

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

On behalf of the Isisford Shire Council and Community, I submit the following submission to your commission. The Isisford Shire Council and Community request that the commission leave our shire boundaries, exactly as they are at present. The following submission will refute the reasons supplied by the State Government for the need for this reform. We will positively address all areas of concern, including: -

1. The State Government Local Government Reform Report;
2. The Auditor-Generals Report;
3. Price Waterhouse Coopers Report; and
4. Our QTC Report.

These reports are supposed to be the reason why the State Government implemented this unjust, undemocratic and un-Australian action. We are not 'Broke or Going Broke' which appears to be the inference of the State Government on small rural remote shire councils. The **Independent Umpire** [the QTC] has rated the Isisford Shire Councils' financial sustainability as '**MODERATE**' with a neutral outlook. [Refer Attachment A]

The Premier and Minister Fraser have repeatedly stated that the reform is needed to stop Councils "GOING BROKE". Our QTC Report will refute those claims for the Isisford Shire Council. The positive indicators of the report are Very Strong Liquidity, Multi-skilled Staff, Extensive knowledge of available grants and subsidies, Asset Management plan review and a Major Capital Project: Jericho-Windorah Road.

We acknowledged the need for shared service many years ago, and as a result, we share many services and resources with our neighbouring Councils as evidenced in our detailed summary later in this submission. The shire is proactive in looking outside the square to improve services, such as water. The Isisford Shire is presently in negotiations with the Department of Local Government and the Department of Natural Resources and Water and a private contractor to fund a proposal to place floats on our town dam water supply to reduce evaporation. Considering we loose up to 3m in evaporation per year, this will mean a major saving of water by the Isisford Shire. At least four [4] other shires to-date are waiting on our initial results before they commit to the proposal. This has the potential to save Millions of litres of water throughout Queensland. We are not trying to use more water from the system only better use what we already have.

This submission will supported by evidence in the form of official research by Professor Brian Dollery [MA.PhD] and Andrew Johnson [B.Ec{Acc} CPA, MBA. JP] that wholesale forced amalgamations has not worked in other states. The full report is being submitted by the Remote Area Planning and Development Board on behalf of the member Councils in the RAPAD area. The Dollery/Johnson Report will be presented in four (4) parts. Parts A & B are on local governments in general and wholesale forced amalgamations in other states. Parts C & D highlight in particular, The Isisford Shire and our particular region.

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|----------|---|
| PART A - | Amalgamation and Shared Services                                  |
| PART B - | Sustainability and the role of Council in small communities       |
| PART C - | Analysis of R.A.P.A.D. member Councils {Including Isisford Shire} |
| PART D - | Recommendations   |

Part D of the report listing recommendations, is attached at Attachment B.

I will also present evidence of community satisfaction with Council, the support that council gives to the community, and highlight the fact that the social impact of any amalgamations will have a disastrous effect on our community. This submission will provide evidence of the concern from real people. I will also attach letters from tourists to our shire from N.S.W. & VIC. who have been through forced amalgamations, these sentiments are confirmed by many other tourists who have been in forced amalgamation situations, none have a positive word for such forced amalgamations only anger at their loss of services and identity. This submission will provide letters of support from local businesses, clubs, organizations etc on how this would affect their quality of life.

The Minister has publicly stated that Chief Executive Officers and Senior Officers will become redundant or may have to be deployed to another site {Town}. This loss of staff will have an immediate affect on the economy of the Isisford Shire. There is a four fold flow on effect as will be highlighted later in this report. Evidence from Victorian Amalgamations shows, that despite reports of no employment losses for outside employees due to amalgamation, over a period of time it is inevitable that losses will occur because of financial pressure on councils, because of a reduction in the Federal Financial Assistance Grant. This course of action will cause a reduction of outside employees living in smaller remote towns, such as Isisford or Yaraka. These employees will have to relocate to the larger centres to maintain their employment, this will be the beginning of the end for our towns.

The loss of employees from the Isisford Shire will have a flow on effect on the Schools, the Primary Health Centres, the Businesses, the Sporting Clubs & Associations and the social fabric of the shire. The value of employees and other residents Homes will be devalued dramatically. This will also devalue rural grazing land and in turn reduce State Government rents.

