

# **BOULIA COMMUNITY SUBMISSION** **LIST**

Kelsey Neilson - Councillor, Grazier

Lindy Punch - Indigenous Leader Yulluna Tribe

Len & Marie Wilmington - Uniting Church Flying Padres

Barry & Lorene Westaway - Desert Sands Motel

Shane & Rae Lincoln – Grader Contractor

Boulia Rodeo Association

Boulia Camel Races

Boulia Allsports

Boulia Turf Club

Under separate cover: DVD recording of Boulia Community  
Members unable to write a submission

Lindy Punch  
Traditional Owner  
PO Box 93  
Boulia 4829

I am a descendant of the Yulluna tribe, traditional indigenous owners of the land around my home town of Boulia. My family have lived here for thousands of years. I come from this dirt and this dirt is my dirt. When indigenous women from this place are taken away to have their babies they take this dirt from Boulia with them because they need to eat it for their baby. You cannot take us away from our traditional home.

If amalgamations happen then there will be no attention paid to the people out here and their needs. We won't see any attention paid to the dirt roads that allow us to travel to our ceremonial grounds and our country out on the rivers. We won't be able to get to our hunting grounds. The people in Dajarra have no butcher shop and they travel out on the roads to hunt and bring back meat for the town. The same happens in Boulia. We like to eat our traditional foods and if the dirt roads are not graded we won't be able to get out of town. We need to get out of town to our country and have ceremonies with our elders out on the river for story telling and teaching the kids traditional hunting and gathering skills.

If you take away the council office, the jobs won't be there, then there won't be enough kids for the school. Boulia is a safe haven for the young kids that go away to the cities and get into trouble over there. They can always come home to Boulia to straighten up and get away from the drugs and the sniffing and get back to their families and their home. If there is no community here they won't be able to come home. I bring kids back here all the time and take them out to their country and help them straighten out and get work.

If there's no jobs in the town, the young ones can move away if they are forced to but it's an issue for the pensioners then. Now, families check on the old people all the time. They know they only have to yell out over the fence and someone will be there. I do their shopping and their banking and I help them with their clothes and their cooking. My whole family do this too. We look after our old people. If we have to move away for my husband to get a job, who will look after those old people? The kids that get into trouble won't be able to come home and straighten out. I have seen kids from Boulia move to Mount Isa at eight years of age and by the time they are ten, they are off their heads sniffing and stealing cars. They are falling down in the streets. I don't want that to happen to any of my family. If we are forced to leave Boulia we will lose all our culture and all our connection to this land and its animals. We can read the animals behaviour and they tell us things here and we won't be able to teach our children about them. We won't get that same thing anywhere else.

I had a terrible dream when I was away from Boulia that every time I tried to come home the bridge would collapse away in front of me and I couldn't come home. This made me very sad. I knew that I had to get to my home to make the bridge stay up. These dreams are very important to me and my people and I see this dream as meaning that I will be kept away from my home.

I speak for my whole family when I say that I am against closing down the council office in Boulia because they do so much for the town like the bank, the undertakers and the cemetery, the library and just a lot of things for the community as well. If amalgamations happen it will be very bad for the town and bad for the people. We want to see the councillors and the mayor and the council offices stay here in our own town not moved hundreds of kilometres away to another place where no one will understand us and we will get no say in what happens to us.

Yours truly

LINDY PUNCH

Kelsey Neilson  
Councillor  
Two Rivers Station  
Boulia 4829

Local Government Reform Commission  
Brisbane

Dear Commissioners,

I would like to submit the following with regard to the governments proposed local government reform:

- The **changing of the Act to remove the right to referendum is underhanded and undemocratic** and was done at a time when councils were working through the SSS program with no given timeframe.
- **The amount of time given** for comment and submissions from the announcement on 17<sup>th</sup> April and the formation of the commission early May to 5pm 25<sup>th</sup> May **is ludicrous in the extreme** and can only lead people to believe that **their submissions are worthless** and that an agenda has already been very firmly set.
- **The QTC reports were never intended to be used as a “live or die” document** and it is grossly unfair to table a “snapshot” of a council which has been operating for a hundred years and judge their sustainability or otherwise on that snapshot. Any number of short term funding issues can seriously and temporarily affect their bottom line.
- QTC report for Boulia gives a rating of **weak though their own projections forecast a 20million dollar bank balance for Boulia in ten years**
- Surely **councils are not required to amass and accumulate funds in bank** accounts. It is their charter to put money into the community not into the bank.

