

# **EDV ACTION GROUP INCORPORATED**

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24<sup>th</sup> August 2007

Committee Secretary  
Finance and Public Administration Committee  
Department of the Senate  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Sir/Madam,

## **Submission Regarding the Commonwealth Electoral Amendment (Democratic Plebiscites) Bill 2007**

The Eumundi, Doonan, Verrierdale (EDV) Action Group is a community based incorporated organisation that represents 3,000 electors in the areas of Eumundi, Doonan, Verrierdale and West Peregian (formerly Weyba Downs). These areas are situated at the far northern end of the Maroochy Shire adjoining and adjacent to the boundary with Noosa Shire.

Since 2004 (prior to the last local government elections) our group has been campaigning to have the above named areas removed from Division Six of Maroochy Shire and a boundary change implemented in order for these areas to become part of Noosa Shire. To support our case, an extensive and detailed submission was prepared by us, for both Noosa and Maroochy Councils and presented to them in January 2006 (Executive Summary enclosed). This submission clearly showed that more than 80% of local residents and 87% of businesses in these areas were in favour of this move on strong community of interest grounds. (It is of interest to note that the issue of boundary change in this area has a history dating back to the 1920's).

Noosa Council supported our proposal and in a recent submission to the Local Government Reform Commission (LGRC) of Queensland, recommended that the above named areas as well as Peregian Springs be part of an expanded stand-alone Noosa Shire. Our own submission to the LGRC also argued for this outcome. Additionally, we understand that the electors of Peregian Springs and Coolum (presently part of Maroochy Shire and adjacent to Noosa) also supported this move.

### **Terms of Reference**

In reference to the proposed amendment to the Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918, we fully support the Bill. We believe that it is essential for local authorities to be able to call for a plebiscite on this issue, or any other issue which profoundly affects their constituents. We are outraged that the Queensland Government is not acting in accordance with **the will** of the people by forcing amalgamation upon them and denying them their democratic right.

It is also outrageous that democratically elected Local authorities should be faced with dismissals and/or fines if they fail to act in accordance with the Queensland Government's edict by allowing their constituents to express **their will** via a plebiscite. Should a plebiscite be conducted by Noosa Council we firmly believe that it would yield an overwhelming result opposing amalgamation and supporting an expanded stand-alone Noosa Shire. Approximately 32,000 submissions to this effect were sent to the Local Government Reform Commission of Queensland in May of this year and were ignored. Under the Terms of Reference of that Commission Noosa Council should have been exempt as it is financially strong, viable and sustainable and hugely supportive of its community of interest.

### **Our Dilemma**

The areas that we represent wish to be part of an expanded stand-alone Noosa Shire and Noosa Council wishes to include our areas within its boundaries. Should Noosa Council conduct a plebiscite we would not be included as we are presently, not in that shire. If Maroochy Council conducted its own plebiscite, we would be swamped as Maroochy has a population of more than 149,000 (2006 figures) and our supporters total 3,000. We would be totally disenfranchised as Maroochy Council will not give us any power and has not been in favour of a boundary change.

We propose that there are two ways of overcoming this dilemma.

The ambit of the terms of reference be extended to allow:

1. the above named areas to be included in a Noosa Council plebiscite owing to their strong links and their shared community of interest.
2. the above named areas be allowed to conduct a plebiscite of their own funded by the Australian Electoral Commission.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Johanne Wright".

**Johanne Wright**  
**President**