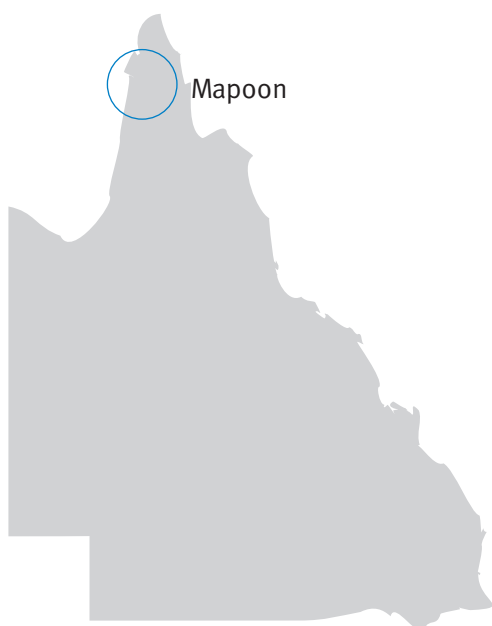


Mapoon Aboriginal Shire Council



1. Recommendation

The Commission recommends:

- (i) the existing local government area of Mapoon Aboriginal Shire Council remain unchanged;
- (ii) the local government continues to be called Mapoon Aboriginal Shire Council*;
- (iii) the local government remains undivided however the number of councillors be reduced from five to four plus a mayor; and
- (iv) the local government continues to be classed as a shire.

*Under the *Local Government (Community Government Areas) Act 2004* the 15 local governments covered by the Act may call themselves either:

- 'council of the shire of... (insert name of community government area)';
- '...(insert name of community government area) Shire Council';
- '...(insert name of community government areas)...Aboriginal Shire Council'.

It is not the intention of the Commission to alter this naming convention. Throughout the report councils will be referred to as Aboriginal Shire Councils for simplicity.

2. Local government metrics

| KEY LOCAL GOVERNMENT METRICS | |
|---|---|
| Name | Mapoon Shire Council |
| Class | Shire |
| Size | 530 sq km |
| Population 2006 | 214 |
| Electors 2007 | 148 |
| Electoral arrangements | Undivided 4 councillors plus mayor (a) |
| Electors per councillor excluding mayor | 37 |
| Net assets 30 June 2005 | \$19.9 million |

(a) Currently there are five councillors including a Mayor. Adopting the Commission's recommendation would see councillor representation reduced from one councillor per 26 electors to one councillor per 37 electors.

3. Rationale for local government remaining the same

3.1 Service delivery, operations and management

- The Commission identified potential for possible improvements in service delivery, operations and management from amalgamations involving Mapoon and other western Cape York councils. However, due to administrative and implementation complexities (for example land tenure arrangements) the Commission does not recommend amalgamation at this time.
- The financial sustainability of Mapoon Aboriginal Shire and contiguous local governments is unlikely to improve significantly through amalgamation.

3.2 Communities of interest

- The Commission has identified a regional community of interest between Mapoon and neighbouring Aboriginal local governments in western Cape York. However for reasons outlined in section 3.1 above and Part 7 of its report, the Commission does not recommend an amalgamation involving Mapoon at this time.
- The Commission also notes strong linkages in western Cape York councils including Aurukun to Weipa. Weipa is an unincorporated area proclaimed under the *Commonwealth Aluminium Corporation Pty Limited (Weipa town Area) Regulation 1994* and is a “company town” under the management of Rio Tinto (previously Comalco Ltd). It currently does not have an elected local government. The Commission considers specific action should be taken to transition Weipa to a normal local government so it can participate effectively in the local government affairs of the region.

3.3 Other

- The Commission has identified there may be long-term benefits to the investigation of an amalgamation of western Cape York councils including Aurukun, Pormpuraaw, Kowanyama, Mapoon and Napranum following further work

on implementation issues including:

- land tenure arrangements in particular for future structural reform involving DOGIT and non-DOGIT communities; and
- lessons learned from models proposed for the Torres Strait Island and Northern Peninsula Area Regional Council.