- **Forced amalgamations are undemocratic** and will not be advantageous to anybody. Pushing two or more weak councils together will not make one strong one most particularly where distance is a factor.
- **Forced amalgamations have not been successful in other states**, for the smaller/weaker shires OR for the Shire which became the central shire.
- **Where amalgamations are sensible**, the correct, fair and democratic process of referendum would have gotten the right result.
- **If “elected councils” are performing badly, replace the “councillors” not the council.**
- Many people in our community feel strongly about the issue but are **unable to put their opinions on paper public consultation would have revealed this.** Widespread uprising on the issue throughout the State cannot be ignored by the commission.
  
- Outback Shires huge in area, Boulia over 60,000 square kilometres are already **hundreds of kilometres from regional centres** Boulia to Mount Isa 300 kms, Boulia to Longreach 540 kms. It is in the States best interest to keep and nurture small towns like Boulia as connections along the vast outback roads.
- The tyranny of distance will make administration of the Boulia Shire from a centre hundreds of kilometres away **unworkable inefficient and unprofitable.**
- **Forced amalgamations of huge outback shires will be the death of outback towns.**

The removal of the council offices from the towns will result in:

  - ❖ loss of population
  - ❖ loss of families
  - ❖ loss of numbers of children in the schools
  - ❖ loss of school teachers and teachers aides
  - ❖ loss of banking services
  - ❖ loss of undertaking service
  - ❖ loss of post office
  - ❖ loss of police numbers
  - ❖ loss of work for local contract machinery operators

- ❖ **compounding domino effect and fatal loss of jobs and population**
- ❖ loss of business and businesses will close
- ❖ Health Centre would have reduced numbers and be threatened
- ❖ Min Min Centre & **historic Stone House Museum** (tourism) will not be maintained
- ❖ **Tourism will suffer** as town declines and services fall away
- ❖ Shire roads (1300kms of gravel roads in Bouliia Shire) will not be maintained to current standard and **will become dangerous to users** especially tourists not accustomed to driving on unsealed roads
- ❖ **Increase in car accidents due to road conditions** and reduced capability of the community to respond and rescue people involved
- ❖ Shire roads in bad condition will mean loss of income for cattle producers as cattle lose weight (up to 10-15% of body weight) in travel to market over rough roads
- ❖ The flow of cattle from the NT into Queensland markets will halt (other route through Mount Isa is not economical) and they will go to Adelaide and the **profits from their transport and sale will go with them to SA**
- ❖ Shire Roads in **disrepair will become impassable for aboriginal people** who wish to travel to their traditional hunting and ceremonial grounds
- ❖ The community of Urandangi, in the north of our shire is 850 kms from Longreach
- ❖ Volunteers would be lost and **emergency services like SES and rural fire brigade would close down** making the outback a very unsafe place
- ❖ Without council support and with the loss of volunteers in the town all of the **annual social events and special events in the town would cease** and quality of life would decline significantly
- ❖ **A social catastrophe would develop over time** as people were displaced and removed from their town, their heritage, their identity and their extended families
- ❖ Many people simply would refuse to locate and **would be forced onto social welfare services**
- ❖ Dramatic **loss of value on housing and businesses in the town** and people life's work becomes worthless

