



Speech by

Andrew Cripps

MEMBER FOR HINCHINBROOK

Hansard Thursday, 8 February 2007

DISSOLUTION OF JOHNSTONE SHIRE COUNCIL

Mr CRIPPS (Hinchinbrook—NPA) (2.55 pm): As members probably know, I represent some of the Johnstone shire in this place. There is no doubt that there has been a considerable amount of concern regarding the activity of the Johnstone Shire Council over the last few years, culminating in the former minister for local government issuing a show cause notice before an injunction was sought by two councillors late last year. That injunction was dismissed recently, and subsequently today the council has been dismissed.

Firstly, I would like the Minister for Local Government, Planning and Sport to know that I feel strongly that the government should undertake an extensive education program about how this affects the governance of the shire of Johnstone. He and all members of this place would know what the effects of this decision will be, but I think in general the community will have less of an understanding about the consequences of this decision. So my suggestion to the minister is that the government may like to undertake some sort of education program about what this decision means.

I believe that the minister and the government should be very conscious of the fact that this community struggled in 2006 and continues to struggle following the devastation caused to that area by Cyclone Larry. While I recognise that the minister has taken this decision in accordance with what he believes is the correct course of action, given that this is his decision, it is now incumbent upon him to ensure that the administrator of the council undertakes that role with a degree of sensitivity and takes into consideration the serious challenges that that community has faced in recent times.

There is no doubt that there has been a significant volume of people in the Johnstone shire who have expressed their dissatisfaction with the Johnstone Shire Council, which has now been dismissed. It is important that the minister ensures that the administrator acts in good faith throughout the time he is in that position. Certainly, critical issues pertaining to the government's size, shape and sustainability initiative are currently being discussed in Queensland and in the Johnstone Shire Council, so it will be vitally important that the administrator establishes very strong links with the community that are representative and reflect the attitudes of the community with regards to that process.

The minister has made a weighty decision and I trust that at all times in the future he and the administrator he has appointed will act in good faith. From the advice that I have received, I understand that Mr Webb is well qualified and experienced to fill this position. With those few comments on the record, I will be taking a keen interest in this process as it unfolds.