



Speech by

BARBARA STONE

MEMBER FOR SPRINGWOOD

Hansard 17 May 2001

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Ms STONE (Springwood—ALP) (6.31 p.m.): I rise to speak briefly on particular sections of the Local Government and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2001. I commend the bill to the House.

This bill will achieve a number of objectives in the areas of national competition policy, provision of local government infrastructure and integrated state planning and especially of local government electoral arrangements. This bill makes clear that a councillor must resign from local government office on becoming a candidate for election to the state or Commonwealth parliaments. This certainly has caused a lot of public debate. I know the people of Springwood certainly raised this issue with me during the recent state election campaign.

In the seat of Springwood we had a councillor who had only recently been returned to the council and who decided to run for the state seat. To many people, this certainly sent a message of, 'I don't want to be your councillor,' and I know that the people of Springwood certainly got that message. Many said that they could not trust him to do the same thing again. Could they trust him not to be a candidate in the upcoming federal election? During the campaign this person and other councillors did not stand down. Instead, the people of Logan had inflicted upon them councillors who maintained all their privileges as councillors while they campaigned as state candidates. When did they campaign, I ask. Was it in the council car with the council phone during time that they should have been devoting to the people they represent?

These were the questions many constituents of Springwood were asking. Local governments in Queensland have a level of autonomy that other states envy. In Queensland local governments are treated as governments in their own right. Given this level of autonomy, it is appropriate that they should be subjected to the same principle that applies to the members of state parliament who want to run for higher office. What is even more appropriate is that they should be subjected to what the people want. Community consultation certainly demonstrates this. A survey of community attitudes to this proposal resulted in the community in general supporting this proposal, as we have heard tonight.

Therefore, it is not only the people of the Springwood community who wonder about the councillors who run for higher office without resigning, it is very much the subject of community debate. And why, honourable members may ask. Because people believe that the role of councillor and the quest for higher office conflict! They believe some—and I say only some—seek election to council in order to seek higher office. This bill will ensure a decline in the instances of this happening and that people will get a councillor who is truly there to represent them and their issues.

To all those councillors who do not support this bill I say: you are not listening to your people. To the people of Springwood I say: I am listening; I am proud to be your state member and I will work hard to be your state member for a long time. Representing the people of Springwood as their state government representative is the greatest honour.
