



SUBMISSION

To

THE SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

Inquiry into the Commonwealth Electoral Amendment
(Democratic Plebiscites) Bill 2007

24 August 2007

In recent months, many Queensland Local Governments and the residents within their areas have been subjected to the forced amalgamation of their areas. This action by the State Government has been taken without the support of the majority of people affected. It has been undertaken without consultation of the affected people. The opportunity to comment on the recommendations of the Local Government Reform Commission did not exist. The actions by the State Government have been called many things including dictatorial and undemocratic. In general it can be summed up as un-Australian.

By way of background, this Council resolved to undertake a poll of its electors to determine their views on the amalgamation of Bungil Shire Council with other Councils. This decision was made in accordance with the *Local Government Act 1993* prior to the amendments being put through the Queensland Parliament which made this illegal. Prior to the amendment of the Act, Council had ordered the relevant ballot papers and stationery for the poll and had posted it ballot papers to voters with reply paid envelopes enclosed. This occurred on 20 July. This cost \$5,000. On 17 August, Council staff shredded the 807 ballot papers still inside the reply paid envelopes due to the poll being illegal. The irony is that we are still getting ballot papers returned even though the sections of the Act which made the poll illegal have now been removed.

Other examples of undemocratic events in the Local Government Reform process in Queensland are the naming of new Council areas and the decision as to whether electoral divisions would apply to the new area. The Premier advised that the recommendations of the Local Government Reform Commission could be overturned if all affected councils in the new local government agreed. In our case, the 4 rural councils agreed on a different name for the new council and that electoral divisions should apply. The more populous urban centre did not agree to either the name change or electoral divisions and therefore the recommendation of the Commission stood, much to the disgust of rural residents.

Council supports the Bill as proposed which allows democracy and the various freedoms which Australians enjoy to be restored.



Robert Loughnan
Mayor