



Speech by

## Hon. Andrew Fraser

MEMBER FOR MOUNT COOT-THA

Hansard Wednesday, 22 August 2007

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### LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORM

**Hon. AP FRASER** (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Minister for Local Government, Planning and Sport) (5.45 pm): I move the amendment circulated in my name.

That all words after 'Parliament' are deleted and the following words inserted:

Notes—

- the phenomenal, nation leading growth occurring in Queensland
- that referendums are not held to determine state and federal boundaries
- that rates have always been determined by local governments in Queensland without interference from the State
- that Queensland needs stronger councils to guarantee the provision of future services and infrastructure; and
- the legislated protection for council employees through the transition to Queensland's stronger system of local government, and, further
- affirms its commitment to implementing the new boundaries as determined by the independent Local Government Reform Commission.

**Hon. PD BEATTIE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (5.45 pm): I second that.

**Mr SPEAKER:** It is moved by the minister and seconded by the Premier.

**Mr FRASER:** In doing so, I absolutely guarantee to the House that what this government is doing in implementing local government reform is absolutely the right thing to do and absolutely in the best interests of Queensland. It is a bit hard in five minutes to deal with all the things that are offensive, inane and untrue—

**Mr SEENEY:** I rise to a point of order. The motion that I moved dealt with providing a right of appeal and a no disadvantage test. The amendment does not address either of those issues. Mr Speaker, I would ask your ruling as to whether this amendment is not completely out of order, because it deals with completely different areas from the issues that were raised in the original motion.

**Mr SPEAKER:** I indicate that I am in my 10th year in this parliament and so are you. I think the process that has been followed tonight is exactly the same process that has been followed under both political parties in government. I therefore rule it in order.

**Mr BEATTIE:** I rise to a point of order. This is only a matter of procedure. I am concerned that these procedural matters are taking away—and I am not arguing with the fact that the Leader of the Opposition has the right—

**Mr Seeney** interjected.

**Mr BEATTIE:** Hang on, I ask the member to please not be rude for one minute. I am just raising the issue that we have now lost a minute and a half of the minister's time. I suggest that his time be restarted. I am not suggesting—

**Mr SPEAKER:** I will take that into consideration. We will set the clock at four minutes but we will give him five minutes.

**Mr FRASER:** In moving the amendment circulated in my name, I absolutely guarantee to the House and to the people of Queensland that what we are doing is absolutely in the best interests of Queensland and absolutely in the best long-term interests of the future growth that we need to manage in this state. It is difficult in four minutes—or five minutes—to deal with all of the inanities, untruths and offensive parts of the 15 minutes that have been contributed by the opposition so far in this debate, but let me commence just with the utter hypocrisy of the position taken by the member for Warrego in the last third of his speech. That was to suggest in some way that it is inappropriate for unions to be involved in the transition.

I say to all of the House that during this whole process it was preached by many a mayor and preached by the opposition that the one thing that they were concerned about was people's jobs in communities. The one thing that drove all of this was the future of local economies and people's jobs. Then as this process moves on and we seek to take account of people's interests in employment and make sure that they are represented on transition committees, the opposition reverts back to type—to the anti-union, anti-worker, anti-employee philosophy that it always practises to argue against us, including fair and appropriate union representation.

If there was ever an affirmation that what this government is doing is the correct thing to do, it comes from the analysis of the census that I tabled this morning. Over the last five years—between 2001 and 2006—there has been red-hot growth in the south-east and growth occurring up the coastline as the tree change/sea change phenomenon takes over, and growth continues in the resources corridor. That is the map of what the Local Government Reform Commission put in place. It is an affirmation of our commitment to do this and also the fact that the Local Government Reform Commission got it right. More to the point, this government was right to adopt lock, stock and smoking barrel the recommendations of the Local Government Reform Commission.

The growth that is occurring in Queensland is far above the national average. We are growing at 2.4 per cent, which is streets ahead of the national average of 1.3 per cent. We are streets ahead of our nearest other growth state, Western Australia, which is at 1.6 per cent. Ultimately, we are providing the councils of the future to deal with that growth.

The time for the politics, the never-ending interventions and the stunts of the coalition parties, at both state and federal level, is over. A taxpayer-funded Senate committee, constituted as an abuse of the federal government's majority in the Senate, is about to tour Noosa and Port Douglas. I grant you that those are nice places to visit, but to what end are they undertaking those hearings? Given the stated position of this government, I call upon John Howard to cease the abuse of his majority in the Senate and to call off the stunt that is the Senate inquiry.

I also call upon John Howard to definitively state that he will not be seeking to conduct any such moves on federal election day. If he does not do that, the truth will be out. This is about his vote; it is not about anyone else's vote. This is actually about John Howard's vote and John Howard's interests, not the national interest. If John Howard will not do that, the cat will be out of the bag.

In his bill, which does not mention local government once by the way, John Howard does not propose to change one single thing. He proposes only to peddle false hope and engage in what in my view is one of the cruelest hoaxes that has ever been seen in a federal election year. From this point forward the federal government should come clean on its intentions.

It is my firm view that the opposition also needs to start answering some questions, rather than acting like Henny Penny and declaring that the end of the world is nigh because of local government reform. They need to stop saying that they support mergers and boundary changes in some instances; that they support some but maybe not others. They should produce the list of what they support. They should take a position. The Leader of the Opposition should exercise some leadership. We would really love to see a policy.