

QUEENSLAND COALITION

MEDIA RELEASE

www.qldcoalition.org.au

29 August 2007

Howard Hobbs MP
Shadow Minister for Local Government, Planning and Sport
Member for Warrego

Coalition to give councils de-amalgamation option

The Queensland Coalition will continue to fight Labor's forced council amalgamations and when elected to Government will give communities the opportunity to de-amalgamate if they wish, Shadow Local Government Minister Howard Hobbs said today.

Mr Hobbs will make the vow during his speech to the Local Government Association of Queensland's annual conference on the Gold Coast today.

Mr Hobbs said forced council amalgamations had paralysed most local governments since April and history would record 2007 as the year local was taken out of local government.

"The Beattie Labor Government's forced council amalgamations are a purely political decision with their deceitful arguments about councils going broke being debunked by various independent reports and analyses," he said.

"An analysis by respected international administrators and receivers McGrath Nicol found even the so-called 'weak' councils were unlikely to become insolvent within the near future and had financial ratings higher than the reported results for some of Australia's listed companies on the stock exchange.

"In addition, Morgan Consulting found factors such as efficiency, scale, cost reductions and elimination of duplication were often overemphasised and not properly balanced with factors such as the attachment people have to place and community and their concept of local democracy and representation."

Mr Hobbs said the Queensland Coalition would continue to fight forced council amalgamations and work to ensure communities were not worse off under Labor's plans. He also outlined the alternative under a Queensland Coalition Government.

"A Queensland Coalition Government would give communities affected by forced mergers the opportunity to de-amalgamate if residents had already stated their objection through a petition or poll," he said.

"Amalgamations may be right for some councils and not right for others, but at the end of the day, the decisions of local communities should be accepted, not overridden by a dictatorial State Government.

"Any State Government that goes so far as to make criminals out of elected representatives who are prepared to exercise their legislative and democratic right to have a say is not fit to govern."

Media Contact - Howard Hobbs 0428 152 856 or Ann Leahy 0427 741 154