



Speech by

Hon. Andrew Fraser

MEMBER FOR MOUNT COOT-THA

Hansard Wednesday, 23 May 2007

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Local Government Reform

Hon. AP FRASER (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Minister for Local Government, Planning and Sport) (9.58 am): The Beattie government's local government reform policy is strong evidence of our commitment to sustaining the future economic prosperity of our growing state of Queensland. It is evidence of a government committed to leading on the difficult issues. It is evidence of sensible reform—reform that will be achieved taking into account the different needs of different areas across this state, and reform that will be achieved with the jobs and conditions of local government employees protected through to March 2010.

The LGAQ and relevant unions have asked for legislative protection and the government has agreed. I table today a copy of the LGAQ's letter to me on this point.

Tabled paper: Copy of letter dated 26 April 2007 from Greg Hallam, Executive Director, Local Government Association of Queensland Inc to Mr Fraser relating to employment security for local government employees.

I note its response yesterday about this being a protection in the short term. I draw members' attention to the full letter that the LGAQ sent to me including point No. 3, where it sought that the commitment be limited as follows—

No forced redundancies and be restricted to the implementation of the current reforms and the concomitant organisational changes that will necessarily emanate from these reforms.

I ask that the LGAQ and other stakeholders, including the shadow minister, try to conduct this debate with a degree of genuineness and honesty.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr Seeney: You can start yourself! Your nose will grow like Anna's!

Mr Hobbs interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Can I make a comment to both the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Warrego. You were out of order yesterday. I warned both of you. If the Leader of the Opposition wants to persist mumbling and stuttering while I am talking because of his anger I suggest he put it in check. I will not tolerate the behaviour of yesterday. I warned you both and I will not resist going further than the warning if you continue with this behaviour. I call the minister.

Mr FRASER: I am happy for this to be debated any time, whether it is in this robust chamber or in a butcher shop in Richmond. In the last few weeks I have travelled to Mount Morgan, Goondiwindi, Winton, Bedourie, Toowoomba, Charleville, Blackwater, Mount Isa and Richmond. Later today I will travel to Wide Bay and on Friday to the Sunshine Coast. My message to all communities and individual Queenslanders is this: reform is necessary and this is the fairest and most transparent way that reform can be achieved. Anyone who wants to put their view, not just mayors and councillors, but individual residents, ratepayers, community groups and businesses, has until this Friday to do so, and I urge people to put their views to the independent commission.

The independent commission will then craft a new set of boundaries in much the same way as the independent commission sets the boundaries for state and federal elections. I have the utmost confidence in the skills, abilities, wisdom, experience and knowledge of Queensland and the integrity of the seven independent commissioners headed by former electoral commissioner Bob Longland. Sensible reform is absolutely necessary. There is no other course of action open to a government worth its salt.