




Speech By
David Kempton

MEMBER FOR COOK

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ADJOURNMENT

Mareeba, Community Forum

 **Mr KEMPTON** (Cook—LNP) (10.12 pm): A community is defined as a social group of any size whose members reside in a specific locality, share government and often have a common cultural and historic heritage. Mareeba is such a community. Prior to European settlement, the area around Mareeba was inhabited by the Muluridji people. In the local Aboriginal language, Mareeba means meeting of the waters, referring to the point at which the Barron River is joined by Granite Creek.

On 26 May, 1875 James Venture Mulligan became the first European to officially see the future site of Mareeba when he rode up the eastern bank of the Barron River. The Mareeba area was first settled by Europeans in 1877 by John Atherton and quickly became a busy coach stop for Cobb and Co on the road from Port Douglas to Herberton. When the railway arrived in 1893 Mareeba grew. From 1942 to 1945 up to 10,000 Australian and US personnel used Mareeba airfield as a staging post for battles in New Guinea and the Pacific. Post war, Mareeba became the home for many migrant families who were instrumental to the growth of the tobacco industry. With the demise of that industry over two decades ago, Mareeba shifted its emphasis to the fruit and vegetable industry, sugar cane and tourism and became a rural hub.

In 2008, in a senseless and spiteful act, the Beattie government tore the heart out of Mareeba shire by amalgamating it with three other councils to form the Tablelands Regional Council. On 1 January this year our government restored the governance of the shire to the Mareeba Shire Council to fulfil an election promise.

Last Friday, Michael Trout, the illustrious member, and I conducted a community forum attended by 85 people from all sectors including the mayor and the council to determine community economic and infrastructure priorities. Together we identified that transport, infrastructure, affordable water, recreation and social facilities were the top priorities. This was a great opportunity for me to remind my community that our optimism must be tempered by the debt that Labor left us: \$495,000 paid every hour of every day in interest on Labor's debt. Also of consideration was our ageing population. We were pleased to learn that there has been a significant shift in law and order in Mareeba since we came to government with a marked reduction in street crime. There is a new enthusiasm in Mareeba as we work together to develop a new and united future. It is my absolute pleasure to be the local member and I hope to forge a long and valuable relationship with this vibrant town and shire.