A senior Administration Officer of the Isisford Shire Council last year relocated a home from outside Isisford into Isisford at a cost of approx. \$110000. The Officer is married with five [5] children and had chosen to work and retire in Isisford. His goal was the 'Great Australian Dream' of owning his own Home. Should the Isisford Shire be amalgamated with any shire, his employment may be terminated or redeployed to another town, thus leaving him with a massive debt and no prospect of selling his home to recover the debt.

I refer to your terms of reference 3 (b) "creating local governments with **IMPROVED** financial sustainability". There appears to be a State Government belief that a shire should be dependent on rate revenue for in excess of 50% of total revenue. We average 11% over the last five (5) years. If you were to amalgamate all the central western shires, you would not achieve 50% rate revenue as total revenue without massive rate increases. Thus, you would not be achieving **IMPROVED** financial sustainability. The same result would occur even if one, two, three or more western shires were forced to amalgamate. The Director General of the Department of Local Government, Planning, Sport & Recreation replied when asked the question, how would amalgamating help in the above case, his reply was and I quote "Why would we want to group councils together if there is no benefit, there has to be improved financial sustainability". This quote was made in Blackall in front of witness on the 26<sup>th</sup> April 2007.

Minister Fraser stated on the ABC television programme, Stateline, 11/05/07 that if your Commission recommends no change to our boundaries, then the Government will abide by those recommendations.

The Isisford Shire Council is financially viable as evidenced by our QTC Report, which states that our rating is moderate with a neutral outlook and in their own words a "**HIGH MODERATE**" and that we run a "**VERY GOOD LITTLE BUSINESS**".

**Isisford Shire Council Submission**  
**Local Government Reform Commission**

The Shire celebrates its centenary in 2008, and forward planning for the year has already commenced. Please let us continue to carry on our business for the Shire of Isisford, for another 100 years.

**ROBERT M. BAUER**  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

**SHIRE PROFILE**

<b>AREA:</b>	10501.4 SQUARE KILOMETRES	(Refer Attach. 1)
<b>POPULATION:</b>	306 ESTIMATED AS AT 30.6.06	(Refer “ 1)
<b>ANNUAL GROWTH:</b>	1.7% “ “ “ “ “ “	(Refer “ 1)
<b>ROAD LENGTH:</b>	883KM (FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT - COMMISSION REPORT 2006)	

**REPORTED STATE GOVERNMENT REASONS FOR REFORM:**

**{A} LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORM – A new chapter for local government in Qld. -  
Compiled by the Department of Local Government, Planning, Sport & Recreation.**

1. The State Government stated on Page 4 of the above report that “The program [Size, Shape & Sustainability Program] had failed to deliver timely, meaningful reform.”  
The State Government never stipulated a date that the SSS program had to be completed by, for obvious reasons. The Isisford Shire Council was committed to the outcome of the SSS program.
2. The inference of the whole report is that Local Governments are not funding the infrastructure and services required by communities in 2007.  
We are funding the infrastructure and services that our community requires, which will be set out later in this report.
3. The report on Page 4 states that “Queensland is the last State or Territory in Australia to commence a whole-of-state reform of its local government system”. The evidence from the two [2] major states is not good.  
N.S.W. & Vic. have been through forced amalgamations and they still have Councils’ who are financially not viable. (25% of N.S.W. & 10% of Vic. – Price Waterhouse Coopers Report - Page 6 27/11/06).  
I thought Queensland was the ‘Smart State’.
4. The report on page 19 states, “Currently, Queensland’s Local Government Sector is Characterized by:
  - [a] Poor co-ordination between Councils, and a limited ability (or proven track record) to deliver community services and infrastructure through a regional approach.”

The Isisford Shire Council has acknowledged for many years that we do not have the necessary work to gainfully employ full time Engineers, Town Planners, Rural Lands Officers & Environmental Health Officers and some specialized Equipment e.g. Kerb & Channelling machine.

