

# CEO chimes in to help Cr Steve Robinson take back Bli Bli

# Battlelines drawn

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A FINAL determination has been made on a redraw of Sunshine Coast Council's 10 divisional boundaries with big changes set to affect thousands of voters at next March's council election.

Division 9 councillor Steve Robinson got his wish as the Change Commission dropped its proposal to remove Bli Bli from his patch.

In his October 11 submission to the Change Commission, Cr Robinson said there was no doubt in his mind a push by three community groups to have Bli Bli removed from his division was under-

pinned by a clear political motivation to influence a specific electoral outcome.

He was responding to suggestions to the commission made in May by community groups including Coolum Residents Association and Development Watch which advised of a lack of connection between Bli Bli and Coolum Beach. They recommended excising Bli Bli from Division 9, using the Maroochy River as a boundary.

Both suggestions noted the rural residents in Division 9 had long used Coolum Beach as their district centre, while Bli Bli was linked more closely with Nambour.

Coolum Residents Associ-

ation president Ray Barber expressed surprise but support in an October submission to the Change Commission after seeing the proposed Division 9 redraw, including the removal of Bli Bli. But it appears that outcome will not eventuate.

Sunshine Coast Council CEO Michael Whittaker, in a submission written on October 11, the same day as Cr Robinson's, also opposed Bli Bli becoming part of Division 10.

Mr Whittaker said the current and future "community of interest" for Bli Bli was Maroochy and north of the Maroochy River, rather than the hinterland encompassed by Division 10.

"At the regional and stra-

tegic level, council is concerned that some important historical, emerging business and community connectivity considerations have been overlooked in formulating the revised internal boundaries," Mr Whittaker's submission read.

"Council is concerned that the material change in divisional boundaries will negatively impact on the understanding on the electorate and thus, good democratic outcomes."

It was the only aspect of the Change Commission's redraw on which Mr Whittaker made a submission.

Cr Robinson, in his submission, said he completely

disagreed with submission made by community groups seeking to have Bli Bli moved from his division.

He said there were strong historical links between Coolum and the cane growers' residents of Bli Bli, Maroochy River, Yandina Creek and dora.

"These families have worked and recreated together for over 100 years using Coolum as their principle beach town," Cr Robinson said.

"To imply or state otherwise is patently wrong."

Other areas of change in the proposed boundary re- included the retention of Rimundi in Division 3 councillor Peter Cox's patch.