



Speech by
GLEN ELMES

MEMBER FOR NOOSA

Hansard, 15 November, 2007

Local Government Amendment Bill - Council Penalties

Mr ELMES (Noosa--Lib) (3.51 pm): I rise today to speak to the Local Government Amendment Bill 2007. This is the first time since this whole local government reform process came into being that I am in a position to actually agree with the government on one particular point--that is, the abolition, if you like, of this particular part of the legislation. This bill was introduced on 22 August, so it has been around for about three months.

People in my part of the world, in the electorate of Noosa, have been looking at this legislation. They have known that it has been sitting on the Notice Paper for a long time. They have been looking forward to me having an opportunity to get up on their behalf and let the House know how they feel about the legislation and the way in which this government has behaved through this whole so-called reform process. The thing that absolutely astounds me, though, is that we come into this House today, on the last sitting day of the year, and find that debate on this particular bill will be gagged. Regardless of what we do, it will be closed down.

Once again--it has happened through this entire process, from the day local government reform was first introduced into the Queensland parliament--no-one will have an adequate opportunity to debate this issue and put forward their particular point of view. Noosa has not forgotten and will not forget what this government has done to our community.

We have lived under the threat of this particular part of the legislation for over three months. Our council, councillors and mayor--as well as the councils, councillors and mayors across all of Queensland--have lived under the threat of this particular part of the legislation. Nevertheless, as a community, led by our council, we have gone about making sure that our protests have been heard, regardless of the threats and regardless of the way we have been treated. Some 31,000 people made a submission to the Local Government Reform Commission.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hoolihan): I would ask you to be relevant to the bill. It is the same ruling as was made in relation to the member for Tablelands.

Mr ELMES: I wondered how long it was going to take you to get to that point, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I would ask the member to withdraw that statement. That is a reflection on the chair.

Mr ELMES: I withdraw, Mr Deputy Speaker. As I said, my community has lived under the threat of this particular part of the legislation for a long time now. Regardless of this particular part of the legislation, we have made sure that all of Queensland has been able to hear our protests. The council has not been in any way ashamed or scared to do anything it could, and I have certainly offered the council my help and support. I find it very unfortunate that on the last day this parliament will sit for the year we are in a situation where we are gagged.

We are in a situation where--and I say this with the greatest respect, Mr Deputy Speaker--we are not given a little bit of latitude to expand on the way we feel as representatives of our community. To me, that is just another example of how out of touch this government has become, with the way it has treated local government generally and my community of Noosa in particular.

As I said at the start, I am in the unique position that for the first time I am able to support the government on this particular point. Obviously, the legislation will be passed through the parliament and I certainly endorse that. In closing, I would also hope that the new minister--

Mr Lucas: You are not going to talk about desalination again, are you?

Mr ELMES: No, strangely, I am not.

A government member: He is being relevant.

Mr ELMES: I am being very relevant and I am being very careful. I would hate to speak about desalination plants or anything else anywhere on the Sunshine Coast, including in my electorate! With a new minister--at least he is someone with whom our mayors and representatives can sit down and talk--I do hope that at some point down the track there might be some hope for not only Noosa but also affected local authorities across the state. I support the bill.