- ❖ **Elderly people would lose their carers** as young people were forced to relocate
- ❖ **The unique “core” of the workforce with decades of local experience** which leads to increased efficiencies in the work place would be lost
- ❖ As the town declines it will not be an attractive social centre for the workers employed in the grazing industry in the shire and **employers will find it even more difficult to attract staff**
- ❖ Big Shires would issue big tenders which would attract **big earthmoving companies effectively cutting out local contractors** who live and own houses in the town of Boulia and support local businesses and community groups
- ❖ Big contractors would fly in and fly out workers into their work camps and **the town would be bypassed completely**
- ❖ Local landholders with whom the council currently has a good working relationship and who provide council with access to their water and to gravel pits on their properties would be reluctant to do so with “strangers”. It’s a long way between water points out here and this denial of access to water could make working on sections of **road extremely expensive if you have to cart water over 60 kilometres or more.**
- ❖ Loss of council commitment to weed control throughout the stock routes. Boulia Shire is situated at the headwaters of the Georgina Diamantina Catchment which flows into the might Lake Eyre Basin. **Our strategic position means that weed control is vital in our area.**
- ❖ Loss of protection and **monitoring of the stand of unique and rare “Waddy” trees (acacia peuce) in our shire.**
- ❖ Loss of a balanced and crime free community which aboriginal youth who get into trouble in the cities, come home to **as a safe haven and place where they can get away from crime and substance abuse** and back to their roots, their family, their elders and their country

In summary, many Queenslanders in over a century have put their blood sweat and tears into opening up the outback and settling the vast inland of our State. The settlement of outback Queensland has been hard won and has endured floods, fires, droughts, the great depression and world wars. The people who live in the outback

shires are unique and distinctly evolved and suited to living and working in remote areas. They love to live out here and they would be severely displaced and deeply affected emotionally if they are forced to leave their home towns. The State of Queensland needs these irreplaceable people and communities to populate the outback and remain custodians of the heritage and culture of our heartland. To lose outback towns and the people who love them would be a social and cultural tragedy the likes of which has never been experienced by our State. I ask you, the commissioners, to carefully consider our case and to be aware of the gravity of the decision that you hold in your hands and the social carnage that sweeping amalgamations of councils in the outback will produce.

It is too great a loss to bear.

Thank you for your time and consideration

Yours truly

KELSEY NEILSON

## Summary

Shane and Rae Lincoln  
Pituri Street  
Boulia

- Contract Grader Hire & School teacher's aide
- Both third generation locals to Boulia
- Choose to live in Boulia although have necessary skills to go anywhere we wish
- Removal of council offices will mean population loss which will affect everything in the town
- 7 people employed at the school would be reduced to 2 when families are forced to leave town and I would lose my job
- Super Shire councils would tender very big jobs and the little single machine contractors would be cut out by bigger contractors from outside the area
- Contractors from outside the area would not contribute to or live in the town further reducing population and effecting businesses and services



- Currently all of the contractors on the council live in the town and support the businesses in the town. Outside contractors would not do either.
- Our life's work and saving is in our business and home and land, amalgamation will severely reduce the value of our assets
- Boulia is a roads shire and the locals do the job well. They have local experience on location of water and gravel and of where trouble spots are. Outside contractors efficiency would be affected by their lack of local knowledge
- We will lose representation and that will mean no money will come in to Boulia
- There wont be enough volunteers left in the town to run the social events like the rodeo, campdraft, races, camel races and Back to Boulia
- There'll be no one in town to use the new Sports Centre which is such a great thing for our town
- It's 300 kilometres or more to anywhere from Boulia and we need to have a town here for safety reasons

Dear Commissioners,

My husband Shane and I are both third generation locals in our home town of Boulia.

We have lived in Boulia all our lives and we are very happy to do so. I work as a teacher's aide at the Boulia State School and my husband contracts his own grader to the Boulia Shire Council. He is an expert operator who is approached on a weekly basis to work in other Shires and mines. He could accept the better income offered but he does not wish to move from his home town and neither does his family.

Shane and I would like to ask the commission to think before you make your decision about the removal of our council administration, our mayor and our councillors.

In a little town like Boulia the loss of so many jobs would have a major affect on us.

