

24 August, 2007

Committee Secretary
Finance and Public Administration Committee
Department of the Senate
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Sir/Madam,

**Re: Submission – Inquiry into the Commonwealth Electoral Amendment
(Democratic Plebiscites) Bill 2007**

Taroom Shire Council hereby presents its submission to the Senate Inquiry into the Commonwealth Electoral Amendment (Democratic Plebiscites) Bill 2007.

Your consideration of this submission is respectfully requested. We would be happy to provide further information at a public hearing should you deem this necessary.

If I am unable to attend the public hearing due to the Local Government Conference at the Gold Coast ending on Thursday 30th, a Councillor will attend.

Yours faithfully,

Don Stiller
Mayor
Taroom Shire Council
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TAROOM SHIRE COUNCIL

Submission to Senate Inquiry into the Commonwealth Electoral Amendment (Democratic Plebiscites) Bill 2007.

This submission is based on deliberations of the Mayor and Councillors of the Taroom Shire Council in relation to the Queensland State Government's Local Government Reform process and the Commonwealth Electoral Amendment (Democratic Plebiscites) Bill 2007.

The Taroom Shire Council agrees with the amendment to the Commonwealth Electoral Bill which seeks to allow the Australian Electoral Commission to undertake any plebiscite on the amalgamation of any local governing body.

However, while we accept this amendment will enable a local governing body to conduct a plebiscite without fear of incurring penalties or dismissal, we consider the amendment should extend to make any such plebiscite binding on the State Government.

Rationale

During the period from when the Queensland State Government's Local Government Reform process was announced on 17th April, 2007 until the passage of the Local Government Reform Implementation Bill on 9th August, 2007, Mayors, Councillors and the communities of Queensland were denied their freedom of speech and democratic rights by constant threats of dismissal and/or fines by the Premier of Queensland and the Minister for Local Government.

As elected representatives of the residents of the Taroom Shire, the Mayor and Councillors were thus unable to hold a plebiscite to allow the community to have their say on the future of their shire – their basic democratic right.

At a public meeting held in Wandoan on Thursday, 23rd August there was unanimous support to hold a plebiscite on the splitting and amalgamating the Taroom Shire.

A plebiscite, which is binding on the State is the only avenue Queenslanders have to have their voice heard by the State Government.