

The 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**

We live in the semi-rural area of Eumundi at the far northern end of Maroochy Shire. Our home is 200 metres from the boundary with Noosa Shire. We have very strong links with Noosa Shire for it is our Community of Interest. We share Noosa Council's attitudes and philosophies towards environmentally sustainable development and we applaud its efforts to keep Noosa a special place, a very "green place", free from high-rise buildings, traffic lights and unsympathetic subdivisions.

We have no links with Maroochy (in fact we deplore its Miami-style development philosophy) and have felt for some time that our Local Councilor has no interest in representing our wishes. We are not alone in this because most other people in this region feel as we do.

We are supporters of the Eumundi, Doonan, Verrierdale (EDV) Action Group Inc. which has worked tirelessly since 2004 to effect a boundary change between the two shires so that the above named areas can become part of Noosa Shire. The Noosa Council has supported its efforts in this regard but Maroochy Council has never been in favour of it. We understand that EDV is lodging a submission to the Senate Committee on behalf of its members.

When the Size, Shape and Sustainability Review (SSS) was instituted by the Beattie Government the EDV prepared a substantial and detailed submission to put our case for a boundary change. An exhaustive survey of residents and businesses in these areas was conducted in preparation for this submission. It was found that more than 80% of residents and 87% of businesses were in favour of a boundary change.

We understand that surveys of the residents in Peregrine Springs and Coolumbia yielded similar results. These two areas are coastal regions which are situated adjacent to Noosa Shire.

When Premier Peter Beattie announced that there would be forced amalgamations the SSS Review was abruptly disbanded and our hopes of becoming part of Noosa Shire were dashed.

Addressing the Terms of Reference

We strongly support the proposed amendments to the Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918. Residents in our area, and in fact, residents all over Queensland are appalled that they have not been given a say in this most important matter. We acknowledge that there are some Councils that wish to amalgamate and should be

allowed to do so. However unwilling Councils should not be forced to do so dictatorially and certainly not without being asked. Furthermore we find it outrageous that a democratically elected Local Council should be dismissed (and its Councillors fined) simply because it wishes to give its constituents a say in this matter via a plebiscite/referendum. People everywhere are outraged that democracy has been so arrogantly and abruptly extinguished. We applaud the efforts of the Australian Government in initiating these amendments and we wholeheartedly endorse them.

Community Support Action

The residents of the above named areas have supported Noosa Council's fight to remain a stand-alone but expanded Shire. To this end approximately 32,000 submissions were lodged with the Local Government Reform Commission arguing that the present boundary should be extended to include the areas of Eumundi, Doonan, Verricdale, Peregian West (formerly Weyba Downs), Peregian Springs and Coolumb. There is a very strong sense of community in this area. The vast majority of residents here support the "Noosa philosophy" and fervently wish to be part of the Shire with which they share common values.

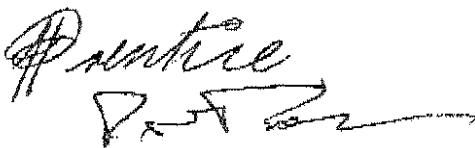
Residents of these areas firmly believe that if a referendum was conducted by Noosa Council it would yield an overwhelming result saying NO to amalgamation and YES to an expanded, stand-alone Noosa Shire.

Accordingly, the residents of the above named areas would very much like to be included in a possible referendum conducted by Noosa Council. However as these areas are not part of Noosa Shire this may not be possible unless special provision is made to enable Noosa to include these areas.

Similarly, the residents of these areas would see no benefit in participating in a Maroochy Council referendum because their votes would carry no weight as the combined population of the above named areas is less than 8,000 and the population of Maroochy Shire is more than 149,000. Maroochy Council wont give them any power and they would be completely disenfranchised.

Recommendations

We would strongly recommend that the Committee for Inquiry broaden its Terms of Reference in order to allow residents such as ourselves (and others) the opportunity to make our vote count. This could be achieved by allowing Noosa Council to include our areas in its referendum or by enabling us to conduct our own referendum financed by the Australian Electoral Commission.



Paul and Adrienne Prentice