That is the reason the Isisford Shire uses the following **SHARED SERVICES**: -

- . Consulting engineers who service the whole Central Western area; {G. Bourne & Assoc.}
- . Town Planning Consultants who service the whole Central Western area; {Campbell Higginson Town Planning}
- . Computer Software Suppliers who service the whole Central Western area; {Practical Computers P/L}
- . Tourism promotion of the West; {Outback Queensland Tourist Authority}
- . Economic Development, Regional Planning & Management of the area under R.A.P.A.D.; {Remote Area Planning & Development Board} also our {Regional Organisation of Councils}
- . Road Funding & Management of the Local Roads of Regional Significance system through the Roads Alliance Programme; {Outback Rural Roads Group}
- . Building Certification for the whole Central Western area; {G. Bourne & Assoc}
- . We use the services of the Tambo Shire Environmental Health Officer on a user pays system;
- . We use the Undertaking services of the Blackall Shire Council on a user pays system;
- . We use the service of the Rural Lands Officers of Barcoo & Ilfracombe Shires on a user pays system;
- . We have regularly hired our plant & operators to the Shires of Blackall, Barcoo & Ilfracombe Shires and also hired their plant when required;
- . The Isisford Shire has completed MRD works in Blackall Shire and we have traded our MRD works to Ilfracombe Shire on occasions;
- . Our Workplace Health & Safety Officer has been to Tambo & Longreach Shires to help them establish their systems in the past;
- . Our Quality Assurance officer has been to Blackall & Longreach Shires to assist with implementing their systems. The MRD was even using our Q.A. System as a template for other shires;
- . Two (2) years in a row the Isisford Shire purchasing officer was recognized in the top five (5) in Queensland by Local Buy, a subsidiary of the Local Government Association of Queensland, the recognition was for efficiency in purchasing;
- . The Outback Regional Road Group [referred to above] is presently drawing up terms of reference for the employment of an Officer to oversee and compile road conditions and co-ordinate bulk purchasing of goods by the group;
- . We have shared the services of a Community Development Officer with Ilfracombe in the past; and
- . The Barcaldine Shire Council is completing Kerb & Channelling work in Isisford because they have a Kerb & Channel machine available.

In 2004, the Shires of Isisford, Barcoo, Blackall, Jericho & Barcaldine joined forces at the urging of the Isisford Shire Council to negotiate a deal for the trade off of the unfinancial Jericho – Yaraka Railway Line for the construction of a sealed road from Jericho to Windorah. The state government commitment was for 10 years funding to be divided amongst the five (5) Councils, this provides a guarantee of employment for the Isisford Shire Construction Gang for approx 7-8 months per year for 10 years. We have employed an extra Five [5] employees at our Yaraka Town Depot to help carry out this work. This ensures that we can guarantee annual employment for our full workforce for the next nine [9] years, at a minimum. A copy of the memorandum of Understanding is Attachment 2. This was signed on the 8<sup>th</sup> September 2005. Work commenced in 2006 and we have completed approx. 10km to date.

The state government through Queensland Transport has used this memorandum of Understanding as a blueprint for other Rail lines and commended the Councils involved for their foresight and commitment in achieving a win, win situation for the State government and the Shires involved. This can be verified by the Hon. Paul Lucas, MP, Minister for Transport & Main Roads.

I believe that the Isisford Shire has shown above that we can and do co-operate with our neighbours already, to achieve efficiencies. The sharing of most infrastructure is virtually impossible without loss of our 'Quality of Life'. e.g. for Isisford residents to use the swimming pool facilities at Longreach or Blackall, it would mean a 244km round trip. The Isisford Shire supports regional infrastructure that will benefit the region.

- [b] The report on page 19 states "A large number of small rural and remote Councils, are financially unsustainable or unable to meet community expectations regarding service delivery."

This is another play on statistics by the State Government. The L.G.A.Q. submissions to your commission stated that the QTC report showed 19 out of 42 Councils with populations less than 5000 people were rated moderate or better (45.23%). Conversely 18 Councils above the population figure of 5000 are rated weak or worse. Obviously there are some shires in financial difficulties *BUT NOT US*. The comments of the State Government are a slur on all small rural and remote shires that are financially sustainable. The QTC report shows that 57.73% of shires are rated moderate or better i.e. 56 Councils of the 97 surveyed. Out of those 56 shires, 19 shires have populations of less than 5000. I believe these facts negate any play on statistics by the State Government and show that 'One size does not fit all'. The facts are that Councils of any size can be and are financially sustainable. Good governance is more important than population or area.

- [c] The report also states on page 26 "There are 150 Sewage Treatment Plants in Queensland that require upgrading or replacing in the next five (5) years, to meet Environmental Protection Agency standards."