When there are not enough families the school would be in danger of closing, if the council office closed so would the banking, all the mail volume that is lost if the council offices closed would mean that the post office would close and so it would go on and on. There are seven people employed at the school at the moment 1 principal, 2 teachers and four teacher's aides and admin staff. After amalgamation and when families leave town because their jobs are gone the school will go back to one teaching principal and one other staff member. The hospital would be affected when we don't have enough people.

If our shires are all put together into one super shire; that council will be tendering out huge tenders for plant and equipment. These tenders will attract the big contractors from the coast and local single machine operators will be cut out. All of the contractors working for the council at the moment all own homes and live in the town of Boulia. They have their families here and they support the town. So you would have to add another lot of people that would be forced to leave the town in the contractors and their families. This would put even more pressure on losing services and would even affect the local grocery shop and all the local businesses, for tyres and other purchases that local contractors make locally. Big contractors will have their own deals made with big suppliers on the coast and the local businesses will be cut out. Outside contractors will not have the local knowledge that Boulia operators do. They wont know about where to find the right gravel and water for the roads. They wont know where the trouble spots are and how to use mitigation works to save money. The outside contractors will not be as efficient as the locals although they may have a cheaper rate on paper. We have skilled contracting and council teams that work well to produce good roads in line with council budgets.

It is also our opinion, that if the mayor and the councillors go so will our say. We do not believe that one person will be able to have a voice on a big council somewhere else and the money just won't come to Boulia.

As the town goes down, we'll go down with it. We have put our life's work into our contracting business, our land and our home, all of which will be worthless in the town of Boulia if amalgamation happens. We don't want to move because this is our home and has been our home for so long. If we'd wanted to leave, we would have gone long ago. Our home in Boulia we see as a solid home base for our son if he chooses to live here in the future.

As the people all leave town there's going to be no one left here to do the volunteer work for all of our events like the Rodeo and Races, the Camel Races and the Back to Boulia weekend. They'll all just fold. There won't be any people left in the town to enjoy and use our great new Sports Centre.

We are asking the commission to understand the huge distances out here and how important our little town of Boulia is. The people who have lived here for generations love the place and they want to stay here and look after it. We think the government should just leave us alone to get on with that job.

Yours faithfully

Shane & Rae Lincoln



The Secretary  
PO Box 37  
BOULIA QLD 4829  
Ph: 47463308  
Fax: 47463319

Boulia Turf Club Inc.

Established in 1890

22<sup>nd</sup> May 2007

Cr Kelsey Neilson  
"Two Rivers" Stn  
BOULIA QLD 4829

Dear Kelsey,

**Re: Boulia Shire Council – Forced Amalgamations**

On behalf of the Boulia Turf Club we would like to voice our concerns regarding the forced amalgamations and the effect this will have on our club and all clubs in our shire if this was to become a reality.

Horse racing was first established in our shire in 1890. 30 years ago the Boulia Shire Council made a decision to pay for all improvements at the Boulia Race Course, because of this invaluable contribution from the Boulia Shire, both financially and in kind we have continued to provide a high quality of country racing to the community.

With forced amalgamation looming on our doorstep we feel if we were to be amalgamated with other shires this support would cease to exist. Every small town has a number of clubs to provide entertainment and a release from their daily problems. We feel a huge amalgamated shire would not have the ability to provide the support we all currently receive to the numerous clubs that would be under their control.

We are a fully volunteer run organization and we foresee a definite decrease in population that would affect the capacity to run our event efficiently, or not at all!

We can only hope that sense will prevail and this will not be an issue.

Yours faithfully,

Mari Gundersen  
Secretary

### **SUMMARY**

- Contract Truck Driver Councillor & Finance Officer
- Choose to live in Boulia
- Removal of Council offices will mean loss of income for us both
- Domino effect on reduction of all local government departments such as the Hospital, School & Police Station.
- Owner/Drivers who live in town & support local businesses and events would be cut out by larger contractors from outside the area who have no interest in the community.
- Amalgamation would drastically reduce the value of everything we have worked for, our homes, land & businesses.
- Local knowledge can not be found in any text book
- Tourist numbers will decline due to conditions of roads and the loss of local identities who promote Boulia and all its wondrous assets.
- Our hopes for the growth of local Industry and Employment so our children may return after leaving school will be shattered
- Amalgamations in the past have failed.

