



Speech by
GLEN ELMES

MEMBER FOR NOOSA

Hansard, 4 September, 2007

Local Government Reform

Mr ELMES (Noosa--Lib) (11.51 am): I rise to speak on forced council amalgamations and to provide some great news of hope to the wider Queensland community and their desire for a return to democracy. I welcome to the public gallery today representatives from the Anti-Amalgamation Army for Democracy, and it is on behalf of these people from communities across Queensland that I proudly speak today. Mr Deputy Speaker, I table for you and for this parliament a symbolic declaration of war on behalf of the people and the communities of Alpha, Cape Tribulation, Coolum, Cooya, Doonan, Eumundi, Jericho, Mossman, Newell, Noosa, Oak Beach, Port Douglas, Verrierdale and Wonga.

This declaration of war is against the Beattie Labor government, the federal opposition leader Kevin Rudd and the Australian Labor Party. Tabled paper: Symbolic document, in relation to council amalgamations, titled 'Declaration of War' Our communities demand the restoration of the democratic rights of all Queenslanders which arise from the fact that the underhanded processes forcing the amalgamation of the communities of Queensland are contrary to the democratic principles by which all Australians live and will destroy the social, economic, environmental and cultural qualities of our communities and that the removal of our community's right to vote, speak out and be heard is contrary to natural justice and the democratic foundations upon which this nation and its political systems were built.

We will campaign on many fronts. In fact we have already begun with the following actions: a full-page advertisement placed in the Financial Review by the Friends of Noosa last Thursday and submissions to the Senate inquiry held in Noosa, Emerald and Cairns over the past week. The first Friends of Noosa billboard on Lutwyche Road is proudly there today, as well as two mobile billboards--one for Brisbane and the other for regional centres. One of the mobile billboards is on display outside the parliament today. In order to highlight this government's complete disregard for democracy, teams of volunteers--and I assure the House that in this particular case it was not hard to get volunteers--will descend on the seat of the member for Mount Coot-tha to ensure that his central role in the destruction of local government is known to each and every voter in his seat.

Mass rallies will be held in all communities as they join the fight. We will expand our newspaper campaign and also begin radio and television advertising. Lastly, a direct mail campaign will begin in all marginal federal seats in Queensland. Our demands are simple: that the legislation forcing amalgamation of our communities is repealed and the right of our communities to hold a legally binding vote is restored and that a royal commission is established to investigate the so-called independent Local Government Reform Commission and the processes of the Queensland government that led to the amalgamation and associated legislation.

The Premier said over the weekend that the amalgamation issue was over, yet even last night the propaganda campaign trying to sell this nonsense was still underway on television. If this government had any understanding of the way Queenslanders thought about their towns and neighbourhoods and how important they view the role of their local council then Labor would never have embraced this so-called reform. In Noosa we have had petitions, thousands of submissions to that sham of a commission, mass rallies both at home and outside this parliament, and now, together with our partner communities, an extended campaign on which we are able and prepared to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars to protect our way of life.

We will target Kevin Rudd and we will target Labor candidates across the state. We are determined to cost federal Labor seats in Queensland. To use a well-known course of lines from one of Winston Churchill's speeches, 'This is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning.' The Beattie Labor government should not doubt the resolve of Noosa, Port Douglas and many other communities to fight council amalgamations up to the federal election, up to the state election and even beyond that. When the Beattie Labor government reinstates in legislation what has been removed--that is, the right of our communities to hold legally binding votes to approve or disapprove council amalgamation--then our campaign will end. It is up to the Premier and Kevin Rudd to decide when that will be.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr O'Brien): Order in the public gallery please.