We have a C.E.D. scheme that works very well at present. The Sewage Treatment Plants will still be required to be upgraded whether there are 150 Councils or 1 Council. Bulk tendering by the State Government could save millions of dollars for ratepayers, without having forced amalgamations.

I believe that the Isisford Shire Council meets any requirements of the State Government report and the previous answers address the main areas of concern by the State Government.

**{B} AUDITOR – GENERAL OF QUEENSLAND – Report to Parliament No: 1 for 2007**

The State Government referred to the above report in their reasons for forcing Amalgamations. Once again we concur that some Councils may have problems in these areas but not the Isisford Shire Council.

(1) In the summary of key findings of the report on page 7 under Financial Management: -

- (A) “More attention is required on quality systems designed to achieve accuracy completeness and timelines of reporting.”

The Isisford Shire has a certified Q.A. System that MRD have used as a template for other shires and has had no problems meeting timelines in the past.

- (B) “Audit committees & internal auditors –“

Not feasible – The full council of seven (7) elected representatives meet monthly to consider all financial reports. The finance committee checks and signs each and every voucher for payment. I am sure this would not happen in Brisbane City Council.

- (C) “The continued reliance on consultants for the provision of accounting services should be assessed regularly.”

The Isisford Shire Council has not used consultants to provide accounting services since I commenced as Chief Executive Officer in June 2001. The normal staff complete all annual financial statements, reports and Budgets.

- (D) “Page 10 of the report, shows a list of Financial Management matters that have been issues with Councils in 2005/06.”

Council Audit for 2005-06 was without qualification and none of the issues listed on page 10 were raised in our audit. We have received an unqualified audit report for the last five (5) years under three (3) different contract auditors appointed by the State Government, including the Queensland Audit Office themselves.

- (E) “Page 19 of the Report, shows problems for financial viability. Over the past 12 month period the following problems were raised” :-

- (i) Cashflow difficulties between rate billings.

This is not a problem for the Isisford Shire as our QTC report shows.

- (ii) Inadequate attention to key ratios, such as the current ratio, whereby current liabilities exceed current assets.

The Isisford Shire Councils current assets far outweigh our current liabilities. The watchpoint for the Auditor General is 1.5 to 1 as stated on page 64 of the Queensland Local Government Profile Report 2004-05, completed by the Department of Local Government Planning, Sport & Recreation. **The Isisford Shire Council has the highest liquidity rating of all Rural & Remote Councils of approx 14.1 (Attachment 3)**

Our operating efficiency ratio and Capital Expenditure ratio are both above the ideal level. (Attachment 4) These attachments are from the Queensland Local Government Comparative Information 2004/05.

- (iii) High levels of Unfunded Depreciation.

The Isisford Shire Council funds all depreciation. (Refer Attachment 4)

- (iv) The existence of significant deferred capital works projects.

No capital works projects are deferred at present or are proposed to be deferred.

- (v) Inadequate Reserve Funds.

Our QTC report states that we have adequate reserve funds.

- (vi) Natural operating Deficit (>20% of operating revenue).

The QTC report shows no operating deficits for 2001 to 2006. Small deficits no greater than 3.75% are estimated for 2009-2014 but an accumulated surplus for other years well and truly covers such deficit, if occurred.

- (vii) Significant Borrowings.

The Isisford Shire Council is debt free and has a policy to not borrow. Refer attachment from the Queensland Local Government Comparative Information 2004/05.

- (viii) Asset Management.

The Isisford Shire is presently developing a comprehensive Asset Management Program in conjunction with the L.G.A.Q. and Department of Local Government.

I believe that the Isisford Shire Council successfully answers all the key finding of the Auditor General Report and that we are compliant with the findings.

**{C} PRICE WATERHOUSE COOPERS Report commissioned by the Australian Local Government Assoc. published November 2006.**

The introduction of this report on page 1, clearly states the relevance that this report should be given for Queensland Local Government, - *NONE*.

*The report states "This National Financial Sustainability of Local Government report has drawn upon studies by Access Economics for state local government associations in Western Australia, South Australia and New South Wales, as well as a detailed analysis by the Municipal Association of Victoria."*

The report did not look at all Queensland Councils and therefore should be treated accordingly.



**{D} FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY REVIEW – Prepared for Isisford Shire Council, January 2007 by the Q.T.C.**

The report shows a MODERATE rating with a neutral outlook. Council notes their observations, recommendations, strengths and weaknesses. Prudent governance and common sense dictates that these items should be constantly addressed.

