

22 August 2007

**Submission to the Inquiry into the Commonwealth Electoral Amendment (Democratic Plebiscites) Bill 2007**

I cannot believe that our elected representatives have fallen so low in integrity, as to try to dignify this piece of political engineering as a “Democratic” Plebiscite (quite apart from misspelling Plebiscite (Plebiscite) in the Courier Mail advertisements).

Will the Senate Inquiry take into account the following matters?

- The Queensland Government provided the opportunity for voluntary amalgamations.
- The Queensland Government appointed an independent Commissioner to make recommendations about the amalgamation of shires, and acted upon those recommendations.
- The Queensland Government has passed legislation implementing the amalgamation of shires.
- The proposed “democratic plebiscites” will have no effect whatsoever on the process of amalgamation of shires.
- The results of the plebiscites will be used purely as a political tool in the run up to the forthcoming Federal election.
- Will the history of other States regarding rationalisation of local government areas (a State matter under our Constitution), and the lack of Commonwealth intervention in those be taken into account in reporting on the blatant political action being proposed in this Bill. Perhaps there were no Federal elections pending, or maybe a different political party was in power in the State when it acted?
- The information on the Bill is unable to provide a financial impact statement. No matter what the cost, it will be a complete waste of hard-earned taxpayers’ funds. It is bad enough that our taxes are stashed away in “surpluses”, while needed infrastructure is neglected. This absolute waste of resources for a purely political purpose should not be allowed.
- If the Senate Inquiry is really emphasizing “democracy”, will they take note of how many plebiscites are held by the Commonwealth to ascertain public opinion on really important issues, such as the Iraq war, the split of public/private hospital funding, the reduction of university places for educating much needed doctors, etc?
- If you appointed Senators do implement the Government’s wishes, perhaps that will result in a great service after all for Australia. The public will soon see through this ridiculous political ploy and vote the perpetrators out of office.

Submitted by J.G. (Chris) Christensen