



Speech by

Hon. Andrew Fraser

MEMBER FOR MOUNT COOT-THA

Hansard Tuesday, 7 August 2007

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Local Government Reform

Hon. AP FRASER (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Minister for Local Government, Planning and Sport) (12.10 pm): Later today I will introduce the Local Government Reform Implementation Bill. The Beattie government's historic program of reform for councils across the state has as its central objective the provision of a more streamlined, sustainable system of local government for the modern era. Reform can ensure stronger councils have the financial capacity and resources to meet the challenges of the 21st century, but to achieve that councils will require continuing financial assistance from both the state and federal governments. Today I announce a funding package to assist those councils affected by amalgamations to make a smooth transition toward more effective, sustainable local government.

The funding package for local government reform will be \$27.1 million and includes allocations for staff support packages, local transition committees and specific transition requirements within affected councils. This is a wise investment—an apt injection of funds to not only establish solid local government but to prevent the very real requirement to bail out many existing councils which face financial uncertainty into the future. Funding includes \$12 million for the staff support package and further funds for business system reviews, change management, community engagement, the administrative costs of local transition committees and interim CEOs. The comprehensive three-year staff support package will ensure job security for council employees. Just as the government is determined to reform local government, it is determined that the 37,000 Queenslanders who make a living working in this sector can continue to do just that. The support package will include a local government workforce code of practice to protect and support job security.

Funding has been included toward the costs associated with the transition such as legal and other statutory costs, as well as to replace or upgrade existing financial systems and also to specifically support the new councils beyond March 2008. The government will provide funding support for the establishment and ongoing costs of the local transition committees. These committees will be established as soon as possible and remain in place through to the March local government elections. The first task of the local transition committees will be to appoint an interim CEO for the new council. The government will provide funding for these interim CEOs during the transition phase to the value of \$70,000, the amount requested by the LGAQ. Interim CEOs will be critical in ensuring the transition for new councils over the initial six-month period. The independent Local Government Reform Commission has reported back with wide-ranging and thorough recommendations for structural reform which have been accepted lock, stock and barrel by this government. These are essential reforms to give Queensland the modern, sustainable local government system it requires for its growth into the future. It is now imperative that the government provides the appropriate funding to ensure the reforms are implemented as smoothly and as efficiently as possible.