

Douglas not ready to give up

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Illustration 1: Fighting spirit: Division 10 councillor Julia Leu addressed yesterday's meeting at Rex Smeal Park.

ANGRY Port Douglas and Mossman residents yesterday voiced mounting frustrations at the region's forced amalgamation with Cairns and renewed calls for a split.

Pressure to end the uncomfortable marriage between the former Douglas Shire and Cairns City Council is gaining momentum with more than 300 disgruntled Douglas residents gathering at Rex Smeal Park.

The crowd met Opposition local government, planning and regional development spokesman Howard Hobbs, local dignitaries and Division 10 councillor Julia Leu.

Cr Leu said the meeting she called last Tuesday at the Mossman Shire Hall attracted 800 people and gave the community an opportunity to voice their concerns about amalgamation and its impact.

She said yesterday's meeting again echoed the resentment and anger from residents.

"People did talk about the issue of the decline of using local business contractors," Cr Leu said.

"The local has been taken out of local government."

Port Douglas Waterfront Protection Association president Tony Purves said deamalgamation had been successful in Victoria and Canada.

"We're concerned about selling the community's assets," Mr Purves said.

"This new Cairns Regional Council is more dysfunctional than the one we had before.

"We're not just numbers, we're proud of our community just like Cairns is of theirs."

Mr Purves said many other Queensland shires were also unhappy with amalgamation and they were treating the Far North's push for deamalgamation as a "guinea pig".

He said the association had been operating for more than four years and was determined to give the community a voice.

"We're representing the mums and dads and property owners of the area," he said.