The Isisford Shire Council has proven itself to be fiscally responsible in the past and our 10 year forward forecast shows that we plan to do so in the future. We have adequate reserves in case of unexpected financial shocks or funding opportunities to further improve our shire.

The Isisford Shire is in the worst drought in living memory (even Mr. Beattie agrees with this) and has been since early 2000 some parts even earlier. The Isisford Shire also faced a reduction in our Federal Assistance Grants over this period. The reduction was phased in over four (4) years and finishes this year. In this period, Council constructed the **“Outer Barcoo Interpretation Centre”** to house and display **“ISISFORDIA DUNCANI” the worlds oldest, most complete crocodile fossil ever found, reportedly 95 – 100 Million years old.** The fossil was found in the Isisford Shire and we are presently working with our partners to prep and display other world-class fossil exhibits that have been found in the same area. The Isisford Shire Council has contributed to the partnership, both in-kind and directly financing. The Isisford Shire recognizes the World significance of these finds and the need to preserve our palaeontological history.

During this time of drought, reduced grants & the construction of the O.B.I.C., general rates have not risen more than CPI, no money was borrowed and we still have a **MODERATE** Financial Sustainability Review rating from the QTC.

Our actual operation expenditure on administration in 2005/06 including depreciation was 8.84% of our total operating expenditure. This shows that we are putting services before administration.

The Isisford Shire has budgeted to purchase a new Stone Crushing Plant in 07/08 and is presently applying for funding assistance from the Federal Government. The present equipment has outlived its economic life. The Plant has been a major revenue raiser for the shire in the past and no doubt will be again. The present plant provides employment for two [2] part time employees whereas the new plant will employ four [4] full time employees.

**{E} SIZE SHAPE & SUSTAINABILITY**

The Isisford Shire was working with a group of seven (7) Councils to look at our Size, Shape or Sustainability Review. The group was formed to save on the costs of consultants and assess each of the four (4) options listed. We were prepared to follow the S.S.S. process down to the referendum of the people.

We had no preconceived thoughts on the process, only to fully look at all options. If the referendum had shown a preference for amalgamations then Council would have obviously agreed and pursued the matter. We had almost completed Phrase 1 of the SSS process by the group, but the biggest delay was the QTC. The sheer volume of information they had to report on, obviously caused bottlenecks of replies back to Councils.

**{F} COMMUNITY SATISFACTION**

The Isisford Community has authorized Council through a public meeting to fight against forced amalgamations with whatever resources are required. Community members have friends and relatives living in N.S.W. & Vic. and have heard the problems still being experienced in those states and therefore can see that Amalgamations will reduce services in the bush because of the tyranny of distance. The residents, electors & tourists to the shire have signed a petition. (Attachment 5) We have used a 2004 Electoral Roll to have electors sign as we did not have enough time to obtain a complete up to date roll and have it signed. The petition was signed by 137 current Electors, 35 Residents not on the roll at present and 87 Visitors/Tourists. The fact that we did not receive a refusal to sign the petition by any elector or resident, clearly documents the community's objection to forced amalgamations. The only blanks on the Electoral Roll are people away or unable to be contacted in the short time we had to finish this submission. We have used the electoral roll for our electors, as they are real people not fictitious names on a petition. Some of our many tourists have also signed our petition in such a short time frame. Not one [1] of our tourists from other states, who have been through 'Forced Amalgamations', have any positive comments on the process, they do have plenty of negative comments.

The Isisford Shire Council has recently updated our four (4) year Corporate Plan and as an information gathering project, wrote to all residents asking them to provide a list of capital infrastructure they wanted Council to work on supplying. No major items were suggested over and above items that Council was working on except one – an artificial lawn bowls green. Council is presently talking to the Department to access normal subsidies for the project. A list of items is Attachment 6.

At the last Local Government Elections held 2004, all sitting councillors sat for re-election and were successful at the ballot. This shows that the community is satisfied with the Governance of the shire by the present Councillors.

I have attached letters from tourists to our shire from N.S.W. & Vic. (Attachments 7,8 & 9). These are real people with real accounts of what has happened to their small communities. These people can be contacted to confirm their thoughts if you have time. We are presently surveying other tourists who have been through amalgamations in other states. To date no positives have been noted only negatives. The short timeframe for this report does not allow us to include the results of this survey but will be there for future reference if required.

