

CAT BILL 2011 — COUNCIL WORKER POWERS

607. Mr P. PAPALIA to the Minister for Local Government:

I have some sympathy for the baby crying in the public gallery, because the Minister for Health also makes me cry when he does his dorothy dixers!

I refer to the Minister for Local Government's Cat Bill, which we considered in detail in this place last night, and the fact that it empowers council workers, once they have entered a cat owner's residence, to seize documents, film, photograph and audio-record the cat owner and compel the cat owner to answer questions. Why do council workers need such powers when investigating moggies, when police do not have those powers to investigate drug dealers, organised crime figures or paedophiles?

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI replied:

The member for Warnbro put out a press statement today. What a pathetic, over-the-top, sensationalist press release! It states —

The Barnett Government is passing laws that give more powers to council workers investigating cats than Police have when dealing with drug dealers, organised crime figures or paedophiles, ...

What a pathetic beat-up. What an absolute beat-up. Maybe the member for Warnbro should have stayed in Sydney, as I mentioned to him last night. I thought that the other members of the opposition and I were getting on fairly well, because they came to me with their concerns and I accommodated most of them and amended the bill accordingly. However, I tell the member for Warnbro, I will not remove the ability for local government rangers to lawfully enter premises to investigate certain suspected crimes; nor will I remove their powers to do that.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, members!

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: They need to be able to deal with situations in which kittens are bred in unsafe and unethical conditions, and in which numerous cats on properties are not being properly cared for. The member behind the member for Warnbro, the member for Maylands, made a very good contribution to the second reading debate, speaking about hoarders.

Several members interjected.

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: I have to tell members that one of the good things about the second reading debate is that I found out that members opposite cannot agree even amongst themselves! There is a disconnect between the lot of them! Some wanted more legislation; some wanted less; some wanted local governments to do more; and some said local governments would be busting down doors with jackboots to hit little old ladies over the head and rip up their furniture and dig up their papers. Some argued that unowned cats were not a threat to wildlife, but I think the member for Gosnells put that to bed with his contribution to the second reading debate. Some said that stray cats were not a problem in the metropolitan area and some said they were. Get organised! Get on one page! I think the member for Warnbro was left on his own. Most of his colleagues supported the intent of the Cat Bill.

Several members interjected.

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: Of cat owners, 98.8 per cent support registration, and the biggest argument from members opposite was about getting rid of registration, yet they want local government to police it! Of 590 submissions, about 84 per cent supported all three elements of the legislation. We have great support. Even the Conservation Council of Western Australia came forward to implore us to bring in the cat legislation. As far as I am concerned, that is what we are doing.