

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AMALGAMATIONS — CABINET LEAK

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

I refer to the leaks from cabinet revealing splits in the government's council amalgamation process.

- (1) What exactly is the government's current policy on council amalgamations?
- (2) Will the minister guarantee that there will be no penalties for councils that refuse to amalgamate?

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

- (1)–(2) I reiterate the words of my friend the Minister for Regional Development. We have been working together on local government reform for quite some time because we both believe in building the capacity of local government. I am fully aware of the views of the Minister for Regional Development and his National Party colleagues on amalgamations. I am trying to progress the reform of local government because I believe, as do members opposite, that 139 local governments are too many local governments for this state. Local governments know that they need reform and the former government recognised that reform was needed. That is what I am doing. I want to build the capacity of local government. It is my responsibility to have strong, sustainable local governments in the state. I know what the situation of local government is, and I can tell members that if local governments do not take the opportunity to embrace this reform process, some of them will become irrelevant. As the Minister for Local Government, I do not want that to happen. I want strong, sustainable local government so that local governments can represent and advocate on behalf of their communities and participate in the development of Western Australia. That is my responsibility. I will not sit on the information that I have about what is going on in local government and of which the opposition is fully aware. I need to progress local government reform because we want sustainable, strong local governments that can represent not only this state, but also their communities in the future.