Isisford Shire provides service and safety to the many tourists that travel the outback. Currently we assist in providing health services, mechanical services, emergency services, banking and communications, accommodation, postal services, tourist information and entertainment and a link in the network of roads that distribute tourists throughout our State. If small outback towns such as Isisford or Yaraka were to disappear, the distances between communities would be so great as to dissuade people from travelling the outback. Small remote communities are integral to the outback tourism experience.

Since the announcement of this fiasco, I have been contacted by a rural ratepayer who has massive amounts of Red Gravel on his freehold land. At present he allows Council to use as much Red Gravel for our Roadworks as we require, as it is for the **COMMUNITY**. He has stated that if the Shire is forced into Amalgamation with another shire or shires then, in future, all gravel will have to be paid for. Thus eroding any so called profits from amalgamations.

If you have a heart, I am sure the attached letters will affect you, as they show the pride, passion and respect in which the Isisford Shire is held. (Attachments 10-23).

The community is particularly upset with the Local Government Department under the leadership of the Director General Mr. Kinnane. Only 1 week before the fateful announcement on the 17/04/07, the Director General was telling Councils to keep up the SSS process and that the Department was right behind them. In fact, an internal memo from Mr. Kinnane to his staff (copy at attachment 24), the day after the Reform Bill was passed in Parliament, states that his staff had been quote *“preparing the papers and legislation over the last couple of months”*. Our children are taught not to tell lies.

The community is fearful of a loss of democratic representation. The Federal and State members of Parliament have massive areas to cover and electors only occasionally see them. The community is afraid that this will happen here if the Isisford Shire is amalgamated into a so-called Super Shire. There will be a loss of local decision-making and control. Amalgamations in the vast outback areas of Queensland, such as the Isisford Shire, would take the **“LOCAL”** out of Local Government.

#### **{G} COUNCIL SUPPORT OF THE COMMUNITY**

The Isisford Shire has the total support of the community, as evidenced by the petition referred to above, we also have the business, clubs, school, organizations, adults & children writing to us offering support for our efforts to stop this decimation of their shire.

The Isisford Shire Council support the community in many ways including the following direct assistance:-

1. Council has made Capital outlays to purchase buildings in Yaraka and Isisford to lease back to operators to operate grocery stores;
2. Council operates the fuel distribution in Yaraka to ensure fuel supplies for locals and tourists alike;
3. Council maintains Community Halls and Showground Facilities in both Yaraka & Isisford, the local clubs or associations do not have to pay a fee to use these facilities;
4. Council funds the cleaning of the Yaraka Health Clinic;
5. Council pays a retainer to the Operators of the Cafeteria in the O.B.I.C. to promote the museum section and keep the cafeteria operating all year round;
6. Council pays a retainer to a Freight Company to provide a weekly freight service to Yaraka and Isisford;
7. Council successfully lobbied for the introduction of a CDMA mobile telephone system for the Isisford Town and surrounding areas and are presently negotiating with Telstra Countrywide for a mobile service for Yaraka and surrounding areas; and
8. Council funded the establishment of Historical Museums in both Yaraka and Isisford and presently fund the maintenance of both buildings as well as in-kind support for the collection and display of Historical items.

The Isisford Shire Council Administration Staff of five (5) people including the C.E.O., commenced and manage the Annual Fishing Competition at the Oma Waterhole each July. This Year will be the 6<sup>th</sup> Annual competition, with 750 nominations. A very good result, considering there are only 120 adults living in Isisford. This event has been funded by

Queensland Events and was listed as one of their bush success stories. This competition will not function without the Administration Staff to run the event, the organizing is too great.

The Administration Staff also assist as Secretariat of the Isisford Sheep & Wool Show Committee, the Isisford Race Club, the Isisford Golf Club and serve as individuals on other committees. The C.E.O. is responsible for the Town Rural Fire Brigade Board & State Emergency Service. All these services or events will be affected by taking the Council Administration out of the Shire. The employees of the Isisford Shire make up most of the Emergency Service operations. Council fully supports this by allowing training in Council time and Council officers also carry out the management. This will cease with amalgamations as Minister Fraser has stated that C.E.O.'s and senior staff will become redundant or have to move towns to keep employment. Either way, Emergency Services that Council carries out on behalf of the State Government, will be affected.

