

From: Alex Harris

Sent: Friday, 24 August 2007 7:40 PM

To: SeniorClerk, Committee (SEN)

Subject: submission to the Senate Committee Inquiry into the Commonwealth Electoral Amendment (Democratic Plebiscites) Bill 2007

Dear Sir/Madam,

Please accept this submission to the Committee.

What Peter Beattie is doing on the subject of Council amalgamations and the Traveston Dam are the biggest threats to democracy this country has seen. It is inconceivable that despite (perhaps even because) the entire local community is against both, that our right to be heard let alone object, be removed.

It seems that the esteemed Member of Parliament, the Hon. Peter Beattie, has forgotten the very reason he is in parliament - to represent the people. He was elected to do so. But right now he is hell bent on destroying the very fabric of communities in which he has no seats to lose (politically).

We know the reasoning behind the council amalgamations and we know that not a single so-called reason applies to Noosa. Noosa is a financially strong council. Its rate base is low but it delivers significant services and fulfils its obligations in terms of strict development controls, protection of the environment and principals of sustainability - which hangs on our population cap. It is in all ways, a most effective and efficient council.

The only area in which anyone could accuse Noosa council of not being efficient would be in the time it takes for building approvals. And therein lies the reason behind the council amalgamations and the sole reason Beattie rammed this legislation through, and why he is so desperate to lock it down. The property developers want to get their hands on Noosa.

It is a fact that if Noosa is amalgamated, it will come under Maroochy planning guidelines. Noosa will lose its population cap, its low rise development and urban footprint restrictions, its significant green space and pristine A rated river. These items are fundamental to Noosa remaining a sustainable community, and instead of holding Noosa up as an example to follow as all governments should, Beattie is handing Noosa on a platter to the developers.

The Qld Property Council wrote the report that claimed efficiency could only be achieved through amalgamation, in 2004. It is property developers behind the amalgamations and Beattie's desperation to force Noosa into Maroochy is highly, highly suspicious.

His actions of threatening (and even legislating) to fine councillors that arrange for democracy to see its course, his threats to sack councils that object to amalgamation, are illogical, emotional and desperate measures.

Having lived in several countries and travelled extensively, I can say there are two things that I value above all else as a proud Australian. The first is freedom: Freedom of choice, freedom of speech, freedom to object. The second is the genuine democracy that Australia is. For all its flaws, it works. The only joy in all of this is the strength of the democratic principal being demonstrated by residents of Noosa. It is a most active, vocal and united community in defending its democratic rights.

I pray that you too, will be active, vocal and united in protecting that democratic right for all Australians.

Sincerely,

Alex Harris