




Speech By
Hon. David Crisafulli

MEMBER FOR MUNDINGBURRA

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Local Government

 **Hon. DF CRISAFULLI** (Mundingburra—LNP) (Minister for Local Government, Community Recovery and Resilience) (2.28 pm): The Newman government went to the 2012 state election proposing to re-empower local government across Queensland and I am proud to inform this chamber that that is what we are doing. One of my core beliefs is the purity of councils as the form of government closest to its people. I was happy as deputy mayor of Townsville but could no longer sit by in council chambers and see what was happening to local government. I wanted to be part of the solution.

In councils across the state, Labor reduced elected officials to puppets who were left to deliver state programs they did not want or believe in, like the dreaded waste levy. In 2007, councils in Queensland entered one of their darkest chapters when the Beattie government rounded up 156 of them and turned them into 73. Queensland councillors are not silly people. They knew that change was afoot and that there was a need to restructure, but the brutality ensured that the embers of community discontent continue until this day.

In March last year the LNP was brought to power on a promise to help communities address these wounds. Nineteen councils applied to have their amalgamations reviewed. This could never be a simple exercise, as the splitting of councils five years after the fact is a complicated and expensive proposition. But the communities that could prove there was a chance of creating two viable council areas were progressed to the Boundaries Commissioner for analysis by Queensland Treasury Corporation.

Madam SPEAKER: I would ask that the minister wrap up.

Mr CRISAFULLI: I seek leave to have the balance of my statement incorporated into *Hansard*.

Madam SPEAKER: I have viewed this. Is leave granted?

Leave granted.

Of those five, four areas went to referendums. With these communities knowing full-well the significant costs involved, all four areas voted to revert to their original shire councils. As I stand in this House today, I know that there are other areas who would also have voted to revert to their shires, but the costs that are involved in splitting councils five years after joining them would have left them financially unviable.

We now begin the next journey to make those remaining amalgamated councils work for their regions. Another proud achievement that has heralded a new relationship between councils and the state is the signing of the councils' member body's Partners in Government Agreement. This agreement, which was torn up by then-Local Government Association of Queensland President Paul Bell to protest councils' disgust at the forced amalgamations, was more than words on paper. When Premier Newman signed this agreement on July 4, 2012, it marked the start of a new era in State and Local Government relations. And it showed councils we were fair dinkum about working with them, rather than dictating to them.

On November 13, 2012, the biggest reform of Local Government in a generation was achieved when 170 amendments to the Local Government Act and the City of Brisbane Act were passed by this House. The heavy layers of regulations and rules were stripped away, once again putting elected Mayors and Councillors back in charge. The consultation that led to these changes

was one of the most comprehensive in the state's history, with me visiting each of Queensland's 73 councils, asking what councils wanted to better represent their communities. As the State braced to address the desperate financial mess left by those sitting opposite me, the Newman Government put what money we did have to good use. GraffitiStop is a classic example of a small amount of money doing the most amount of good. In a new page of our record books, all 73 Local Governments signed up voluntarily to be part of a \$2 million pool to help councils beat the expensive and time consuming blight of graffiti.

On February 4, the Local Government portfolio was expanded by Premier Newman to include Community Recovery and Resilience in answer to the disasters of this year. Since then, 56 local government areas have been activated for flood recovery assistance from both the State and Federal Governments. To anyone who has seen the devastation, the inclusion of Resilience in the title of this new portfolio is a sad reminder of what these communities have repeatedly endured in the past three years, and the need to do better. We have made no bones about the fact that we can't flood proof a State as big and diverse as Queensland. But we can build smarter, stronger, and avoid the traps learnt through the many bitter lessons Mother Nature has taught us. These events have created trying times for these communities, but with empowered local governments they are better placed than ever to rebuild.