




Speech By
James Lister

MEMBER FOR SOUTHERN DOWNS

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ADJOURNMENT

Southern Downs Regional Council, Deamalgamation

 **Mr LISTER** (Southern Downs—LNP) (7.25 pm): I rise in the House tonight to talk about the issue of deamalgamation in the local government area of Southern Downs, which is a large council in my electorate of Southern Downs. In 2008 the Stanthorpe shire council and the Warwick shire council were merged. At the time it was a deeply unpopular event. I remember as the ADC to the Governor travelling around the state at that time finding many communities unhappy about the amalgamation of their shires. The community of Stanthorpe and the Granite Belt attempted to demerge from the Southern Downs Regional Council some years ago. Work was done by the Save our Shire group in that regard, but the attempt was unsuccessful.

On Sunday I attended a rally advocating for deamalgamation at the CF White Oval in Stanthorpe which was officially attended by 1,300 people. I believe more attended because not everybody signed the attendance sheet. There was a motion passed that the community supported deamalgamation. I believe that tomorrow the Clerk will table a petition with approximately 5½ thousand signatures, which is about the population of Stanthorpe, requesting deamalgamation from Warwick.

I note that the Mayor of the Southern Downs Regional Council announced yesterday that she is providing in principle support for deamalgamation and the creation of a Granite Belt regional council. She has noted that their support would be dependent upon a proper financial case being made and it having factual content. I urge the council to assist in that process by opening their books to those who are advocating for the change.

I thank the Minister for Local Government for his positive engagement with me. I understand from him that there is a process to go through. My understanding is that he is happy for those advocating for deamalgamation in Southern Downs to have access to that process and to be able to put their case to the people for the people to decide.

I would like to state for the record that as the member for Southern Downs I take this matter very seriously. I represent everyone in my electorate of Southern Downs whether they support deamalgamation, are undecided or oppose deamalgamation. I see my role as making sure that my constituents have access to a process and are able to express their will in relation to how they are governed at a local level freely and fairly. I urge all concerned to assist in this process by getting out of the way and allowing the people to have their say.