



Mission Beach Community Association

Representing Residents & Ratepayers of the villages of Mission Beach

*Garners Beach • Bingil Bay • Narragon Beach • Mission Beach • Wongaling Beach
Carmoo • South Mission Beach • Tam O'Shanter Point*

The Hon Andrew Fraser MP
Minister for Local Government, Planning and Sport
PO Box 15031
CITY EAST Qld 4002

Dear Minister,

SUBMISSION ON REFORM OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

The Mission Beach Community Association is an active body representing more than 250 residents and ratepayers of the Mission Beach community. We welcome the Local Government Reform Commission's recommendation (and your Government's acceptance) to abolish the Johnstone and Cardwell Shire Councils and establish a new local government based on the combined areas of the two Councils as being a practical way to resolve the problem of the division of Mission Beach between the two local governments.

We support the proposed name of Cassowary Coast Regional council. In rationale for the new local government it was noted in Section 3.2 of the Commission's recommendation that tourism is a significant economic activity in both Shires, and the Association believes the name will be a useful promotional tool for tourism based businesses. The Commission also noted that "the amalgamation would facilitate a more focused strategy in developing Mission Beach as a tourist landmark in its entirety." The Association agrees with this observation and believes the proposed name will assist in achieving this objective.

The Mission Beach Community Association welcomed the Reform Commission's recommendation for an undivided Council as a means of pre-empting likely geographical polarization and parochialism. Your recent announcement has clearly reversed that recommendation in relation to the Cassowary Coast Regional Council. Our position now is that Divisions should be drafted along "community of interest" lines. For example we would suggest the Cassowary Coast Regional Council should have three Divisions represented by two Councillors who would represent such "community of interest" areas as - a coastal division, a rural division and an urban division. It is interests in common rather than geography that need to be fairly represented.

We would see the Coastal Division incorporating Mission Beach, the islands, and coastal communities located between the north and south boundaries of the Regional Council. All have tourism, town planning development controls, boat access, beach erosion, cassowary habitat, Coast Guard, Surf Life Saving and other issues in common. The coastal community issues are significantly different to those of inland rural and urban issues.

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In section 5 on implementation issues the Commission, having noted that Johnstone Shire Council is rated as being financially distressed, went on to say “the Commission suggests that the State Government give consideration to what assistance can be provided so the amalgamated local government is not unnecessarily burdened with issues of the old Johnstone Shire Council.” The Association strongly supports this proposal. The problem is not the existing level of debt; the Commission report lists Cardwell Shire Council debt at 30 June 2006 as \$11million and the Johnstone Shire Council debt as being \$26million. However Johnstone Shire has significant infrastructure shortfalls that will require major funding. If the Cassowary Coast Regional Council does not receive Government assistance, there is potential for an endless round of blame games that would have the potential to render the new body dysfunctional to the same extent that resulted in Johnstone Shire being put into administration.

In section 3 as part of the rationale for the new local government, the Commission said it “enables the production of a planning scheme that will enable a consistent, environmentally sensitive and integrated approach to managing the development and servicing of Mission Beach. The Association agrees that this is a desirable outcome. Planning issues have been a major concern to us for some time. In our submission to the Commission of 23 May 2007, we stated “CSC has effected significant amendments to their Shire Plan which includes controls in population density as well as architectural design and building elements. It has been subjected to considerable public consultation and embraces the aspirations of the Mission Beach community. We commend it as a model for coastal development and would like to be assured that these gains are not foregone in any restructuring process. How this hard won plan might be merged in a restructure is of paramount concern.”

On 3 August 2007 the Premier and yourself issued a joint statement headed as “New Laws to protect Queensland Icons”. This statement declared that you would introduce legislation to protect already existing planning schemes for natural icons located in areas of new Regional Councils. The Association believes that Mission Beach deserves this recognition and this protection to ensure the planning scheme developed by the Cardwell shire Council remains in place.

Yours Sincerely,



Allan Ogden
Secretary

8 Aug 07