



Speech by

**Andrew Cripps**

**MEMBER FOR HINCHINBROOK**

Hansard Tuesday, 11 March 2008

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## **JOHNSTONE SHIRE COUNCIL**

**Mr CRIPPS** (Hinchinbrook—NPA) (9.47 pm): At midnight on 15 March 2008 the Johnstone Shire Council will cease to exist following the decision by the state Labor government to impose a forced amalgamation on the Johnstone Shire Council and the Cardwell Shire Council to form the new Cassowary Coast Regional Council. Tonight I would like to place on the record a brief history of the Johnstone Shire Council.

The Johnstone division was proclaimed a separate entity to the Hinchinbrook division on 28 October 1881. On 18 January 1884 the Cardwell division was proclaimed, which significantly reduced the size of the Johnstone division. On 4 October 1884 a further boundary change between the Johnstone and Cardwell divisions was gazetted as being 'the watershed of all rivers flowing into the sea north of Clump Point'.

The township of Innisfail is the main residential and business centre of the Johnstone shire. The township was founded by Thomas Henry Fitzgerald, who established a substantial sugarcane farming operation on the banks of the North Johnstone River. The sugarcane plantation was called Innisfail Estate. A settlement formed at the picturesque junction of the North Johnstone and South Johnstone rivers. The township was named Geraldton in 1882. However, this created much confusion among merchant trading vessels with the town of Geraldton on the other side of Australia. A public meeting held in 1910 voted to rename the township Innisfail after the first sugarcane farm in the district, founded by Fitzgerald, who had died in 1888.

Under the Local Authorities Act 1902, the Johnstone Divisional Board became the Johnstone Shire Council. Mr HL Gill was the council's first chairman. In 1910, part of the Johnstone shire was transferred to the Eacham shire. Other settlements throughout the shire are important communities in and of themselves with interesting histories.

South Johnstone is still a sugar mill town more than 80 years after the famous sugar mill worker and canecutter strikes of the 1920s. Mourilyan boasts a spectacular harbour as a significant commercial and recreational asset for the region. The township of Elarish was established as a soldier settler community. Mission Beach is named after the Indigenous mission that was established in that area by the Queensland government and which was destroyed by a cyclone in 1890.

On 8 February 2007 the Queensland government dissolved the Johnstone Shire Council and appointed an administrator, Mr Graham Webb PSM. Although perhaps not the most auspicious way for 127 years of local government administration to come to an end, the Johnstone shire nonetheless has a rich history and the local community can be justifiably proud of its achievements during that time. On 15 March 2008 the Johnstone shire will come to an end as a local government entity. I believe the residents and local ratepayers will feel a great degree of sadness as a result of this development—feelings that no doubt will be exacerbated by the absence of a referendum to determine their own future as a community.