




Speech By
Shane Knuth

MEMBER FOR DALRYMPLE

PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENTS

Tablelands Regional Council

 **Mr KNUTH** (Dalrymple—KAP) (3.46 pm): This morning I tabled a petition of 162 residents from Walsh River, Irvinebank, Bakerville and Watsonville in the newly reconstituted Mareeba Shire Council. The petition requests the state government allow these communities to remain with the Tablelands Regional Council. Residents of these communities conduct their business in Herberton, are employed in the Southern Tablelands and their children go to school in Herberton, which is only 20 kilometres away. As part of the Tablelands Regional Council, all local government services were coordinated from the Herberton service centre as this is logistically the easiest and most cost-effective way of providing an efficient service to the area. Residents believe that since amalgamation their communities have received a higher level of service delivery simply because services can be provided cheaper and quicker from Herberton.

In the poll held to deamalgamate the Mareeba shire from the Tablelands Regional Council, 87 per cent of these communities voted against splitting from the Tablelands Regional Council. The three townships are over an hour away on an unsealed road from the closest town in the Mareeba shire and over an hour and a half from Mareeba itself. It will be a burden on the Mareeba shire to get machinery, services and garbage collection to these communities. I believe that any inflexibility is counterproductive and condemns communities to years of rearranging boundaries to accurately reflect the logistical and geographical proximity of Irvinebank, Walsh River, Bakerville and Watsonville to the Tablelands Regional Shire service centres.

The deamalgamation process is the perfect opportunity to address the cost burden and inefficient service delivery issues created by having these communities included in the Mareeba shire. As ratepayers are responsible for bearing the cost of deamalgamation, the capacity of the shire to service these areas will be even further diminished. The minister has said time and time again that he supports the autonomy of local government and will defend their right to have a say in what happens in their communities. It is the responsibility of the state to provide a mechanism in the deamalgamation process which will allow local governments to renegotiate council boundaries with the state government and the Boundaries Commissioner.

It makes economic, social, logistical and geographical sense to allow the Walsh River, Irvinebank, Bakerville and Watsonville communities to remain with the Tablelands Regional Council. Communities need time to heal and recover from the disruption caused by amalgamation and these issues need to be included and addressed in the process. There is no good reason why this cannot be a part of the process rather than stir things up again with a boundary realignment after the dust has settled over deamalgamation. I call on the minister to allow councils to redraw boundaries during reconstitution in order to achieve cost-effective and efficient service delivery to these communities.