



**Amalgamation Debate Speech
GLEN ELMES**

MEMBER FOR NOOSA

Hansard, 7 August 2007

Local Government Reform

Mr ELMES (Noosa--Lib) (3.02 pm): I stand here today and speak on behalf of about 50,000 people in the Noosa shire. All of us--every single one of us--feels the way a person would if someone broke into their home one night and started to destroy the things that they felt were of value and that they had built up during their life. That is how my community feels.

Mr Hoolihan interjected.

Mr ELMES: The member for Keppel is showing that he is not quite the decent human being I would have thought he would have been. He has spent enough time in regional Queensland to have some understanding.

Mr HOOLIHAN: I rise to a point of order. I find those remarks objectionable and I ask that they be withdrawn.

Mr ELMES: I withdraw, Mr Speaker. The mayor of Noosa and I led a march in Brisbane last Friday. About 15,000 people took part in that march. When we got outside the gates of Parliament House I turned around and looked down George Street and all I could see were green and blue balloons going as far as the eye could see all the way back to South Bank. All of these people had come to Brisbane to demonstrate their commitment to their town. With them were people from Aramac, Isisford, Ilfracombe, Redcliffe, from the Pine Rivers shire and from shires and communities across Queensland, all taking a last opportunity to implore the members of the Queensland parliament to please do something to protect their homes and give them an undertaking that they can have back the right to vote at a referendum and to decide their own future. That is what this legislation has taken away; it has taken away the right to vote. The government is about to take away the right to debate and for some communities the government is taking away the ability for those people and those communities to survive.

I have correspondence that has been sent from people in my community to Kevin Rudd and I would like to read a couple of quotes from the letters he is sending back. In those letters he states--

We do not support forced amalgamations of local councils without due consideration of alternate means to achieve efficiency improvements and best practice in local governments. I have indicated my position against the current forced amalgamation proposal and have asked the Queensland Premier to review his council amalgamation proposal to include consideration of non-amalgamation options for sustainability and reform of local government in Queensland.

This morning in this place there was a condolence motion for Tom Burns, a great Queensland, a great member of the Labor Party and a great member of parliament. My grandfather, as I mentioned in my maiden speech when I came into this place, was also a member of the Labor movement. I would like those members who are listening to me today, particularly on the other side, to go back in their history books. I would like them to think about the roots and beliefs of the Labor Party. I would like them to think about those people in Queensland who are looking to this government to lead, to show them some understanding and provide them with some certainty for the future. If any member on that side has any intestinal fortitude, when the time comes for this vote to be taken they will join the

coalition and vote to overturn this legislation and make sure that we provide some certainty for Queenslanders.

The Noosa shire has shown its position over and over again--it showed it with the march of 15,000 people, it showed it with the 31,000 submissions it sent to the Local Government Reform Commission and it showed it a couple of years ago in a petition against forced council amalgamations which was signed by 18,747 people in one day. That came about because Terry Mackenroth, one of the commissioners, made a speech to--guess who?--the Property Council. He told the Property Council that we should amalgamate the three local councils on the Sunshine Coast. There is an opportunity here for some leadership, there is an opportunity here for some soul, and I really hope, on behalf of the coalition but more particularly on behalf of all Queenslanders, that there are some people opposite who will do the right thing when the vote is taken
