



Speech by

Hon. PETER BEATTIE

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

Hansard Wednesday, 23 May 2007

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Local Government Reform

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.51 am): Finally, I want to make reference to the local council amalgamations issue. There is no doubt that the issue of local council amalgamations has been the subject of much debate. There have been comments in support, comments against, and a number of issues raised for further consideration by the independent commission.

For the most part it is a topic that has generated rational and well-informed debate. Unfortunately the contribution from certain members of the Queensland National Party has been disgraceful and offensive. First of all, the member for Warrego claimed it as a rushed dictatorial decision and tried to tie the announcement to Hitler's birthday. This was reported in the Bundaberg *NewsMail* on 3 May. Unfortunately, his disgraceful example was then followed by the Cloncurry Shire Council, which circulated images with Nazi swastikas and silly accusations that our government comprises fascists, Nazis and socialists, and that was reported in the *Sunday Mail* on 6 May. Not only is this offensive to me; more importantly, it is offensive to the thousands of Queenslanders and Australians whose families were in some way affected by the evil Nazi regime.

I thought that was bad enough, but yesterday the member for Warrego hit a new low. To compare our reform process to ethnic cleansing is ridiculous and incredibly offensive. Ethnic cleansing is defined as a policy for a particular group of persons to systematically eliminate another group from a given territory on the basis of religious, ethnic or national origin. On radio yesterday the Leader of the Opposition refused to censure the member for Warrego. He claimed that it was just a term or expression.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: These are simply not words to the close to one million people killed by ethnic cleansing in Rwanda, and they are not words to the thousands murdered or left homeless by ethnic cleansing in the Balkans. They are certainly not words to the many millions of Jews whose lives were destroyed by the Nazi regime. I have a pretty thick hide and I have endured my fair share of barbs and caustic comments over the years. I do not mind what they throw at me but I ask them to have some sensitivity for the victims of ethnic cleansing and the victims of the Nazis.