



Speech by

Barbara Stone

MEMBER FOR SPRINGWOOD

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LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Ms STONE (Springwood—ALP) (12.31 pm): I am very happy to rise to speak in support of the Local Government and Other Legislation Amendment Bill before the House. I am delighted to talk briefly on the subject pertaining to the clauses in detail as per Mr Speaker's ruling yesterday. I want to start by setting the scene of the debate that Logan City councillors have been having in the local media on the future of local government sustainability. I believe this will give a real picture into why the latest decision to form an independent reform commission by the minister is needed. I begin with an article from the *Albert and Logan News* dated 20 December last year. It states—

If Redlands Shire Council has its way, 10 per cent of Logan could soon fall into its boundary.

Logan City Council Deputy Mayor John Grant said he became aware of the proposal during a recent Size, Shape and Sustainability review.

Cr Grant said Redlands had expressed interest in acquiring a portion of Logan in the north and east, including the Leslie Harrison Dam catchment area and the area known as Koala Coast.

He said the area was around 10 per cent of Logan and was in Division 1, 4 and 10 and included 4000 residents living in Rochedale South, Springwood, Daisy Hill, Shailer Park, Carbrook and Cornubia.

Since this is nearly the entirety of my electorate, I am not too sure where the figure of 4,000 comes from. Nevertheless, I will continue with the article—

Cr Aidan McLindon (Division 4) said the idea was "wishing thinking" on Redlands Council's behalf.

"I admire their brazen audacity and vision for something that will never come to fruition," he said.

Cr Darren Power (Division 10) said the suggestion "should not even be considered".

Cr Andrew Byron (Division 1) said Redlands would be "foolhardy" to try to acquire any land in Logan.

Obviously, the three councillors continued their Christmas cheer well into the new year and they probably had some time on their hands, because on 7 March *The Reporter Newspaper* had an article titled 'Power's bold plan to split Logan City'. The article stated—

Division 10 Councillor, Darren Power, who looks after the suburbs on the eastern side of the Pacific Highway, says the time has come for his division to leave Logan and move across to Redland Shire.

I am not too sure if he remembers that he actually has some other colleagues who assist him to look after divisions in Logan east. Perhaps he is speaking on behalf of all of them? In the article, he also states that residents in his division are subsidising the entire city and are not getting value for the rates they pay. Has he forgotten that he is a councillor on Logan City Council? This is the same council he does not believe is giving value to ratepayers. I urge him, on behalf of my constituents in his division, to take this up with the council and come out and explain to the residents what he has been doing with their rates and why they are not getting value for money. Councillor Power went on to say that he would like a fairer rates system and that he can do this because he is on the council. I ask him to take that up with the council.

I would like to quote what the mayor of Logan also said in this article. The article stated—

Mayor of Logan, Cr Graham Able, refuted Power's suggestion saying that there must be a "blue moon" in the sky or it was "April Fools day".

"I have never heard such rubbish," the mayor said.

"Where do people in these areas shop, do they drive down to Redlands Bay shopping centre, where do they play sport, in Victoria Point or at the Cornubia InSport centre," he said.

The Redland Shire Council was cautious not to buy into the potential dispute. One week later, there was another article in *The Reporter Newspaper*. It stated—

Last week's call by Councillor Darren Power for residents on the eastern side of the freeway to desert Logan City for Redlands Shire has certainly stirred the pot.

The Council is now divided on the issue with councillors McLindon and Byron giving it some support, while the rest have rejected it outright.

Remember that it was only last year that Councillors Power, McLindon and Byron had rejected the move to Redland shire. So what else do we see in this article? It stated—

While Redland Shire Mayor, Don Seccombe refused to buy into the issue, many of Cr Power's other colleagues did not hold back, even calling for his resignation over the issue.

Councillor Phil Pidgeon was also reported as saying—

"It's a ridiculous idea, but if he's serious he should call for comments from his people and if the majority want to stay in Logan he should seriously consider resigning."

Remember that one of the reasons for moving to Redland is that Councillor Power wants a fairer rates system.

Councillor Russell Lutton said it was his information that over 50 per cent of ratepayers in Division 10 would be worse off in Redlands under their current rating system.

I am not sure what Councillor Power thinks is fair about that. Once again, it certainly highlights the play that has been happening in Logan City regarding some ideas of sustainability for the council. *The Reporter Newspaper* article continued—

Cr Luke Smith was stunned at the backflip, referring to comments made just eight weeks earlier when Cr Power stated in the media that the idea of his division going to Redlands 'should not even be considered'.