Dear Commissioners

My husband Roy and I have lived in Boulia for the past 21 years and have raised our three children in this small outback town, where the community spirit is to join together in support of local events and strive towards improvement to the Shire and its facilities.

Although we don't get a morning paper or have a local radio station, the grape vine is still alive and well.

The messages that are travelling along this vine are all very much the same. Locals have experienced the good times along with the bad and worked damn hard to establish their homes and business, which are now under the threat of extinction if forced amalgamations are carried out by Mr Beattie.

The scenario for our family alone looks bleak. My husband who contracts to the Council will be tendering against much larger companies in a bid to remain here, while my administration job with the Council would basically spell out retrenchment or a spot on the unemployment line for me.

The boys are away at boarding school (and always eager to return home), while our daughter is in her sixth year at the Boulia State School. If the student numbers decline due to families moving on, the domino effect will begin. The school then reduces its staff, followed by other Local Government Departments. The Hospital would no longer require an on call Nurse and the Police Station would become manned by one officer.

The Boulia Shire Council has a very dedicated team of road workers who are a credit to the Shire and their families. These blokes camp out for months working in the heat, dust and flies to produce some of the best built and maintained roads in Queensland. We are very fortunate to have a great network of people from the C.E.O, Mayor and Councillors through to the employees and contractors who all would like to ensure Boulia grows into a future where Employment opportunities are here for our children once they complete school.

Boulia has worked tirelessly over the years to encourage people to come out for a visit.

The establishment of assets such as the Motels, Min Min Encounter (visitor information centre) and our spectacular Sports and Aquatic Centre are now starting to reap the rewards with tourist numbers increasing each year.

Please listen to the people in these outback towns. They are generations of many families that can tell you amalgamation of the Shires like Boulia would be a irreversible mistake.

Thank you for your consideration

Regards  
Carol Smith  
Bilby Haulage Pty Ltd  
Boulia Qld 4829

## Boulia All Sports

PO Box 48

Boulia Q 4829

**Phone: 07 4746 3648**

**Fax: 07 4746 3711**

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Kelsey Neilson  
Boulia Shire Councillor  
Two Rivers Station  
BOULIA QLD 4829

Dear Kelsey

On behalf of the Committee of the Boulia All Sports Committee, we would like to acknowledge in writing, the important relationship we have with the Boulia Shire Council and the concern we have if these forced amalgamations became a reality. This proposal will no doubt see the Boulia Shire Council disintegrate and leave us with no assistance to run any events.

We are proud to boast that our Back to Boulia and any All Sports events throughout the year bring much needed laughter and joy to many people in the Shire and surrounds.

Our support from the Boulia Shire Council is a very important part of our events and without them we would not be able to continue. Secondly, we receive a lot of in-kind support from the

Boulia Shire Council Outdoor Crew members, in the areas of Rodeo ground preparation, grading of the camping areas and the use of Shire owned equipment and associated operators. In actual fact, the list of assistance is truly endless and I do not feel I could list all assistance without unintentionally forgetting somebodies contribution. There are a lot of occasions, particularly in the lead up to the event, where little odd jobs are completed by Shire staff and the Committee have not even asked for those jobs to be completed. That community spirit is something we are very scared to loose and it will be lost, if the Boulia Shire Council is amalgamated with a bigger Shire which is located many hundreds of kilometres away.

We wish you and your fellow Councillors the very best in the fight to stop these forced amalgamations.