4. Financial sustainability

Mapoon Aboriginal Shire Council did not participate in the Financial Sustainability Review by Queensland Treasury Corporation. Analysis of amalgamation of Mapoon with other local government areas suggests that boundary changes would not remove any existing structural inefficiencies, or improve the financial sustainability of the shire.

Key economic elements of the shire include:

- economy is based around traditional agriculture, fishing and land and animal management;
- the local government area is largely dependant on grants funding and provides a range of services which are not normally undertaken by most mainstream councils; and
- very small population base.

5. Implementation issues

The Commission has identified that the issue of western Cape York council boundaries should be examined following work to be undertaken on:

- land tenure arrangements in particular for future structural reform involving DOGIT and non-DOGIT communities;
- lessons learned from models proposed for the Torres Strait Island and Northern Peninsula Area Regional Councils; and
- negotiations with Rio Tinto to ensure the Weipa community has the same rights as the rest of Queensland in relation to local government.

6. Boundary issues

Existing shire boundaries will remain unchanged.

7. Suggestions

The Commission gave consideration to the eight suggestions it received in relation to Mapoon.

7.1 Details of suggestions

Suggestions for Mapoon were:

- Communiqué from Indigenous mayors forwarded by the State Government outlines opposition to any forced amalgamations.
- Regional Organisation of Cape York Councils opposes amalgamation of Cape York Councils with preference to establishing a regional model to be facilitated by the State Government to assist all existing Cape York councils.
- Cook Shire suggestion outlines difficulties in the amalgamation of Aboriginal and Island councils with mainstream local governments.
- Kowanyama Council suggestion requests opportunity to complete the ‘transitional’ phase to a fully fledged shire before any reform or amalgamation is considered. Outlines issues faced by Cape York councils including isolation and communication difficulties. Also outlines a number of issues unique to Indigenous communities that should be examined before structural reform is progressed including land tenure arrangements, alcohol management plans and role of business and enterprise initiatives. Council is currently establishing a ‘community board’ or entity that will have community and external professional representation.
- Napranum Aboriginal Shire Council suggestion expresses a preference for Aboriginal local governments to remain as they are. However if amalgamation was to proceed suggests a western Cape York local government servicing Napranum, Mapoon and Aurukun. Identifies ongoing likely financial sustainability issues and need to resolve land tenure arrangements. Outlines Weipa has become a service delivery hub for western Cape York communities.

7.2 Commission’s comments on suggestions

The Commission bases its recommendation to not amalgamate Mapoon Aboriginal Shire Council on the rationale outlined in section 3 above and Part 7 of its report. The Commission recognises the issues raised in Kowanyama, Napranum and Cook suggestions as needing resolution before any amalgamation proposals for Mapoon can be properly evaluated.

Napranum Council’s observation regarding the important role of Weipa as a service delivery hub for western Cape York communities adds weight to the

Commission’s view that Weipa should be “normalised” so it can play a proper role in the affairs of the region.

8. Other Commission considerations

While the Commission recommends that Mapoon is not amalgamated, it offers the following observations:

- a Financial Sustainability Review or equivalent should be conducted; and
- consideration should be given to ensuring Mapoon is an ongoing priority in respect of efforts by other spheres of government to improve the expertise and capacity of local government in Queensland.

9. Objectives set for the Commission

| OBJECTIVES | OBJECTIVES ACHIEVED |
|---|---|
| Facilitates optimum service delivery to Queensland communities. | Yes to the extent possible given the very small population, the shire area and its resources including financial and human resources. |
| Ensure local government effectively contributes to and participates in Queensland’s regional economies. | Yes to the extent possible given the very small population, the shire area and its resources including financial and human resources. |
| Manages economic, environmental and social planning consistently with regional communities of interest. | Yes to the extent possible given the limitations of council as a consequence of Council’s capacity constraints in respect of resources, access to expertise and finances. |
| Effectively partners local government with other levels of government to ensure sustainable and viable communities. | Yes but more robust and better resourced local governments have the capacity to participate on a more equal basis in representing local government and community interests. |