Re: Local Government Representation Review 2026

Dear Members of the Representation Review Committee,

I am a Litchfield Councillor for the North Ward and resident living on the rural–urban frontier, immediately beside the rapidly developing Holtze urban suburb. I strongly oppose the proposed transfer of Holtze and Kowandi North to the City of Palmerston.

This is not simply a matter of drawing a convenient line on a map. It affects existing residents dramatically, community identity, planning, infrastructure and the financial sustainability of Litchfield Council.

My key concerns

• Boundaries should reflect communities, not simply property lines. Under the Local Government Act 2019, the Committee is required to consider matters including community of interest, economic and social interests, travel and communication, population trends, population density and physical features. The proposed boundary should therefore have a genuine geographic and community rationale, rather than simply following cadastral boundaries.

• The existing rural community is not automatically part of Palmerston. The construction of a new suburb beside established rural properties does not change the identity of those residents. We chose to live in Litchfield for its rural lifestyle, environment, larger properties and community. Existing rural residents, and there are a lot, should not become collateral damage from urban expansion.

• There is a serious concern that this amounts to a “land grab” for future growth and revenue. Litchfield Council has been planning and preparing for Holtze and Kowandi for years and has invested resources in anticipation of this growth. It has invested heavily, and concerning that, once the development begins producing a substantial new population and rate base, the area could instead be transferred to another Council.

• Who carries the cost of preparing for growth, and who receives the future revenue? The Committee should examine Litchfield Council's previous planning, infrastructure and financial commitments and the future rates, assets, maintenance and service responsibilities associated with Holtze. A Council should not undertake years of preparation only to lose the future community and revenue once development occurs.

• Existing rural residents could face increased financial pressure. Changing Council boundaries can change rating structures and charges. Existing rural residents may face significant increases through no choice of their own. For some long-term residents, increased costs could make remaining in their homes difficult and potentially force them to sell. Going from a fixed rating system to a UCV system will rate residents with larger parcels of land out of existence.

• The proposed Yarrawonga adjustment needs consideration. I propose including a small section of Yarrawonga currently within Palmerston. This is not a reciprocal exchange. The purpose of this proposal is to create a more logical and coherent boundary and reduce confusion caused by an isolated section of Palmerston on the Litchfield side of the Stuart

Highway. This small boundary adjustment should be considered on its own merits and should not be treated as justification for transferring the much larger Holtze and Kowandi areas to Palmerston. Numerous times, this area has caused a lot of confusion when navigating to other areas in Holtze and it is more realistic to include in the Litchfield Municipality.

• Planning should determine boundaries — not boundaries determine planning. Holtze and Kowandi form part of a much larger planned growth area. The Committee should consider roads, drainage, infrastructure, emergency access, physical features and the relationship with the established Litchfield rural community before determining that the area should become part of Palmerston. These places are a part of our community and we want to keep it that way.

I respectfully ask the Committee to:

- Reject the proposed transfer of Holtze and Kowandi North to Palmerston.
- Assess the existing rural community as a community of interest in its own right.
- Assess the financial impact on existing residents, including potential changes to rates structure and charges.
- Assess Litchfield Council's investment and future financial consequences of losing Holtze and Kowandi.
- Consider roads, infrastructure, drainage, physical features and existing community relationships, rather than relying primarily on property boundaries.
- Consider the small Yarrawonga adjustment separately, as a boundary rationalisation rather than a reciprocal exchange.

A good local government boundary should make communities more coherent and better represented. It should not simply make one municipality larger and the expense of another.

Kind regards

Plaxy Purich
North Ward Councillor
Litchfield Council