

## Question on Notice

No.796

Asked on Tuesday 17 August 2004

**Mr J English** asked the Minister for Communities, Disability Services and Seniors (**Mr Pitt**) –

“Will he outline how the Regional Community Forum process is allowing local communities to have a further voice in the State Government?”

ANSWER:

Ministerial Regional Community Forums were established by this Government in 1999. Since that time 156 Forums have been held across the State – including 10 conducted on Monday, 13 September.

Along with Community Cabinet and Regional Parliament, the Forums provide an opportunity for all Queenslanders to have increased access to Government. They also assist Cabinet Ministers to better understand the priorities, needs and issues of regional Queensland.

A review of the Forum process was conducted earlier this year and a new regional engagement and coordination program has been endorsed.

The key improvements to Forums include:

- aligning the Forum agenda with regional priorities and the portfolios of attending Ministers to better achieve practical outcomes;
- increasing opportunities for more community members to get involved in the Forum process, particularly through a range of activities that will take place before and after Forums;
- a more flexible Forum model, that will allow the Forum event to be planned locally to suit the topics to be discussed on the day;
- a stronger focus on regional leadership at the regional level, with my Regional Queensland Councillors driving the Forum process locally;
- better linkages with other government and community activities in regional Queensland; and
- expanding the Forum process to provide opportunities for Queenslanders from across the entire State to get involved with government.

Now that responsibility for the Forums has moved to my Department of Communities, the Forum program has been expanded to cover all ten regions of the Department, with the inclusion of new Forums in the Greater Brisbane and Darling Downs/South West Queensland regions. The range of issues raised at the last round of 10 Forums is an indication of the diversity of communities across the State. Items discussed ranged from: sustainable housing; education and training in the mining sector; marine industry coordination; rural revitalisation; community renewal; sustainable production and transport services.