

From: Kelsey Neilson
Sent: Thursday, 23 August 2007 2:24 PM
To: Committee, FPA (SEN)
Subject: Boulia community submission

To the Senate Inquiry Committee,

As a councillor and resident in the Boulia Shire in north west Queensland I would like to applaud the Federal Government for moving to bring a halt to the unacceptable actions of the Queensland State Government with regard to Local Government Reform. These radical and rapid reforms will have long term damaging effects on people and communities across the State. One of the most disturbing issues has been the governments refusal to allow any sort of public input or say on the new boundaries drawn by the seven member commission, to the extent of writing into to law that councils who offer their constituents a vote are committing a criminal act which would give them a criminal record and furthermore, as democratically elected members, they would be sacked.

There has been nothing sensible or fair throughout the entire process which was carefully planned to be pushed through without public debate.

It could be said that if the government had not carefully removed the right to referendum on boundary changes from the Local Government Act and the proper process had been followed, new mutually agreed boundaries could have come about, within a reasonable time.

People in Queensland should be, and many are, outraged at this governments blatant attacks on our democratic rights as Australians.

Despite an overwhelming out pouring of opposition in many forms from right across the State, the government has refused to listen or consider the will of the people.

The government needs to be investigated as to the level of planning undertaken without the knowledge of local government that took place in order to put this legislation through in such a short time, thereby avoiding debate and exposure. The terms of reference given to the independent seven member commission also need to be investigated to gauge whether they were broad enough to be able to consider the social, historical and community aspects of reform of this magnitude.

There has been no evidence of large scale amalgamations being anything more than marginally financially beneficial anywhere else in Australia or in fact the world (that could be produced by the State). Many places are now deamalgamating after enormous cost both financially and socially.

So what is the real reason for these drastic and sudden changes?

I have attached a number of submissions from the Boulia community. Whilst our Shire's boundaries were unchanged and we retained two division, we did lose 3 councillors. Our community was hugely relieved that our council will continue to function in our town. However, the issues that we faced if amalgamated are the same for affected outback shires whose communities will be decimated by these reforms. Our submissions will Im sure mirror theirs and thereby give the overall submissions more substance and credibility.

I hope that the short time frame given for people to get submissions to the inquiry does not limit the numbers.

Once again I thank you for the opportunity to contribute and look forward to the findings of the inquiry.

Yours truly,
Kelsey Neilson