

Submission:
Local Government Change Commission
Proposed Boundary Re-alignment
Rockhampton Regional Council - Livingstone Shire Council

As a councillor elected to both Councils over 30 years (Livingstone twice), I can speak with first hand knowledge on the effects to both staff and residents.

I currently represent Livingstone which causes me to fiercely defend this Council's right to retain the three suburbs, based on solid grounds.

I voted a resounding NO to the proposed boundary changes for the following reasons:

1. In the 1980's there was an **earlier boundary re-alignment** immediately south of the current Ramsay Crk boundary in question today, and further east, when Rockhampton Council gained substantial highway land from Livingstone on that occasion for development. Despite research that land size is not able to be determined at this moment.

Rockhampton now wants to come back and take another slice of Livingstone, this time taking in the 3 suburbs comprising 1,266 rateable properties, already established and highly valued. These suburbs have always been part of Livingstone since its existence.

2. In correspondence March 2016 Rockhampton objected to Livingstone's Preliminary Approval to expand one of these suburbs, and further announces its own intention to develop this land under Rockhampton.

Rockhampton objected to Livingstone's right and plans to expand, because Rockhampton wanted that land for itself, to develop it into smaller blocks.

3. Since the de-amalgamation in 2014 and the debt Livingstone brought back, combined with the downturn in development, saw the shire with the second highest rates in Qld. Livingstone struggled with this reputation. While trying to stimulate development, Rockhampton was objecting to our opportunities and our plans moving forward.

There is no doubt Rockhampton is styming Livingstone's opportunities to succeed.

4. The 3 suburbs under threat (Glenlee, Glendale and Rovkyview) form the foundation of Livingstone's future Northern Development Corridor, where its growth is planned for 10km north to the township of The Caves, the location of our water reservoir.

Development is already taking place in these suburbs, but this development is within the land which Rockhampton wishes to claim. Livingstone would not benefit if it goes to Rocky. This land forms a crucial part in this Northern Development Corridor, as well as Livingstone's future.

5. While the focus of a boundary re-alignment always refers to Glenlee, Glendale and Rockyview by name, what is being overlooked is the amount or undeveloped land around these developed areas which would be included in the transfer.

The combined area of all developed and undeveloped land which would be included in a boundary re-alignment, adds up to 20.4% of Livingstone's total land mass.

6. From what I can tell, no-one has ever clarified with the voting public, just what lands are involved.. Most people believe it's just the residential areas involved, nothing more. In the absence of all the facts, their votes will be misguided.

7. North of the shire contains the Shoalwater Bay (Army) Training Area (SWBTA) which was once estimated to cover 23% of the shire's land mass.

Since the acquisition of 21 cattle properties in recent years to expand the training area, that has now increased to 33% of the total shire - that's 33% of the shire that does not pay rates.

Now add the 33% SWBTA land to the 20.4% of the suburbs which may be lost, we now have over 50% of our shire not providing revenue.

No wonder we will be disadvantaged.

Livingstone will not be sustainable if the boundary suburbs are lost.

8. The offer of compensation is not negotiable. Once the developed and un-developed land is gone, so is the potential to grow Livingstone's rate base, and have guaranteed income to alleviate the pressure on the existing ratepayers. The rate base becomes substantially reduced, causing the balance of our ratepayers to carry the load.

9. The ratepayers have been asked to carry the load for too long - since 2008. They have been the political puppets of agendas which have caused substantial financial hardships.

The wasted millions of public dollars through the various changes, amalgamations, de-amalgamation, and now facing yet a second boundary re-alignment - all to the detriment of the Livingstone Shire and its people.

The personal fall-out to staff alone changed lives forever. The costly redundancies had a substantial affect on both Councils and families, some having to leave homes, children changing schools, and depression.

I doubt whether anyone ever thought to carry out a feasibility study into the affects these changes had on families. Councillors are all too familiar with these effects.

Surely there's a Minister who's brave enough to make a decision on what's right, rather than what's politically correct.

10. The people have been living in a vacuum for too long. **They have no certainty**, and they have no leaders who are able to offer them any.

While there is uncertainty, there is no confidence. I am aware of potential development which will not progress without a clear path forward.

11. The Rockhampton's plan to acquire the 3 suburbs has been entrain for 7 - 8 years, even under the previous Mayor.

Relations between the 2 Councils have deteriorated due to this persistent "land grab" based on flimsy argument and mistruths.

It is abundantly clear, that Rockhampton's attitude to Livingstone being financially worse off from a boundary re-alignment, is one of indifference. It simply doesn't care.

12. The 3 suburbs and the surrounding un-developed land the subject of the boundary debate, have always been part of Livingstone, and their retention is crucial to the Shire's future.

Knowing what we have already lost in assets and rateable land due to a previous boundary change was painful enough. Do not let another threaten our future.

13. **Community of Interest:** The argument that the boundary dwellers should be transferred to Rockhampton as they see it as their community of interest..

This is a fallacy and misleading argument.

The whole of Capricornia sees Rockhampton as its community of interest - major medical services, government departments, airport, central transport hub, boarding schools, rural services etc. The fringe dwellers have no more relationship with Rockhampton than any other part of Livingstone. The thousands of daily vehicles traversing to Rockhampton from all regions, is evidence of this.

14. **Decisions to invest:** Property owners in the boundary areas made a decision to invest in those particular properties because of the lifestyle Livingstone offered.

Rockhampton did **not** offer such a lifestyle. In fact, Rockhampton even objected to an Application for Preliminary Approval which would have extended the existing Glenlee development on the northern side of the boundary. Rockhampton stated in its written objection (24/3/16) that it **did not want** this sort of development in its local government. Rockhampton expressed it's intention to take over this land via a boundary re-alignment but would create an urban development going north (in the land it hoped to acquire).

The Livingstone property owners already on the boundary, want it both ways.

They now have the lifestyle they want. but they want to pay their rates to another local government body, with total disregard to the financial impact they would be causing to the balance of the shire ratepayers.

It is Livingstone's responsibility to consider the impacts on **all** aspects of the shire, not just the ones who have personal preferences.

15. It is not in the public interest to allow further severance of the Livingstone Shire, if it is to remain viable.

A repeat "land grab" will destroy public confidence, claiming political bullying.

If the state wishes to gain or retain the confidence of the people, it must provide the certainty these two local governments have not enjoyed for a number of years.

16. The previous Local Government Minister categorically stated:

- * "The two Councils must agree before any changes could take place, and
- * "as a result of any boundary changes to occur, no council would be worse off financially."

The people expect the state to honour these commitments.

The shire has earned the right to grow to its potential, allowing it's ratepayers to benefit from a greater rate base, and a guaranteed future with certainty.

Sincerely,
Glenda M Mather

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