



Speech by

Peter Wellington

MEMBER FOR NICKLIN

Hansard Wednesday, 23 May 2007

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORM

Mr WELLINGTON (Nicklin—Ind) (7.52 pm): I wish to rise and share with members the reason I voted the way I did on the recent motion moved by the opposition. I would like to put on the record very clearly something that is very important to my constituents. I note that the first reason the Leader of the Opposition gave for proceeding with the motion is that councils can go to the next local government election in March 2008 on their present boundaries.

A number of residents in the Maroochy shire have said that they do not want to go to the election with the current boundaries—they want to join the Noosa council. Other people in the Maroochy shire have said to me personally, 'Peter, we would prefer to be with the Cooloola council than with the current Maroochy Shire Council.' Can I say for the parliamentary record that is one of the brief reasons I was not prepared to support the Leader of the Opposition's motion.

Another issue that was very important to me in my consideration was a statement the Premier made this morning. He stated—

The recommendations from the commission will be provided to the state government by 1 August. The commission's report and all of the submissions received will be made available to the public after 1 August, at which time the government will consider the recommendations before the new arrangements are put to the parliament in September.

In September every member of this parliament will be able to debate, as fully as they choose, the proposals that the government puts forward. I think that is the appropriate forum to debate this very important issue.

The Leader of the Opposition referred in the debate on the motion to the issue of referenda. I am a great advocate of referenda in Queensland. I even introduced a citizens' initiated referenda bill when I was first elected as a member of parliament. I believe there are opportunities for referenda. I certainly support the issue of referenda and giving Queenslanders the chance to have a say.

At the moment I have received very few written submissions in relation to the issue of the amalgamation of councils. I have received one detailed submission from the Local Government Association and I have received two other written submissions. I realise there is uncertainty and concern in the community but I put on the record that I realise my cousins in the Noosa shire are passionate and want to remain part of the Noosa council and some of my ratepayers in the Maroochy shire want to join them. For those residents in the Maroochy shire who want to join the Noosa council, I say that is one of the reasons I was not prepared to support the Leader of the Opposition's motion tonight. I also believe there is ample opportunity yet for all politicians to put forward their views and to debate the issues which the government has proposed when the report of the commission is actually presented to the parliament.

Time expired.