



25 July 2018

Committee Secretary
Economics and Governance Committee
Parliament House
George Street
Brisbane QLD 4000

Dear Committee Secretary

COUNCIL OF MAYORS' (SEQ) SUBMISSION ADDRESSING THE *DRAFT LOCAL GOVERNMENT (DISSOLUTION OF IPSWICH CITY COUNCIL) BILL 2018*

The Council of Mayors (SEQ) lodges this submission in opposition to the *draft Local Government (Dissolution of Ipswich City Council) Bill 2018* (the Bill) which seeks to dissolve the Ipswich City Council and appoint an interim administrator in the place of its duly elected officials.

To summarise, the Council of Mayors (SEQ) raises the following concerns in relation to the introduction of the Bill and the circumstances surrounding its drafting:

- This Bill deprives the people of Ipswich of their elected representatives to advocate for their interests in local, regional, state and national matters of significance
- This Bill undermines the principles of natural justice and the foundations of our legal and parliamentary systems
- The course of action chosen by the Queensland Government ignores many more appropriate, productive and fair ways in which to deal with this matter.

As the representative body of the councils of South East Queensland, the Council of Mayors (SEQ) can no longer stand by while the State Government pursues a course of action that the region's Mayors believe to be unjust and serving its own interests.

Excluding the Mayor, the current councillors of the Ipswich City Council, some of whom have only been elected in recent years, have not been charged with any criminal or civil offence and remain dedicated to serving the Ipswich community.

Throughout the Crime and Corruption Commission investigation, the Council has demonstrated a commitment to improving the processes within the organisation and the public perception of its elected officials.

Despite this, the Queensland Government is pursuing an agenda that will deprive the people of Ipswich of their elected representatives to advocate for their interests in local, regional, state and national matters of significance.

More so, the act of halting a Supreme Court action on this matter by simply rewriting Queensland law to achieve the Government's intent undermines the basic principles of our legal and parliamentary systems and is an affront to democratic values that are important to all Queenslanders.

While the Council of Mayors (SEQ) recognises the seriousness of the situation and the pending charges levelled by the Crime and Corruption Commission against certain persons associated with (or previously associated with) the Ipswich City Council, the course of action chosen by the Queensland Government ignores many more appropriate, productive and fair ways in which to deal with this matter.

By its own admission, the Queensland Government has drafted a Bill that denies the most directly affected individuals an opportunity to be heard on the matter or to be afforded procedural fairness and natural justice before the legislation is passed.

The Bill does not provide an avenue for review or appeal of the decision to dissolve the Council and appoint an interim administrator, nor does it consider any form of compensation for the affected individuals who are about to lose their livelihoods.

The drafting and introduction of the Bill has been done in haste and, while it purports to represent the interests of the Ipswich community, gives no consideration to the welfare of innocent parties or the consequences of depriving a city of its elected officials.

The Bill's explanatory notes state that these concerns have been discounted because the "ongoing and growing concerns regarding the performance of the Ipswich City Council merit a legislative solution", and further adds "the decisive nature of the Bill will support business confidence in Ipswich and will restore community confidence generally".

However, with a robust and growing economy supporting \$9 billion per annum of regional production, the strongest annual growth rate in the state and recent investments from Costco and Rheinmetall, the past year's scrutiny has not deterred interest in the city.

The Council of Mayors (SEQ) has serious concerns about a Bill that seeks to dissolve a council that is more than willing to work with the Department of Local Government, the Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ) and fellow councils to rebuild its reputation and restore confidence in its administration.

The people of Ipswich are entitled to have the strength of elected representatives providing leadership on their behalf to shape a stronger future for their communities. This Bill seeks to remove this entitlement by a decision made by the Queensland Government and the Parliament - not the residents of Ipswich.

Local government seeks quality leadership from our elected representatives. If Councillors can be dismissed from democratically elected positions without any wrongdoing, and without any avenue of appeal, it will discourage good people from entering local government.

It is for these reasons the Council of Mayors (SEQ) builds on the LGAQ's submission in expressing its opposition to the introduction of the *draft Local Government (Dissolution of Ipswich City Council) Bill 2018*, and strongly urges the Queensland Government to seek a more just and democratic path forward in the interests of the communities of Ipswich.

For more information on this submission, please contact me at any time on (07) 3040 3460 or via email at [REDACTED]. Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Kind regards



Scott Smith
Chief Executive Officer