

Chapter 6

Local Government Amalgamation and De-amalgamation in Queensland

Gabrielle Walsh

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.

This is a preview. Not all pages are shown.

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

References

- ALGA News (2007), 'Australian Government Condemns Forced Local Government Amalgamation' <<http://councilreferendum.com.au/newsletter/newsletters.ALGA.NEWS.20070730>>.
- Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (1996), *Review of the Aboriginal Councils and Associations Act 1976*, Final Report, Canberra.
- Cockburn, C (1977), *The Local State: Management of Cities and People*, Pluto Press: London.
- Crisafulli, the Hon David, Minister for Local Government, Community Recovery and Resilience (2013), Media Release, 12 April 2013.
- Dollery, BE and Marshall, N (1997), *Australian Local Government: Reform and Renewal*, Macmillan: Melbourne.
- Duncan, S and Goodwin, M (1988), *The Local State and Uneven Development: Behind the Local Government Crisis*, Polity Press: Cambridge, UK.
- Friends of Douglas Shire (2012), 'A Proposal to the Minister for Local Government, Honourable David Crisafulli MP in Support of De-amalgamation of the Former Douglas Shire from Cairns Regional Council', August 2012.
- Hallam, G (2007), 'Opportunities Lost, Failed Policies Followed' in *Council Leader*, Christmas edition.
- Hoffman, G and Talbot, S (2013), *Amalgamation: The Queensland Experience to Date: Learnings, Outcomes and Sustainability? Future of Local Government – National Summit: Melbourne, 22-23 May 2013*.
- Lyons, M (Sir) (2007), *Lyons Inquiry into Local Government: Place-shaping: A Shared Ambition for the Future of Local Government*, Final Report, The Stationery Office: London, March 2007.
- McQueen, H (1979), 'Queensland: a State of Mind' *Meanjin Quarterly*, 38(1), 41-51.
- Monkkonen, EH (1995), *The Local State: Public Money and American Cities*, Stanford University Press: Stanford, California.
- Mowbray, M (1997), 'Intellectuals and the Local State: The Australian Local Government Literature' *Urban Policy and Research*, 15(4), 247-258.
- Passmore, Daryl and AAP (2007), 'I Stuffed up on Amalgamation Polls – Beattie', *The Sunday Mail* <www.couriermail.com.au/news/queensland/i-stuffed-up-on-polls-beattie/story-e6freoof-111114213865>.
- Power, J, Wettenhall, R and Halligan J (Eds) (1981), *Local Government Systems of Australia*, Advisory Council for Inter-governmental Relations Information Paper No 7, 'Queensland', Australian Government Publishing Service: Canberra, 19 August 1981.
- Tiley, I (2012), *Divided We Fall: An Insider's Perspective on Local Government Amalgamations*, Xlibris.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AMALGAMATION AND DE-AMALGAMATION IN QLD

- Tiley, I and Dollery, B (2010), *Historical Evolution of Local Government Amalgamations in Queensland, the Northern Territory and Western Australia*, ISSN 1835-761X, March 2010.
- Tucker, JD (1997), 'Queensland Local Government Rationalisation to the 1990s and Beyond' in Chapman, RM and Ryan, B (Eds), *Local Government Restructuring in Australasia*, University of Tasmania: Hobart.
- Walsh, G (2009), *The Local State: Queensland Local Government 1985 - 15 March 2008*, LGAQ: Newstead, Queensland.