

**CR ROD DAVIS**  
COUNCILOR FOR PORT DOUGLAS

COMMITTEE SECRETARY  
FINANCE AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE  
DEPARTMENT OF THE SENATE  
PO Box 6100  
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**RE: INQUIRY INTO COMMONWEALTH ELECTORAL AMENDMENT  
(DEMOCRATIC PLEBISCITES) BILL 2007.**

**SUMMARY.**

THE 'REACTION' TO THE QUEENSLAND GOVERNMENTS AMALGAMATIONS AND ANTI-PLEBISCITE OVERKILL, HAS SEEN A FEDERAL SOLUTION WHICH WHILST HELPFUL, STILL FAILS TO ADDRESS THE KEY CONCERN OF LOCAL RESIDENTS, WHO FEEL THEY ARE PERMANENTLY LOSING THEIR SAY. THERE IS A BOLDER SOLUTION BEYOND A 'STUNT' PLEBISCITE, THAT THROUGH AEC FUNDING, COULD ADDRESS THE CORE COMMUNITY CONCERNS. THIS SOLUTION IS SIMPLY TO FUND THE AEC TO PROVIDE ONGOING SUPPORT TO PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY IN THE AGGRIEVED SHIRES.

**DOUGLAS SHIRE.**

I AM ONE OF 2 ELECTED COUNCILORS FROM PORT DOUGLAS, WITHIN THE DOUGLAS SHIRE. LIKE NOOSA, OUR RESIDENTS WERE INCENSED BY THE PROSPECT OF BEING HOMOGENIZED INTO CAIRNS. WE HAVE ALREADY CONDUCTED POLLING SHOWING CLEAR REJECTION OF A CAIRNS AMALGAMATION. PROTEST RALLIES IN PORT DOUGLAS DREW OUR COMMUNITIES' SINGLE BIGGEST CROWD IN YEARS. IN PARTNERSHIP WITH NOOSA, DOUGLAS HAS BEEN OFFERED SPECIAL 'ICON' LEGISLATION TO PROTECT THE SHIRE'S 'ESSENCE'. THE CORE OF THIS LEGISLATION WON'T FOSSILIZE OUR TOWN PLAN, BUT INSTEAD WILL HOPEFULLY DEVELOP A MODEL OF PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY THAT WILL TIE THE DEVELOPMENT FATE OF OUR SHIRE DIRECTLY TO ITS PEOPLE, VIA A COMPOSITE OF POLLING, SURVEYS, STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK AND ELECTRONIC REFERENDA. IT WON'T BE UNTIL AROUND SEPT 11 THAT THIS EMBRYONIC ICON LEGISLATION WILL BE TABLED, AS PER THE BEATTIE'S INVITATION TO OUR MAYORS ABBOTT AND BERWICK.

**ALL SHIRES HAVE THEIR 'ICONS'.**

SINCE THE BEATTIE GOVT MET WITH THE MAYORS OF NOOSA AND DOUGLAS, THERE HAS BEEN A RUN OF MAYORS FROM SHIRES ALL OVER QUEENSLAND SUGGESTING THEY TOO HAVE SHIRES WITH UNIQUE INDIVIDUAL CHARACTER, AND THEY TOO WANT A TO BE ENGAGED IN THIS 'ICON' LEGISLATION. THEY HAVE TWO STRONG ASSETS...THE NUMBERS AND THE NEED. THE ARGUMENT HERE SAYS ALL SHIRES HAVE SPECIAL CHARACTERISTICS WHICH ARE VERY 'LOCAL' IN NATURE. BUT THE 'LOCAL' IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT IS REDUCED WHEN LOCAL COUNCILORS ARE TAKEN AWAY, ALONG WITH THEIR FORUM. SO COULD THE FEDERAL GOVT INTERVENE TO RE-EMPOWER THESE PEOPLE DESPITE THE DETERMINATION OF BEATTIE AND LUDWIG AND FRASER? IF THE SUPER PUBLIC SERVICE RE-EMPLOYMENT OF ALL COUNCIL WORKERS GOES AHEAD TO RESTORE AWU STRENGTH, THIS ISSUE WILL GROW INTO FULL BLOWN FEDERAL CAMPAIGN ISSUE. AT 22 AUGUST, MINISTER FRASER'S BUREAUCRATS HAVE ALREADY ANNOUNCED THE NEW SUPER UNION, BUT AT THE TIME OF WRITING, HAVE NOT ISSUED ANYTHING IN WRITING. IF THE COUNCIL AMALGAMATION ISSUE ESCALATES INTO A WORKCHOICES TROJAN HORSE, SO TOO WILL THE NEED FOR THE FEDS TO FIND SOLUTIONS DEEPER THAN A SINGLE MEANINGLESS POLL, WHERE EVERYONE ALREADY KNOWS THE RESULTS.