Kind Regards

Deb Rivas  
Secretary  
Boulia All Sports



## Boulia camel races

PO Box 70

Boulia Q 4829

**Phone: 07 4746 3386**

**Fax: 07 4746 3387**

E-mail: [tourism@boulia.qld.gov.au](mailto:tourism@boulia.qld.gov.au)



Kelsey Neilson  
Boulia Shire Councillor  
Two Rivers Station  
BOULIA QLD 4829

Dear Kelsey

On behalf of the Committee of the Boulia Camel Races, we would like to acknowledge in writing, the important relationship we have with the Boulia Shire Council and the concern we have if these forced amalgamations became a reality. This proposal will no doubt see the Boulia Shire Council disintegrate and leave us with no assistance to run our event.

We are in our 11<sup>th</sup> year of operation and are proud to boast that our races bring over 3000 people to this Shire every July. The event is growing on an annual basis and for the first time this year, we are welcoming over 120 motor homes from Victoria, who have organised their whole Australian trip to coincide with the Boulia Camel Races.

Our support from the Boulia Shire Council is two fold. Firstly we have a dedicated team of office staff at the Min Min Encounter, who are Shire employees, to co-ordinate all promotion of the Camels Races and to act as the single point of contact for all spectators and participants. This in itself is a major in-kind contribution that our Committee members would struggle to do as we are all volunteers, who do not have the time required or expertise, to organise this important aspect of the Races.

Secondly, we receive a lot of in-kind support from the Boulia Shire Council Outdoor Crew members, in the areas of Rodeo ground preparation, grading of the camping areas and the use of Shire owned equipment and associated operators. In actual fact, the list of assistance is truly endless and I do not feel I could list all assistance without unintentionally forgetting somebodies contribution. There are a lot of occasions, particularly in the lead up to the event, where little odd jobs are completed by Shire staff and the Committee have not even asked for those jobs to be completed. That community spirit is something we are very scared to loose and it will be lost, if the Boulia Shire Council is amalgamated with the a bigger Shire which is located many hundreds of kilometres away.

We wish you and your fellow Councillors the very best in the fight to stop these forced amalgamations.

Kind Regards

Bob Spilsbury  
President  
Boulia Camel Races

\*\*\* OUR BUSINESS LETTERHEAD \*\*\*

To Whom it May Concern

For many years we visited Boulia as tourists and to try our luck with fishing in the local waterholes and rivers.

On our many visits we had always been impressed by the amenities provided in the town by the council for locals and tourists alike.

Boulia always looked well looked after, the streets neat and tidy, and the green in the gardens and median strip a pleasant surprise after the long journey across the Donohue Highway.

We believed Boulia to be a progressive country town with much to offer so in 2005 we made the life-changing decision to purchase the motel – this decision was not made lightly and meant selling our home and closing our business in Alice Springs.

It is now nearly two years since our arrival in Boulia and the town has not disappointed us. Our motel guests are always commenting on how lovely the town looks, how friendly the locals are and how well looked after the town is and they are always surprised by the quality of our sports centre and tourist information centre.

The motel provides a good income and Boulia a pleasant lifestyle and we have been pleased with our decision to move here.

However all of this, including our future plans could now be in jeopardy due to the proposed amalgamations of country shire council offices.

I truly believe we need to keep our council office and work depot here in the town as the people that live in the town look after the town.

Please find following our submission.

Regards

Barry & Lorene Westaway  
Owner Operators

We would like to submit the following to the Reform Commission with regard to the effect large scale amalgamation and the loss of Boulia's administration office, mayor and councillors would have on our business and our quality of life.

We own and operate the Boulia Desert Sands Motel situated on the main street of Boulia, we have 11 motel units and 1 self-contained unit with a maximum occupancy of 39 people.

We believe that the removal of the council offices from the town of Boulia would have an immediate effect of reducing our occupancy.

However it is the longer term effects on the town that will make our business unviable and our property virtually worthless in the future if amalgamations go ahead and the council administration is lost.



The population lost due to the loss of administration jobs with the council would have a serious negative effect on all the services of the town. School teachers would leave, police numbers would be reduced, the bank which is in the council offices and run by the council in partnership with Queensland Country Credit Union would close. Loss of population and the loss of volumes of mail could mean that the post office would close. All of these things would make Boulia a less attractive place for families to live in and for tourists to visit. The change in demographics would mean that there would not be enough volunteers to run the big social events like the rodeo, races, campdraft, camel races and Back to Boulia weekends which are major revenue raisers for our business. The local businesses like the hotel and the general store would suffer losses as well.