The Isisford Shire Council assisted with the purchase of and presently maintains a Troop Carrier in Yaraka to transport students over black soil roads. In Isisford, Council assisted with the purchase of and presently maintains a Community Bus for the school children and the elderly residents to visit health services in other towns. Both vehicles are available to club, organizations etc for day trips.

The Isisford Shire Council in partnership with the Queensland Music Festival Comm. has successfully staged a "*Symphony in the Shearing Shed*" in 2003 with approx. 1200 patrons and an "*Opera in the Shearing Shed*" in 2005 with approx. 1100 patrons. Both events were held in the historic Isis Downs Shearing Shed, approximately 20km from Isisford. The Isisford Shire financially contributed to both these events which enhanced the quality of life for the local residents and many more visitors from regional areas.

The Shire Administration Staff again organized these events although on each occasion we had up to 78 volunteers from the community plus a few tourists to help with the catering of food and refreshments. All catering profits went back into local clubs, schools and other organizations etc. The school children were the ushers for the night and this gave them personal satisfaction in being an integral part of the occasion and ambassadors for the shire for the night.

The Isisford Shire Council enables vital social events such as horse gymkhanas, motor cross events, campdraft days, etc which raise money for the Royal Flying Doctor, Ambulance, Local Churches and Health Centres, by providing plant and operators to prepare the grounds. The Isisford Shire presently sponsor many of these events, with community volunteers actually carrying out the event operations on behalf of Council, under councils' Public Liability Insurance. Without this support these events could no longer continue as the insurance cost would be more than the financial profit raised on the day. Once again this would have a negative impact on the 'Quality of Life' of residents living in the Isisford Shire.

Social events like the above, play an important part in the interaction of community members and helps alleviate the stress and depression that is rampant in the bush at the present time. This in turn reduces the impression that suicide is the only option left. Local Councillors are an integral part of sensing community needs, especially social needs because they circulate amongst the community.

It is a recognised fact that any loss of employment has a four-fold flow on effect. The loss of any staff will affect, the Schools, the Primary Health Centres, the businesses and the social fabric of the shire.

Contrary to reports, the Isisford Shire is the only major employer in the shire and no other vacancies exist. Given the flow on effect there will be even less opportunity for part time or casual work in the future.

The Isisford Shire Council is the “go to” people when there is any emergency or natural disaster in our area. For example if there was a serious road accident involving a bus or a livestock carrier, the shire council machinery would be available in the area to assist, the communication networks and administration staff would be available as contacts and coordinators of task, radio networks set up by councils can be used to communicate during an emergency where mobile phones don't work.

There would be a medical facility in the outback town to accommodate the injured until the Flying Doctor could get there. The Outback is a dangerous place made considerably safer by the existence of the present Shire Councils network.

Regionalisation and amalgamation of outback shires is unreasonable, unworkable and unnecessary.

### CONCLUSION

I believe that this submission refutes all the reasons the State Government has given for the so-called Reform, in the case of the Isisford Shire Council. We understand, and I am sure any fair-minded person would understand that there should be action in the case of “*donut*”, “*seaboard*”, “*financially distressed*” [bottom 13% o QTC Report] and shires that voluntary support amalgamations, but such action should be by Referendum not forced amalgamations. We joined a SSS group to save the government money on Consultants, boundaries were never considered.

Again I reiterate that we are financially viable and sustainable and that this has come about by the good Governance of Council, by Councillors who have shown fiscal responsibility in the past.

Should you decide to take no notice of this submission and callously force amalgamations on us, I urge you to at least consider the following: -

1. Keep the Shire of Isisford as a whole identity; and
2. The Administration Centre for any new amalgamation of shires should not be **in a town** on a major highway, as those towns will be affected but may survive, whereas the smaller towns will become Ghost Towns.

This submission provides evidence that the Isisford Shire Council boundaries should not be altered. The evidence is in facts and figures and the support of the community. We have not relied on lies, innuendo or playing on statistics. I believe that if your Commission analyses this submission with an open mind, then the only conclusion you can arrive at is to leave the boundaries of Isisford Shire Council where they are at present.

**ROBERT M. BAUER**  
**CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER**