inclusion in the next issue.

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PRESS RELEASE:

Minister Crisafulli put out a press release regarding a round table held in Townsville in August this year. The subject was Council financial sustainability – it can be read at this site: <http://statements.qld.gov.au/Statement/2013/6/14/townsville-to-host-queensland-councils>
The QLGRA put out the following press release in response:

Has The Minister Admitted He Was Wrong?

“Minister Crisafulli has at last admitted publicly, albeit it through the back door, that he has got it wrong” Bob Johnson Chair of Local Government Reform Alliance said today. Mr Johnson referred to Minister Crisafulli’s “Round Table to discuss ways council can remain viable.” Mr Johnson said “It is time that the Minister admitted that the amalgamations of councils across Queensland has been a massive failure. It was huge error of the Beattie government which Minister Crisafulli is in the prime position to repair.”

Mr Johnson was critical of the fact that the Minister has invited many of the culprits responsible for amalgamation and those now benefitting personally from amalgamations to attend the Round Table. “The Minister now wants the culprits to remedy the situation – how likely is it that they will come up with a viable solution when they created the situation in the first place or they are in there personally benefitting from the huge increase in emoluments?” The Minister invited Mayors and CEO’s from local Councils, the Auditor General the CEO of Qld Treasury Corporation, - and are looking to undertake creative exercises like selling public land to ensure viability. Short term thinking and self interest abound. “I ask why has he not invited independent specialists like Professor Brian Dollery or established an independent Commission of Review into the effectiveness of amalgamations so that members of the public can have a say?” “High level remuneration for CEOs, Mayors and Councillors” he said “buried any chance of cost efficiencies.” The QLGRA has written to the Minister recommending that he urgently institute a Commission of Review of the 2007/8 amalgamations (which he now has rejected.)

Mr Johnson said: “We recommended that the government have all costs and savings properly scrutinised and also consider the negative impacts on communities. We asked the Minister to let communities decide by referenda what direction they should take to re-empower their communities to take control of their affairs and cut costs.”

“We have well researched evidence showing that the only solution to council viability is to return councils to their communities.”

Recent research by the University of New England School of Local Government directed by the eminent Professor Dollery, on scale economies pre- and post-amalgamation across all Queensland Councils shows “more councils now experience diseconomies than before – a bad unintended consequence.” “It also shows costs have risen above inflation every year since amalgamation – despite claims of cost savings.”

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