

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AMALGAMATIONS

**208. Mr P. PAPALIA to the Minister for Local Government:**

I refer to the Premier's Statement, in which he refers to local government reform only in terms of voluntary amalgamations.

- (1) Does the minister stand by his commitment, quoted in *The West Australian* on 6 February and *The Australian* on 12 February, to break an election promise and force amalgamations of local government councils in Western Australia?
- (2) Did the minister consult with his cabinet colleagues about this major shift in policy before announcing it?
- (3) Did the minister consult his country Liberal backbench colleagues and the member for Kalgoorlie before announcing it?

**Mr G.M. CASTRILLI replied:**

- (1)-(3) I will say first of all how proud I am to be part of a government that has a plan for better government in Western Australia. There are 139 councils in Western Australia, and about half of them are servicing populations of fewer than 2 000 people. In a couple of cases, the representation rate is one elected member to fewer than 20 people. I am committed to voluntary amalgamations as a part of local government reform, as this government is committed to voluntary amalgamations. We want to allow good, sustainable local government in the state, serving the community. The local government sector has told me that it needs and wants reform. In 2006 the Local Government Advisory Board report suggested to the then Labor government that reform was absolutely necessary. What did the previous government do about it? Absolutely nothing. This government is taking a leadership role in the reform of local government.

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Kimberley and the member for Albany have particularly loud voices. Even I, in my dotage, can hear them from up here. I call them for the first time.

**Mr G.M. CASTRILLI:** To assist in the reform process, I have set up a steering committee and some working groups. I am very confident that local governments will report back to me with their intentions by the end of August. I will wait until I get that report before considering any further action. There is a lot of support from the local government sector and the community at large.