

30 JUL 2010

Law, Justice and Safety
Committee

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The Chairman
Law, Justice and Safety Committee
Queensland Parliament
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**Submission On The Inquiry Into A New Local Government Electoral Act:
Review Of The Local Government Electoral System (Excluding Bcc)**

I as a resident in a village called Eumundi in the now very large Sunshine Coast council area and as an editor of a not for profit community magazine, I would like to make a submission on the inquiry into a new Local Government Electoral Act – review of the Local Government Electoral System.

Electoral divisions

I wholeheartedly support the continuation of the divisional system. In a council as geographically large and diverse as the Sunshine Coast, I believe as the editor of a not for profit community magazine and as an individual ratepayer that small towns such as ours and the areas they service are better served and represented by a local divisional councillor who is much better placed to analyse and act on local community issues. I acknowledge that such a representative also needs to have a strategic ability to think globally as well as representing locally. I am very concerned that the issues of the hinterland of the Sunshine Coast will not get due attention without the checks and balances that having a divided council has achieved. It's inevitable that the squeaky coastal culture and bigger populations would swamp the villages if there were no divisions. One size representation at the grass roots council level would be most unfortunate. The Act should recognise that the differences between areas is the essence of the Sunshine Coast and community strength and forcing everywhere to be the same reduces that capacity. I believe that amalgamations have destroyed much that was good for the Sunshine Coast's sustainability and well being. I have no doubt that everywhere the dilution of local and different to be one undifferentiated mass is in no one's interests. I can honestly say that I'm in touch with the community vibe more than most people and there is no doubt that divisions are favoured by many for the reasons I've outlined and because there has been no evidence to indicate that large does anything for efficiency either.

Candidates

I believe candidates should be able to nominate for both the position of councillor and mayor as that would encourage more candidates to nominate for mayor, giving voters greater choice and facilitate the retention of the skills and abilities of the mayoral applicant who doesn't win, through his or her election as a councillor. I do not support the selection of mayor by councillors as I would like to retain a role in choosing our mayor as a public leader of our area.

Funding and disclosures

Disclosure of campaign funding must be mandatory for all donations over say \$2K with candidates required to disclose significant donations before and during campaigns as well as providing a complete disclosure of all funding after the campaign. Issues around property development and developers and assertions about vested interests will always have a mist around them so the Act needs to de-mist as far as is practicable.

Property franchise

I strongly oppose the extension of eligibility to vote in local government elections to non-resident property owners. Frankly there's much more to a community and groups of communities than paying rates. We value the diversity of values and contributions of the people who live in our community and we have no affinity with those who invest in our area to make money but don't have their heart and soul in the future of our area. Councils are about leadership of their community, its culture and aspirations. Please let's keep it that way.

Joyce Turnbull

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