## **COULD THE AEC BE USED TO SOLVE THE MANY DISENFRANCHISED COMMUNITIES WOES?**

THE 'ONE-OFF' REFERENDUM IS BAD POLITICS FOR ALL PARTIES. IT'S A CLEARLY A MEANINGLESS 'STUNT' FROM A STATE LABOR POINT OF VIEW, POTENTIALLY BLURRING THE 'SACROSANCT' FEDERAL POLLING DAY, WHERE PEOPLE WILL USE THE DAY TO EXPRESS ANGER AGAINST LABOR. THE COALITION MAY LIKE THIS IDEA, BUT DEEP DOWN, ALL AGGRIEVED COUNCILS AND THEIR RESIDENTS KNOW THE POLL IS MEANINGLESS, IF THEIR LOCAL DEMOCRACY IS STILL RIPPED AWAY. FROM A LABOR VIEWPOINT, THERE IS A BIND HERE; RUDD NEEDS TO OPPOSE BEATTIE'S HEAVY HANDED APPROACH, WHILST AT THE SAME, RUDD WILL NOT WANT TO SET UP AN ELECTORAL 'SEE RED' PROTEST ON THE SACROSANCT DAY OF THE FEDERAL POLL .

THERE IS SOME HIGH GROUND HERE, SO WHICH PARTY IS GOING TO TRY AND GRAB IT? THIS HIGH GROUND IS TOO SOME, OBVIOUS. IF THE AEC CAN FUND POLLING ON COUNCIL ISSUES, WHY COULD IT NOT GO FURTHER, AND FUND A PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY MODEL IN ALL THE AGGRIEVED SHIRES, SO EVEN IF THE SMALL SHIRES LOOSE THEIR ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES, THEY STILL DON'T LOOSE THEIR SAY. INSTEAD OF PROVIDING A ONE OFF, MEANINGLESS STUNT, WHY NOT GET BEHIND A MODEL OF PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY, WHERE COMMUNITIES GET A COMPOSITE MIX OF POLLING, SURVEYS, ELECTRONIC REFERENDUMS, ALONG WITH MEETINGS OF STAKEHOLDERS AND INTERESTED GROUPS TO PROFILE 5% TO 7% OF LOCAL COMMUNITY VIEWS BEFORE ANY MAJOR CHANGES TO THE TOWN PLANS OR 'ESSENCE' ISSUES ARE CHANGED?

CALIFORNIANS AND SWISS NATIONALS ARE INUNDATED WITH CONSTITUENT FEEDBACK SURVEYS. WITH AUSTRALIA DRAGGING THE CHAIN ON PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY, THE BEST PLACE TO INTRODUCE THE FIRST REAL FORM OF PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY, IS HERE, IN LETTING LOCALS HAVE A SAY, FOR EXAMPLE, IF THEY GET ZONED INTO A SUBURB OF HIGH-RISES.

WITH BOTH FEDERAL PARTIES ABLE TO PLAY THE \$3 BILLION BUDGETS EXCESSES TO TOP UP FUNDS WITH WHICH TO DELVE DEEPER INTO STATE AND LOCAL AFFAIRS, WHY NOT USE THESE FUNDS, NOT TO JUST PROVIDE 'ROADS TO RECOVERY' BUT TO PROVIDE INROADS INTO BETTER LOCAL DEMOCRACY. GETTING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT UNDERTAKEN IS COSTLY, BUT THEN AGAIN, TOWN PLANS ONLY SEE MAJOR CHANGES EVERY 5-7 YEARS. ONCE THE ICON LEGISLATION IS FLOATED, AND ALL AGGRIEVED COUNCILS CLAMBER FOR A SLICE OF EQUITY, THERE WILL EXIST A PERFECT FEDERAL OPPORTUNITY FOR EITHER LABOR OR THE COALITION TO ENTER THE RING, WITH AN OFFER TO FUND THE GRASS ROOTS PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY, AND BECOME THE WHITE KNIGHT TO ALL ANGERED SHIRES, WITH A LONGER TERM, MORE MEANINGFUL SET OF PERMANENT PLEBISCITE TOOLS.

YOURS SINCERELY.

COUNCILOR ROD DAVIS

A PRIVATE SUBMISSION, **SEEKING ALSO TO MAKE A DEPUTATION TO THE CAIRNS SITTING OF THE INQUIRY ON SEPTEMBER 3.**