



Speech by

CHRIS CUMMINS

MEMBER FOR KAWANA

Hansard 20 February 2002

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AMENDMENT BILL

Mr CUMMINS (Kawana—ALP) (10.41 p.m.): I realised at the nine-minute mark of the previous member's contribution that not much was being said. He did not make much sense after that. As the last sitting councillor voted into this place at a full general election, I have heard all the rhetoric of this inept opposition, the Local Government Association and councils. They ask: what other professionals need to resign to contest a state election? That is a very good question. Being successful in a council election or, indeed, a state or federal election does not make any one of us a professional. I consider professionals to be those who have entered into tertiary education, received their degree, et cetera. So when we hear the question, 'What other professionals need to resign?', the argument is flawed.

Yes, I received criticism when I nominated for preselection for the Labor Party as a state candidate whilst still a sitting councillor. Some, if not all, governments continue to support moves for councils to be recognised in the Australian Constitution. I support local governments and councils right across the country being recognised in the Constitution. They should be. We have had a referendum on the issue but that did not get up. If another referendum is held I would vote that they should be recognised. But if councils were recognised under constitutional law, I believe—

Mr Horan interjected.

Mr CUMMINS: I did not resign because the legislation said I did not have to. How thick is the member?

Opposition members: You resigned!

Mr CUMMINS: I didn't need to.

Opposition members: You resigned!

Mr CUMMINS: I didn't need to.

Opposition members: You resigned!

Mr CUMMINS: I take the interjection. I did not need to resign.

Mr Seeney: Why didn't you do it?

Mr CUMMINS: I did not need to resign because the legislation said I did not need to resign. The legislation had not been passed. I did not break any laws.

Mr Seeney interjected.

Mr CUMMINS: I am glad I took the interjection because I will get to that point. If the local governments were recognised under the Constitution, I believe constitutional law would need councillors to resign, as the present state legislation requires. The state Labor campaign clearly enunciated our position and intention to introduce legislation to enforce the requirement for councillors to resign if they contest a state election. I agree with the members of the opposition; the legislation was before the House but it had not been passed.

I believe that a dozen or so local councillors then contested the February 2001 general state election and there was only one successful candidate, a Labor Party candidate. Therefore my electorate and the majority of electorates across Queensland, 66 electorates, voted in the clear knowledge—it was clearly in the *Courier-Mail* and all other press outlets across Queensland—that we

were going to continue to push through this legislation. We have the electorates' mandate to support the present legislation as it stands.

I commend the member for Callide for coming up with some new terms—and I hope *Hansard* has recorded them properly—such as 'semivolunteer'. I thought a volunteer was someone who performed work for no money. We now have a semivolunteer. Another one was 'local government practitioners'. The member for Callide is a former local government practitioner. Upon being elected he becomes a practitioner. I am very happy for that. I hope he campaigns at the next election that he was once a local government practitioner. It is in *Hansard*.

Mr Seeney: What's wrong with that?

Mr CUMMINS: What is wrong with being a local government practitioner? Can the member please explain himself?

Mr Seeney: It is a term that is used.

Mr CUMMINS: Certainly it is! Being paid 60 per cent of a backbencher's salary does not make a person a semivolunteer. Many local government members receive \$500 less than a backbencher. Is this a semivolunteer? I commend the present legislation and I laugh at the inept opposition and its supporters.