

The Committee Secretary,
Inquiry into the Long-Term Financial Sustainability
of Local Government

Brad Bauer,

Dear Sir/Madam, Re: Submission

I have long been a critic of the number of Court Cases the Rockhampton Regional Council has been and are involved with. I found that there have been 76 Court Cases since amalgamation and May 2013 plus another 7 carried over from some of the pre-amalgamated Council into that period. This makes 83 cases of which 62 are related to the Planning and Environment Department. From the limited research I have done I am convinced that much of the Legal involvement in many of these cases were unnecessary. A satisfactory solution could have been negotiated through just common sense communication between Council and/or the aggrieved parties. Even our Councillors will admit that the Legal Firms are milking this Council dry.

This inspired me to look at the bigger picture and that is all of Queensland. From the available information I found that since amalgamation and May 2013 there have been approximately 3166 Court Cases involving the 72 Queensland Councils of which approximately 2356 relate to the Planning and Environment Departments. The only anomaly I found was that the records relating to Brisbane City Council were 500 but only were available to 2010 of which 424 related to the Planning and Environment Department. Therefore if we average this out to 2008 then we can add another 375 cases making the Councils caseload to approximately 875 with approximately 740 relating to the Planning and Environment Department.

Therefore I estimate that since amalgamation and May 2013 there have been approximately 3540 Court Cases with Local Government of which approximately 2675 relate to the Planning and Environment Department. I believe that these figures are close to the real number.

I am sure you have the resources to verify and obtain the exact numbers I am talking about. However, the bottom line here is that over 3500 Court Cases with Councils over a 5 year period has cost the Government and ultimately the Rate Payers of Queensland massive amounts of money in the range of hundreds of millions of dollars if not billions. Seventy five percent of these cases relate to the Planning and Environment Department. In all Court Cases there are two sides. So it is not only costing Local Governments but Individuals, Businesses and other Organisations as well. The final cost must be astronomical. I suggest that you may wish to identify which Legal Firms are involved as well.

I hope this provides enough information to stimulate an investigation. This could provide an avenue for substantial savings by reducing possible over servicing and/or manipulation of our resources.

Yours faithfully,

Brad Bauer
20/07/2017