He wanted to know what sort of game he was playing. The article also stated—

Cr Parker believed Power's comments were divisive for the city, and said people were confused at his ever changing position.

Deputy Mayor, Cr John Grant, was another to disregard the comments, saying there was no merit in the proposal.

But Cr Power did find some support amongst his council colleagues, with Cr Andrew Byron and Aidan McLindon showing some support.

"I will support whatever saves the residents of Springwood, Daisy Hill and Shailer Park money and at the moment switching to Redlands looks pretty good," Cr McLindon said.

I would like to remind everyone what Councillor McLindon had actually said eight weeks earlier about Redlands. He said—

I admire their brazen audacity and vision for something that will never come to fruition.

Then we go on to Councillor Byron in the article. The article stated—

Cr Byron said the comments raised were valid, and he was pleased Cr Power had put the debate in the public arena.

Well, eight weeks earlier he said—

Redlands would be "foolhardy" to try to acquire any land in Logan.

So the debate continues. One of the things that has come out of this is that the councillors have not explained to their residents why they have changed their minds. They have made no attempt to explain why they have now backflipped on their original decision of saying no to Redlands and now they want to go. Two days after this article, there was more in the *Albert and Logan News*. This is what it said on 16 March—

A Logan City councillor has come under attack from colleagues after calling for 50,000 eastside residents to become part of Redland Shire Council.

Remember that it was 4,000 to start with. Now we have jumped up to 50,000 residents going. The article continued—

Deputy Mayor John Grant (Division 3) questioned the validity of the idea in Tuesday's full meeting of council, asking whether Cr Power was aware his plan included part of Division 3.

Cr Power said he was but he was willing to omit Division 3 from the plan if Cr Grant was not happy.

What a born-to-rule mentality. Councillor Power seems very happy to speak on behalf of the residents of division 3. I wonder if they know that. I would like to know if they are happy about him speaking on their behalf.

If we look at this further, talk of his plan to shift the east side of Logan to Redlands comes only months after Councillor Power was reported—

Mr Messenger: This is the most boring speech I have heard.

Ms STONE: Excuse me, this is very important to my residents. I would hope that the member opposite would sit there in silence and be courteous in the manner in which he was probably brought up by his mother.

Talks of this plan to shift the east side of Logan to the Redlands comes only months after Councillor Power was reported in the news saying, 'The suggestion should not even be considered.' Councillor Power said his earlier comments related to only a small number of residents, but now shifting the entire eastern side would keep communities together. Councillor Aidan McLindon also said in the 20 December report that it was wishful thinking on the part of the Redlands and he stood by his original comments. His original comments were, 'I admire their brazen audacity and vision for something that will never come to fruition.' Now eight weeks later he says that he stands by those comments and that the Redlands cannot just take a slice of the city. Does this mean he wants all of Logan to go to the Redlands? I am not quite sure. I am not quite sure that he knows what he wants and I know the constituents certainly do not know what he wants.

Then there was Councillor Andrew Byron—division 1—who said on 20 December that it would be foolhardy for Redlands to acquire land in Logan, and now he declines to comment. Yet two days ago he had said that the idea was valid and he was pleased it had been put into the public arena. I ask: can we just look at Logan City Council to see a good example of why we need a reform commission?

Another week goes by and one would think that this could not possibly keep unfolding. How many more positions could they possibly take? Can the Logan east councillors keep doing backflips? Yes, they can. On 21 March *The Reporter* newspaper had another article stating—

... Darren Power has vowed to push ahead with his controversial plan to take 50,000 local ratepayers across to Redland Shire Council.

Only a week ago Councillor Byron did not want to comment. He now says that if moving to the Redlands is going to reflect positively on the area then it was something that needed to be investigated. So we keep continuing. I must say that I was getting very dizzy watching this circus. At no time have those councillors come out and explained to their residents about their decision, nor at any time have they given any information about their proposal to their divisions. At this stage all that the residents of divisions 1, 4 and 10 know is that their councillors want them to move into Redland shire, but why? We are still to find out.

While all this is going on—while Logan east councillors are performing circus acts and somersaults—yet another proposal is put forward, only this time by the mayor. The mayor has indicated that he would like to see Logan City Council reduced from 10 councillors to eight. He believes that this is in the best interests of all ratepayers and has outlined the savings that would be made by increasing the number of residents in the divisions. He has made comparisons between the other large councils and the numbers of residents that those councillors service, and has also considered the remuneration package of councillors in comparison with Logan City councillors. These two factors alone had him proposing a reduction in the number of councillors and the increase in division size. When we consider this proposal I must say that it does have merit.

