

Question on Notice
No. 427
Asked on 13 March 2008

MR ELMES asked the Premier (MS BLIGH)

QUESTION:

As VOICE of Australia recently conducted a community referendum in the Shire of Noosa, the results of which were 'that an absolute majority of Noosa residents did not want to amalgamate with Maroochy and Caloundra Councils but instead wanted to remain a stand-alone council'—

As these results were provided to her on 22 February 2008, the representatives of that group ask (a) will she confirm that she received and read the results and (b) when will she provide a response?

ANSWER:

Neither my office, my department or the Minister for Main Roads and Local Government have any record of receiving correspondence from VOICE of Australia regarding this matter. If the organisation concerned would like to forward a copy of the material to my office then I would be happy to respond.

As has been stated by the Government on numerous occasions, the local government reform process was an open and transparent one which removed the need for costly referenda and plebiscites. The Local Government Reform Commission made recommendations for boundary changes through a legitimate process. State and Federal boundaries are similarly determined.

The intention of local government reform is to create stronger local governments across Queensland. To achieve this, local government reform is focused on delivering independent boundaries, independent elections, and an independent remuneration process.

The Government is committed to ensuring amalgamation will not result in adverse effects to Noosa's pristine environment or weaken its rigid local area planning framework. I confirm that the Government is committed to the protection of iconic areas in light of the reform process and has created the Iconic Queensland Strategy to give more clout to local government planning schemes in regions such as Noosa.

The proposal to create the Sunshine Coast Regional Council was carefully considered by the Local Government Reform Commission. The Local Government Reform Commission found that the three local governments on the Sunshine Coast share a number of interests including economic opportunities and initiatives, infrastructure development needs and water catchment management. These interests, in addition to the Sunshine Coast's high population growth, are best managed by a coordinated regional local government.

Queensland is Australia's fastest growing State and all Queenslanders need a contemporary and relevant structure and system of local government to take us forward into the future.

As you are aware, on 15 March 2008, the people of the Sunshine Coast voted for the first mayor and councillors of the Sunshine Coast Regional Council. Bob Abbot has been duly elected as mayor. It is now time for everyone to support the new mayor and councillors for the betterment of the Sunshine Coast Region.

I was pleased to host a historical summit of the newly elected Mayors, including Cr. Abbot, at Parliament House on 27 March 2008, and I look forward to continuing to work with all of the new Mayors to ensure improved local government for all Queenslanders.