



Speech by

Hon. Andrew Fraser

MEMBER FOR MOUNT COOT-THA

Hansard Wednesday, 6 June 2007

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Local Government Reform

Hon. AP FRASER (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Minister for Local Government, Planning and Sport) (10.24 am): As Queenslanders we live in an era of unprecedented population and economic growth. But while our growth is the envy of our southern neighbours, we cannot rest on our laurels and must plan for our future sustainability. This government is building the Queensland of the future by striking the right balance of sustainable growth and development.

The latest Queensland population update released earlier this year by the Department of Local Government and Planning shows that growth is not confined to the south-east corner by any stretch of the imagination, with many other coastal areas also among the country's biggest growth areas. Cairns in the far north is a case in point. Between 2005 and 2006, the far-north's population surged by 11 per cent and Cairns city increased its population by 4,100 people, making it our ninth fastest growing local government area.

Similarly, in the past 20 years the Wide Bay-Burnett region has experienced significant population growth as about 85,000 new residents moved to the area, with a similar number to settle there in the next two decades. The far-north Queensland region can expect a population influx of 68,560 over the same period.

Recently in Cairns I chaired the first meeting of the Far North Queensland Regional Planning Advisory Committee which is responsible for implementing the Far North Queensland Statutory Regional Plan. The plan represents the first time outside the south-east corner that a statutory footprint will be placed over areas suitable for urban and residential development. It is designed to protect the far-north's agricultural areas as well as its environmentally sensitive areas and the government will legislate so that development can only occur within that footprint.

I also recently joined the member for Hervey Bay in Hervey Bay to launch the regional plan for Wide Bay-Burnett. That plan is an important document which establishes a framework for the region's decision makers when undertaking their planning, budgetary, infrastructure and resource management responsibilities.

These plans have a correlation to Queensland's system of local government. Indeed, a more streamlined system of local government can lead to more efficient planning outcomes. In relation to local government reform, Professor John Rolfe from the Centre for Regional Economic Development at Central Queensland University said recently—

... councils that are more consistent across the region are councils that can plan for infrastructure and population increases more coherently.

Governments at all levels have a responsibility to look beyond today and provide infrastructure for the future, and the Beattie government is leading the way. Our commitment to regional planning and reform of local government will provide the framework for building tomorrow's Queensland.