So what did the Logan east councillors think about this proposal? This month Councillor Aidan McLindon revealed that he would consider running for the city's top popularly elected position at next year's local government elections if the mayor, Graham Able, succeeded in his bid to reduce the number of councillors from 10 to eight.

There is another part of this equation. Not too long ago—late last year—Councillor McLindon went out and publicly told everyone how he had joined the National Party. We are sitting here thinking, 'Are we going to see a National Party ticket for mayor in Logan? Is that what Councillor McLindon is alluding to? Will we see a National Party mayoral candidate or National Party divisional candidates?' I thought that question should be asked and I thought that my residents really needed to know, as do all the residents of Logan.

A government member: They don't know what they're doing.

Ms STONE: They do not know what they are doing; that is certainly clear and it will become even clearer to us as we go on. I have said that it needs to be made clear to the people affected by this plan and the people of Logan as a whole whether candidates running for mayor of Logan will represent all of Logan or perhaps only the parts unaffected by the proposed move to Redland shire. Councillor McLindon said that his opposition was to a proposal for Redland shire to annex only a small part of Logan. Once again, I am not too sure whether that means he wants the whole of Logan going or not. I do not know exactly what that means.

Then we have a look at what he said about his running as a National Party candidate. An article in *The Reporter* states—

The Mayor's plans to cut council numbers from 10 to eight could lead to a new contender for the top job.

If Councillor Aidan McLindon finds himself without a council seat, and his division is folded he has declared he will put his hand up for the position of Mayor.

...

In December, Cr Aidan McLindon made very public his decision to join the National Party ...

But Cr McLindon maintained if he does run, he would be running as an independent candidate, while still maintaining his National Party membership.

It is impossible for any of us to know whether they are going to keep to a genuine path and look at the benefits and disadvantages or if they are going to just keep doing backflips. What I do know is that councillors Power and McLindon actually will welcome this introduction of a reform commission because it has representatives from all political sides. They welcome this as they, too, have belonged to a political party or two or three. In fact, their political party affiliations have been very similar to their changing views on the Redlands position. On the odd occasion I have been known to call them the political weathervanes of Logan east. For Councillor Power it was Labor, then Independent, then to the National Party, then back to Independent, then to the National Party again and I am told today the wind is blowing him to Independent. Which way does the wind blow for Councillor McLindon? He was Liberal, then Independent and then he tried to get his way back into the Liberal Party but they said, 'No thanks.' Then he became a National Party member and now he has admitted that it is only sometimes, such as when he is not running for mayor for parts of Logan.

I fully support the reform commission investigating their proposal. They have put this proposal forward and the people of their divisions need to have this genuinely investigated. I also want to acknowledge that I know that this outcome presents uncertainty to my residents. However, I do know that at least it would be thoroughly evaluated and there would be a focus on a genuine outcome. Currently as it stands, this decision has been made solely on the grounds of an individual's political career.

What else has been said about this? I also know that the mayor of Logan supports the decision for a reform commission and I am sure that he will be asking for his proposal and any other work that the Logan City Council has carried out to be investigated and considered. This is what he had to say in our local media—

Logan Mayor Graham Able supports the Queensland Government's decision to launch an inquiry aimed at reforming local government boundaries and amalgamating many councils around the state.

Councillor Able said he applauded Local Government Minister Andrew Fraser for being decisive.

Deputy Mayor John Grant supports the idea. He says—

... it was imperative that the process outlined by the government was based on sound, comprehensive research.

We have long championed the undertaking of detailed analysis of all the issues involved ...

I along with some of my Logan parliamentary colleagues recently met with the mayor and the CEO to discuss a range of issues and the SSS was certainly on the agenda. I know that the Logan City Council has undertaken some meaningful research into the long-term sustainability of the council. I ask the reform commission to consider this work that they have done. At the meeting we were also told how it had been very difficult due to other councils not engaging in meaningful discussions. It was also stated that some of them actually felt the process was taking too long and moving too slowly. When we look at the conflict and the division in Logan City Council we realise that it would be very hard for them to make a decision.

On behalf of my electorate I want to take this opportunity to thank the minister because he has brought this to a head. He has stopped the circus that was happening in Logan and he has introduced a mechanism that will truly evaluate, investigate and propose genuine outcomes. With that, I commend the bill to the House.