Boulia competes with the alternate route from Winton to Mount Isa via Cloncurry. If Boulia loses population and services it will become a less attractive option for travellers.

The Boulia Shire Council built and operates the major tourist attraction, the Min Min Encounter Centre in the town. It is a first class centre and integral to tourist numbers coming to the town. Its future would be in serious doubt if it had to be subsidised by a council centred in Longreach or Mount Isa. If the Min Min Encounter was to close or to fall into such a state of disrepair as to be not worth visiting, it would have a catastrophic effect on the town and our business.

People tell us that they travel way outback to see the little towns, to meet the local characters and to experience the outback way of life. If the locals are forced to leave the town it will lose a lot of its charm and instead of being a energetic busy little place it will be a wilting dying one and word will spread that it's not a good place to visit.

If we lose our councillors and mayor and only have one or two representatives travelling hundreds of kilometres away for council meetings to a place where they are outnumbered in the council chambers, we believe the funding that is necessary to keep Boulia growing will not be forthcoming and things will gradually get worse and worse.

In conclusion we would like to suggest that the town of Boulia is thriving, that is why we bought in to the business. Tourism is strong in the town and is growing. The operation of the council though is the backbone of the

community as a whole and it is needed to keep the town growing and prospering.

### **TO SUMMARISE:**

- amalgamation will drastically affect our Motel business in Boulia
- amalgamation will have serious negative social effects on the community
- amalgamation would mean a major loss of services
- amalgamation would mean a dramatic drop in the value of our asset
- amalgamation would threaten the existence of our Min Min Encounter tourism attraction
- amalgamation would severely effect major events in our town which contribute substantially to our income
- amalgamation will mean a loss of representation which will mean less funding for Boulia
- Boulia competes with the Maltilda Highway from Winton to Cloncurry and if services are lost and people are lost in the town, tourists won't come this way they will take the alternative route

## **Boulia Rodeo Association**

**President: Alistair Malone  
Coorabulka Station  
Boulia 4829**

**21/05/07**

**Dear Commissioners,**

**I am writing to explain to the commission the crucial role that the Boulia Shire Council plays in the operation of our annual Boulia Rodeo, Races and Campdraft. Our rodeo has been running continuously for over thirty years and is a major event on the north west social calendar.**

**The Boulia Shire Council support is not in the form of cash donations but they support our Association substantially "in kind" with the use of heavy machinery and operators to do the necessary earth work required like grading, ripping and watering the arena. The council allow council staff to help volunteers with repairs to facilities like welding and fencing. Through the council, grants have been accessed and together with substantial financial commitment from the**

**Rodeo Association and hundreds of volunteer hours we have built a facility second to none in the west of which we are very proud. The Boulia Shire Council also plays an integral role in accessing the WORK camp scheme which brings low security prisoners into our town to carry out maintenance on the grounds and to assist us with the huge task of staging the event.**

**If the Boulia Rodeo Association was forced to try to access machinery and operators from elsewhere in order to prepare for our rodeo, the expense and logistics would make the rodeo unviable from the start. The recent explosion in insurance costs and the added burden of changes to licensing laws which requires the association to pay security for the weekend now means that our profit levels are slight and we would not be able to absorb machinery hire costs.**

**If the council was amalgamated and approval for use of machinery had to be granted from a place afar we are very concerned that it would not happen. We fully support the council's opposition to any proposed forced amalgamation of the shire of Boulia.**

**Without council support the Boulia Rodeo, Races and Campdraft would simply cease to be.**

**Yours truly,  
Deb Rivas  
Secretary  
Boulia Rodeo Association  
PO Box 48  
Boulia 4829**

Commissioners  
Local Government Reform Commission  
Brisbane

Dear Sirs/Madam,

My background and experience of living and working in Outback Queensland together with my husband, Len Wilmington, who was the flying patrol padre for the Uniting Church based in Cloncurry for 7 years commencing January 1997. I visited families and communities in an area as big as Germany. We came to understand that the role of the local councils is vital to the health, welfare and future of this area and its people. Those who live and work in these geographically vast and isolated areas are the ones who understand the issues, have a heart for their future and a "belonging" to the land. Since the beginning of 2004 we have spent time in outback SA where the distances are not as enormous, and the road networks fewer. Their access to technology and communication is far ahead there than in NW Queensland as we observed children doing school by distance education using more modern methods than in Queensland.

We are now into our second year as volunteers with Outback Links who place able volunteers onto outback properties to 'lend a hand'. In this position we get to know the issues that impinge on the future of primary industry families in outback Queensland. For most the frustration of having to comply with rules that are made by people with academic qualifications and no experience of life out here. On top of the hardship of the drought conditions that prevail, this amalgamation issue is just another blow from those they are supposed to trust to have their welfare at heart.

I believe this could be the last nail in the Trust coffin for a vast majority of those who live beyond a 5000 population town. I doubt it will be possible to regain that trust.

## COUNCIL AMALGAMATIONS

This proposal is being presented by the State Government in a dictatorial manner. People are hearing comments like "Don't waste your energies protesting, it will not change the decision" or "There will be no negotiations, it is going to happen anyway" or "The mega councils and their composition have already been decided" Where is the democratic process?

This move is clearly aimed at silencing the opposition, of ripping the heart out of the outback towns and relegating primary producers to a voiceless class in this State.

1. Silencing the opposition. Amalgamating small councils with the larger, labor dominant ones silences any other ideas, perspectives or alternatives thus denying the voice of the people being heard.
2. Ripping the heart out of country towns. It is a fact that many small council centered towns employ a big percentage of the work force in those towns. many others are employed to support them. eg Take away council workers and their families, the school numbers decline, less teachers result, local businesses decline, the health centre is affected, real estate loses it's value and the heart of the community dies.
3. Neglecting primary producers. Who in a mega council is going to care for the issues of the farmer and grazier who are the producers of our food? Who in a mega council is going to oversee the grading of gulf roads after the wet season so cattle can be got to market or do we have to re invent the drover? Who in a mega council is going to ensure the mail can get through? Or the Telstra repair team? Who in a mega council is going to encourage tourists to visit the wonderful features that highlight particular communities? EG Min Min Centre? Who in a mega council is going o support the Vietnam vets who keep the Anzac spite alive

in Boulia where there is no RSL? **Who in a mega council is going to go out to an isolated property near the NT/SA border and take responsibility as undertaker?** Who in a mega council will undertake the maintenance of an outback, local cultural centre, swimming pool, sports area, library and what of the existing council buildings?

Some of these councils already cover a vast geographical area bordering on the size of Tasmania, so who is going to pay for all the extra travelling in time and vehicle maintenance – if it is to be the responsibility of a council hundreds of kilometres away. And what of representation? many already travel over an hour to their council meetings, how will they be able to travel up to 550 kms and still operate their business? There are too many unanswered questions.

When the Revd John Flynn undertook to bring hope and spirit to the isolated people in this vast land, it was the same land then, as the outback people fear it will become again. That is, with people working and living in isolation while Government Departments hundreds of kilometres away or on the coast deliberate on their future. John Flynn's work led to the establishment of whole communities in the outback because he established the framework of medical and spiritual care to support and encourage people to come and settle in this land. They came and formed into communities then local councils, people who knew the land and its needs and were best able to govern its administration. The Queensland Government would now seem to want to change it all back to how it was in John Flynn's day ie. with little, if any, local say in local affairs.

I pray that the Queensland Government will take the time to come and stay awhile and listen to the heart of the communities, experience what is being achieved by local councils for the people who Rev John Flynn envisioned would have a safety net of care and a voice as part of this country.

Marie Wilmington

12/05/07

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