



Speech by

Andrew Cripps

MEMBER FOR HINCHINBROOK

Hansard Thursday, 9 August 2007

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORM IMPLEMENTATION BILL

Mr CRIPPS (Hinchinbrook—NPA) (1.11 am): I rise to make a contribution to the debate on the Local Government Reform Implementation Bill. In doing so, I want to place on the record my deep-seated opposition and concern for the way that this bill and the bill that preceded it, the Local Government and Other Legislation Amendment Bill, have been rammed through the parliament of Queensland by the Beattie government. I might be a relatively new member of this place but in my opinion it is a disgraceful way to treat this House, particularly when this legislation will have such a significant and widespread impact on local communities right across the state, including those communities in my electorate of Hinchinbrook.

What is particularly outrageous is that this whole local government reform process inflicted on Queenslanders by the government has been rushed from the very moment that the Premier and the minister for local government announced they were throwing out the Triple S process. The bill in April was rushed through the parliament in the same way that this bill is being rushed through. There was a short consultation period during which the Local Government Reform Commission undertook a total of zero public consultations throughout Queensland. Then with over 30,000 submissions the commission reported early to the government and now we have this disgraceful piece of legislation.

Premier Beattie and his local government minister have completely ignored the strong and clear message from thousands of Queenslanders across the state who oppose forced amalgamations as well as those Queenslanders who simply believe that local communities have the right to determine their own futures through referendums. Mayors and councillors planning to hold referendums have been threatened with the sack and \$1,100 fines if they try to give their ratepayers and residents an opportunity to exercise the fundamental democratic right to have a say. The government has mastered the art of political thuggery.

In contrast, the Queensland coalition has listened to the people of Queensland. We respect local communities and we understand the important role of local government. We believe local decisions should be made locally and not be forced on us by George Street. The Queensland coalition has made a commitment that if we win the next state election we will guarantee local communities the opportunity to hold a referendum if that is what the people want. I am proud of that commitment. I am proud that as a representative of my electorate my colleagues and I in the Queensland coalition will give those communities the opportunity to have a say. In view of the limited time available to me, I seek leave to incorporate the rest of my speech in *Hansard*.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Hinchinbrook, if you would not mind, I am still reading your speech that you wish to incorporate.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: No, fair enough. The member for Hinchinbrook has asked to incorporate. I am still quickly reading it, so if you would not mind keeping on giving your speech for a moment. I have not as yet cleared your speech. If you wish to do this, I have to quickly read the speech to allow it to be incorporated. I think this is quite a fair and equitable situation we are dealing with here.

Mr CRIPPS: In view of the limited time available to me because of the actions of the government, I do not wish to seek leave to incorporate the rest of my speech into *Hansard* if the processes will not allow other members to speak tonight.

Mr SPEAKER: Excuse me, look—

Mr CRIPPS: Mr Speaker, the Leader of the House indicated that the debate—

Mr SPEAKER: Can I say to you that you have just given me your speech. I have said that I would incorporate this. That is being fair and equitable to you, but I wish to have a few more moments to read through it. Do you have the rest of the speech there?

Mr CRIPPS: I do, Mr Speaker.

Mr SPEAKER: If you go for another couple of minutes I will probably let you then incorporate the rest, but it is up to you.

Mr SEENEY: I rise to a point of order, Mr Speaker. The member has already indicated that he wants to withdraw his request to incorporate his speech.

Mr SPEAKER: It has got nothing to do with you. That is not a point of order. If you want to keep on wasting time like this, I will simply take your suggestion. I am reading your speech and I find nothing wrong with the incorporation of it, but I need to go for a few more pages.

Mr CRIPPS: Mr Speaker, I respect and thank you for the opportunity to incorporate, but if I continue to speak other members who wish to speak to the bill will not be given that opportunity.

Mr SPEAKER: Thank you, member for Hinchinbrook. I call the member for Whitsunday.