



Speech by

**CHRISTINE SMITH**

**MEMBER FOR BURLEIGH**

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Hansard 6 August 2002

**BOUNDARY CHANGES, STEPHENS**

**Mrs SMITH** (Burleigh—ALP) (7.09 p.m.): I wish to speak about an issue that has caused considerable disturbance in my electorate over recent weeks. As honourable members may know, the Department of Natural Resources has been planning to redraw suburb boundaries on the Gold Coast. This decision was made partly because a large number of new estates have sprung up over recent years and many of the residents quote their addresses as the development name rather than the correct suburb. This makes things difficult for emergency services and Australia Post. A storm has developed over a number of housing developments being forced to give up their names, but one in particular is worthy of comment.

Stephens, a suburb that I have the honour to represent in this parliament, has been the subject of a vicious campaign of slander. Stephens residents have been vilified in the media and now on the Internet. On a web site residents of Varsity Lakes used their opposition to the proposed changes to slander their near neighbours. I was shocked and appalled by the way in which Stephens was depicted on the web site. I cannot believe that people are willing to treat their fellow man that way. Call me naive, but I always believed that the Gold Coast was a warm and friendly place to live. This affair has shaken my confidence. The web site had a picture of a beautiful sparkling lake and, on the next page, a picture of the same lake shown as polluted and dirty next to a caption 'No to Stephens'.

**Mr Terry Sullivan:** Disgraceful.

**Mrs SMITH:** The inference was unmistakable and disgraceful. Stephens does have some Department of Housing accommodation and this appears to be sufficient to have them considered as second-class citizens. The fact that the department and the residents maintain their homes well and that Stephens has some of the best water views on the Gold Coast appears to be irrelevant.

I spent the first 22 years of my life living in public housing and I cannot tolerate the type of prejudice that assumes one person is better than another because of their address. The people of Stephens are sick of having their beautiful suburb maligned. They are overwhelmingly in favour of the name change and hope to finally discard the stigma, which is so undeserved.

I believe I have done everything within my power to offer my support and encouragement, both publicly and privately, to the people of Stephens. I understand the importance of this name change and I will continue to fight for it. On behalf of the residents of Stephens, I call on my colleague the Minister for Natural Resources not to give in to this sort of prejudice and snobbery and to reject the submissions of those residents whose only agenda appears to be to slander their neighbours.