

**080819 - Courier Mail News article**

By [Peter Morley](#)

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**RESIDENTS trying to overturn amalgamation of the Douglas and Cairns councils were deluded, Local Government Minister Warren Pitt said yesterday.**

The Local Government Association said it did not support efforts by Port Douglas and Mossman residents to break away from the new Cairns Regional Council.

But the move could inflame tensions in other recently amalgamated councils and create problems for the State Government in the lead up to the next election.

Councillor Julia Leu, whose Division 10 takes in all the old Douglas shire as well as Palm Cove and Clifton Beach, has organised a meeting next week in Mossman where former Douglas shire residents are expected to push for a split.

They are upset by rate increases of up to 25 per cent, higher service and licensing fees and more expensive water set by the Cairns dominated council.

Cr Leu said she would not be doing her job if she ignored the concerns of her people, the large majority of whom had opposed the amalgamation.

"We are different up here, have our own character and identity and had our own council for 105 years," she said. "The forced marriage was a shock."

But Mr Pitt said: "People who claim life was better under the former Douglas Shire Council and that de-amalgamation is the direction to head are deluding themselves."

If there had had not been an amalgamation, the Douglas council would probably have been sacked and replaced by an administrator, he said.

LGA chief executive Greg Hallam said there was no doubt genuine dissent existed in the old Douglas shire.

"But we support the council of the day," he said. "We do not support any break away attempt. Besides, there is no legal mechanism for it to happen."

But, Mr Hallam said, amalgamation was likely to be a "particular issue" in the lead up to next year's state election.

"It has the propensity to spread to other councils that have been amalgamated," he said.

Mr Hallam would not name them but a political source said the State Government

was "particularly sensitive" about amalgamation "rumblings" in Noosa, Yeppoon, the Whitsundays, Beaudesert and Redcliffe.

"There are a number of marginal seats held by Labor whose members are becoming a bit skittish about a backlash which the Liberal National Party will probably exploit, " the source said.

Amalgamated councils this year have seen average rate rise of 8 to 12 per cent .

Councils such as Rockhampton and Toowoomba have spent \$11 million between them to link computer systems and modify communication networks.