

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Council refutes unsubstantiated claims

August 10, 2017
COOKTOWN

Allegations against Cook Shire Council, dropped in State Parliament this week by renegade Cairns politician Rob Pyne, have been labelled as vexatious lies.

Cairns Member Rob Pyne, who has been running a controversial anti-corruption campaign against local government, tabled a dirt dossier against councils as far away as the Fraser and Gold coasts, as well as a document titled "Call for Cook Shire Council to be placed into administration". But Cook Shire Mayor Peter Scott said a simple phone call would have cleared up most of the incorrect facts about Cook Shire outlined in the papers. "Rob Pyne is not our representative, he is building himself a platform in the lead up to the election by knocking local government and giving himself something to campaign about," Cr Scott said. "Rob, who I have had a friendly working relationship with, didn't even do Council the courtesy of a quick phone call to check the information he has been given."

"While I acknowledge Cook Shire Council has had issues in the past, which we have been and will continue working hard to rectify, putting vexatious, unsubstantiated lies like this onto public record to further an election campaign is a low blow. Possibly the most hurtful aspect of this is the effect on our staff and Councillors." The file clearly identified a number of Council staff and Councillors by their position, although names were redacted.

"I have spoken to our State Member, Billy Gordon, who knew about the allegations but has said he will have nothing to do with it," Cr Scott said. The allegations against Cook Shire Council included breaching local government regulations, outstanding native title issues, overspending and mismanagement, staff bullying and more. "One of the more hurtful allegations was a fabricated email, allegedly written by a Council staff member, who is clearly identified by their job title, which was not redacted from the file," Cr Scott said. "That email was the subject of an independent external investigation, instigated by Council, and it has been proven as a fabrication."

Local Government Minister Mark Furner addressed Mr Pyne's anti-council allegations in Parliament on August 8 with a verbal smackdown, asking the Cairns MP to direct them to the



MEDIA RELEASE

Crime and Corruption Commission (CCC). “They are allegations, so I look forward to those allegations being ventilated through the correct process through the CCC,” Mr Furner told Parliament. Cairns Mayor Bob Manning, whose Council was not identified in the files, has publicly dared Mr Pyne to exit the “coward’s castle” of parliamentary privilege. “Rob’s got a seat that he’s trying to win and he’s on the outer with everybody,” Mr Manning said in *The Cairns Post*. “But in the coward’s castle, you’ve got the ability to badmouth everybody. You don’t have to prove a case either way.”

~ end ~

Media enquiries:
Cook Shire Mayor Peter Scott
E | pscott@cook.qld.gov.au
P | 0418 878 370