Chapter 6

Local Government Amalgamation and De-amalgamation in Queensland

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6.1 Introduction

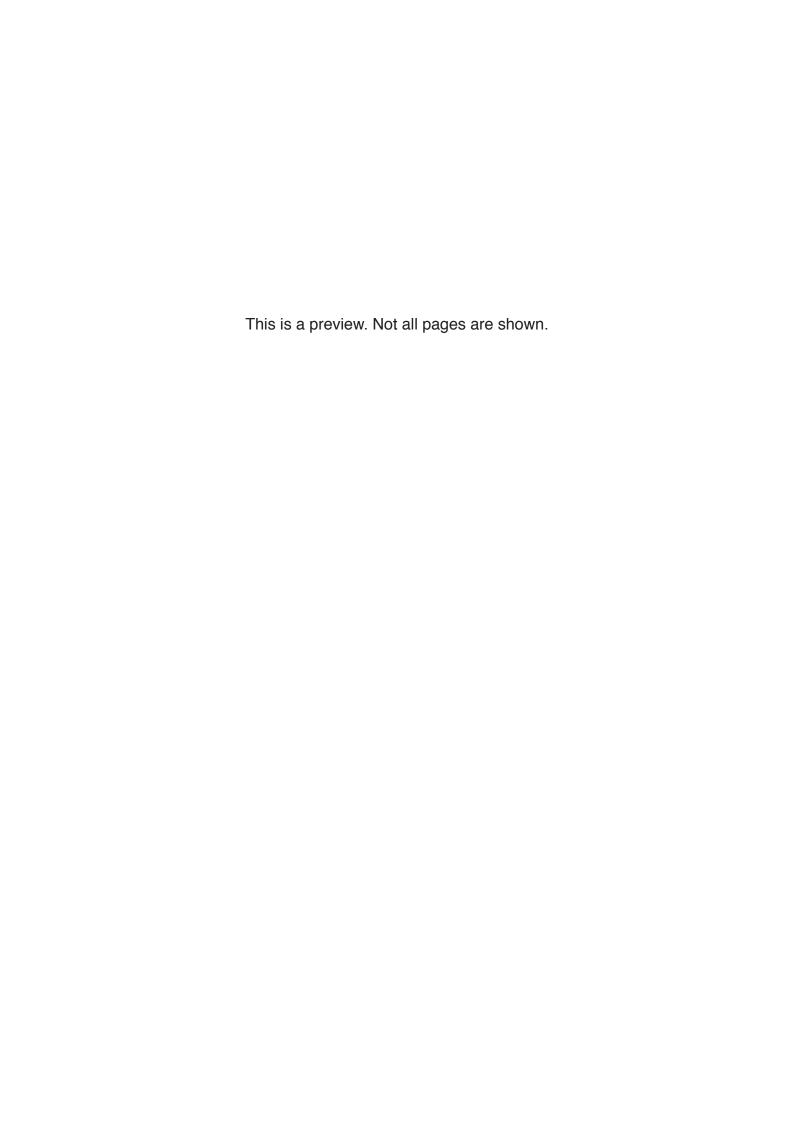
Almost 40 years ago, Cockburn (1977, p 46) suggested that:

We need an analysis that sets local government in the context of the real economic situation of the period in which we live and asks: what is its job? Such an approach involves stepping outside the conventional frame of reference and seeing local government, our old red-brick town hall, for what it really also is: a key part of the state in capitalist society. Such a step doesn't come easily. We have been taught to think of local government as a kind of humane official charity, a service that looks after us ... protects us from the misfortunes of life.

As Duncan and Goodwin (1988, pp 37-38) noted, the concept of the local state is useful from an overall political economy of local state institutions, rather than the organisational details of local governments. Rather than denoting merely a radical methodological approach, or an area of social and political research interest, the concept of the local state provides the opportunity to fully understand the crisis that emerged between the Queensland Government and local governments in Queensland during the period under examination.

Chapter 6 examines structural reform of Queensland local government over the past three decades, paying particular attention to amalgamations and de-amalgamations. It is written from the perspective of local governments (the local state), far from being passive victims of other tiers of government as is often how local governments are characterised, as being vigorous actors within the Australian federation.

Chapter 6 is divided into four main parts. Section 6.2 provides a brief overview of structural reform of Queensland local governments over the past three decades. Section 6.3 concentrates on the 2008 amalgamation of Queensland local governments and section 6.4 examines the subsequent de-amalgamation of four forcibly amalgamated local governments. Some brief concluding remarks are provided in section 6.5.



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at issue, rather it is the manner in which it is prosecuted and its applicability and appropriateness.

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