



Speech by

Hon. PETER BEATTIE

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

Hansard 9 August 2001

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT Queensland Constitution

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.41 a.m.), by leave: In its report dated July 2000, the Legal Constitutional and Administrative Review Committee provided a draft constitution of Queensland, which includes provisions that essentially preserved and consolidated the intent of sections 54 to 56 of the Constitution Act of 1867. Sections 54 to 56 give constitutional status to Queensland's system of local government and were included in the Constitution Act in 1989. Section 56(2) states that a referendum on a proposal to end the system of local government must be held before a bill to that effect can be introduced into parliament.

The exposure draft on the proposed new constitution of Queensland, released by the government in January 2001, did not include a section reflecting the provisions of the current section 56(2). The reason for that is complex, but essentially it was because the section itself could be repealed by a simple piece of legislation. This omission in the new draft constitution of Queensland has given rise to some anxiety. The move has been seen in some quarters as a downgrading of the constitutional recognition of the role of local government.

The Local Government Minister, Nita Cunningham, shared those concerns with me. So it is with great pleasure that I am able to inform the House today that the government gives the assurance that the draft of the new constitution of Queensland will be amended to include a section containing the provisions of the existing section 56(2). In other words, provisions requiring a referendum to be held on any proposal to abolish our system of local government in Queensland will be retained.

Local government is the tier of government closest to the people in many respects. It is such a vital cog in our society and we will not let it be forgotten. It is about us being in a position to respond to their needs and again showing that we are a can-do government that responds. It is about us playing an integral role in supporting their needs. It is important that the status of our system of local government is recognised in the constitution of Queensland.

There are a number of former mayors and local government representatives in this House. I am sure that they will be delighted with us enshrining this in our constitution. I table a letter that I have written today to Noel Playford, the President of the Local Government Association, confirming what I have said in my ministerial statement.
