

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORM — AMALGAMATIONS

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

Noting that the minister has abandoned his failed forced local government amalgamation process after two years, and having wasted \$7.2 million of taxpayers' money, only to appoint a three-person panel —

A government member: Preamble.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** — to spend another year reassessing —

A government member interjected.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** I note that the minister has abandoned his failed forced amalgamation process after two years, having wasted \$7.2 million of taxpayers' money, only to appoint a three-person panel to spend another year reassessing metropolitan councils. I ask —

- (1) Is the minister demanding that metropolitan councils develop community strategic plans at an estimated cost of \$100 000 for a council, such as that of the City of Bayswater, which has a population of 55 000 people?
- (2) Is the minister aware that many metropolitan councils are now reluctant to engage in community strategic planning as demanded by the minister because they are unsure whether they will even exist after the next state election?
- (3) Would spending hundreds of thousands of dollars of ratepayers' money on the minister's community strategic planning process not be an act of recklessness by metro councils, given that the minister's panel may recommend their eradication when it reports next June?

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

- (1)–(3) Any local government looking to the hopes and aspirations of its people would have a long-term strategic plan now, but most do not have it to the whole, complete complexity of what their corporate plan should be. The member for Warnbro should know that long-term strategic planning goes right down to proper consultation with the communities and is fundamental to understanding what the hopes and aspirations of people are. Lumped with that is asset management planning, financial management planning and long-term staff planning, and that all comes together in a corporate plan. As members of the house know, I have established a three-person panel to look at the future of the metropolitan area. There are 29 local governments in the metropolitan area, including that of Serpentine–Jarrahdale. That independent panel will look at national and international trends, at economic, social and environmental aspects of metropolitan Perth, and at where this state is going, because the state has a growing influence in South-East Asia, in terms of the state and its resources. At the moment, that has been diluted across 29 local governments.

By the end of June next year they will be coming back to me to look at what the proper government structure of local government will be in the local metropolitan area and what local government will look like in the metropolitan area to bring us forward for the next 50 years. That is what they will be doing. I think it is about time it was done. It is about getting back to what is great for this state with all of us working together with one arrowhead for the benefit of everybody in Western Australia. That is what this reform process is all about. Local governments need to connect better with their local communities and do their long-term integrated strategic planning to find out the hopes and aspirations of their people. That is the long-term strategic goal that I have set to make local government better and more sustainable.