



Speech by

**JEFF SEENEY**

**MEMBER FOR CALLIDE**

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**LOCAL GOVERNMENT AMENDMENT BILL**

**Mr SEENEY** (Callide—NPA) (10.31 p.m.): I rise to support the bill before the House tonight. There is no greater argument and no greater reason why the parliament should not support the bill than what we have heard in this debate tonight. I heard one of the best speeches I have heard in here for a long time from the member for Surfers Paradise. It was not a long speech, but the man knew what he was talking about. He is a local government practitioner of some standing, respected right across the state. He knew what he was talking about. Every member on the government benches should have listened to what he said. I commend the member for Surfers Paradise. His was a great contribution. He said just about everything I was going to say. There is nothing much I can add to the argument he put forward.

However, that contribution should be contrasted with the contribution we heard from the member for Whitsunday. The member for Whitsunday obviously does not have a clue about local government and obviously does not have any understanding of the situation that faces people who serve in local governments up and down this state. That contribution can be contrasted with the one from the member for Surfers Paradise. I say this to the Minister for Local Government: if the government is going to argue against this legislation, then surely there are members on that side of the House who can be better briefed and make better contributions than what we saw from the member for Whitsunday tonight.

The member for Whitsunday talked about honesty. Let us talk about honesty. Let us have an honest analysis of what this original legislation was all about. If we want to be honest, we all know that this was a political strategy dreamed up by the Deputy Premier. It was a political strategy hatched by the member for Logan to protect his position. That is the honest answer. That is the honest fact. It was dreamt up by the member for Logan and it was developed into a political strategy. It became the Terrymander. Everybody in local government knew it as the Terrymander. That is the honest fact. The government sent poor unfortunate backbenchers in here who do not have a clue to try to justify it and to try to paint the picture that—

**Ms JARRATT:** I rise to a point of order.

**Mr SEENEY:** I did not mention the member.

**Ms JARRATT:** The member was looking at me.

**Mr SEENEY:** If the member wants to identify herself as a poor unfortunate backbencher she can go right ahead, but I did not mention her.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Ms Phillips): Order! There is no point of order.

**Mr SEENEY:** I thank the member for Whitsunday for identifying herself as a poor unfortunate backbencher.

The other thing that we need to be honest about is the whole series of arguments that are raised in objection to the bill introduced by the member for Warrego. The first one raised here again tonight—and it has been raised by members in the government in a tiresome manner ever since the Terrymander was forced into law—is that it was somehow going to reduce the number of by-elections councils would face. It quite obviously and quite clearly does nothing of the sort. In fact, it does the opposite.

If councillors are forced to stand down whether or not they become elected, it is patently obvious that there will have to be more by-elections and the cost that is incurred by councils will be greater simply because more candidates will stand for election while they are councillors and therefore will be required to resign. There is no way that 100 per cent of those councillors are going to be elected. Under the previous system, the only councils that faced a by-election were those where a councillor was successful at the election. Under the Terrymander, every council that has a councillor who stands for election will face a by-election whether or not that councillor is successful. It puts a lie to the inane arguments that are quite often offered by the member for Logan and other promoters of this particular legislation—this Terrymander—that somehow this is saving the government money. They are the honest facts. That is the honesty that the member for Whitsunday did not deal with and that is the honest fact that every member in this House should face.

There is another issue that is quite often raised, and it has been rehashed here again tonight by people who obviously do not understand it, and the classic example was the member for Redlands who talked about the fact that councillors use council resources. He talked about the council cars and the faxes and the phones and the offices. The member for Whitsunday also referred to the council office. These people completely ignore the reality that by far the majority of councillors in Queensland serve in that position in a semi-voluntary capacity. It is only a very small number of councillors in the large metropolitan councils who have access to such things as offices and cars and fax machines and phones.

I, too, was a local government practitioner, and I will give the House an example to illustrate. When I was first elected to the Monto Shire Council I used to get \$80 a day in meeting fees and used to pay \$100 a day for somebody to drive my tractor at home while I was at the council meeting. That is an example of the level of remuneration that is typical for most councillors in Queensland. Councillors do not get cars. They do not have offices. They do not have fax machines. In fact, many of the more respected practitioners in local governments up and down Queensland have spent a good part of their life engaged in a service to their community, the type of service that an up-jump little upstart from Redlands could not begin to understand.

**Mr ENGLISH:** I rise to a point of order.

**Mr SEENEY:** There are men and women in local government in Queensland who have given a lifetime's service to their communities.

**Mr ENGLISH:** I rise to a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker.

**Mr SEENEY:** And this little upstart comes in here and accuses them of somehow ripping off the system.

**Mr ENGLISH:** Madam Deputy Speaker—

**Mr SEENEY:** I am disgusted and he should be ashamed of himself.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! I will hear the point of order.

**Mr ENGLISH:** I find those comments offensive and ask for them to be withdrawn without qualification.

**Mr SEENEY:** I withdraw anything that the member may find offensive.

**Mr ENGLISH:** I rise to a point of order. I asked for those comments to be withdrawn without qualification as I found them offensive.

**Mr SEENEY:** I withdraw anything that the member found offensive.

Local government practitioners up and down the state deserve greater respect than the member for Redlands has shown in this House tonight. Because I know so many of them well, as does the member for Bundaberg, I put on record my disgust on their behalf—and I knew the member for Bundaberg in the days when she was a local government practitioner and I know that she, too, would find such assertions offensive.

There can be no doubt that local government is a great training ground for people who aspire to come to this place. If anyone has any doubt, they should read the speech made by the member for Surfers Paradise. There can be no doubt that there are huge benefits to the people of Queensland as a whole, to this parliament and to any one of the 89 electorates from having a wide choice of candidates who are qualified to represent them in this place. There is no doubt about that concept.

The piece of legislation that this bill seeks to amend was a blatant political strategy of the Deputy Premier, dreamt up by the honourable member for Logan because he found himself under a degree of threat. The member for Logan wanted to make it a little bit easier for him to get elected. He boasts about it. He thinks that one of his prime achievements in this parliament is to claim to be the author of the Terrymander. I doubt that the member for Logan will contribute much more to this House in his time here, but he will be remembered for that. That is what this legislation is about. The bill that

the member for Warrego has brought into this House seeks to put local government practitioners on the same—

Time expired.

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