




Speech By  
**Hon. David Crisafulli**

**MEMBER FOR MUNDINGBURRA**

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Record of Proceedings, 27 August 2014

### **LOCAL GOVERNMENT LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Hon. DF CRISAFULLI** (Mundingburra—LNP) (Minister for Local Government, Community Recovery and Resilience) (9.49 pm), in reply: I take this opportunity to hopefully clarify a few of the issues raised and also to discuss what I see as some of the key contributions. I will do it in the batting order in which they came and start with the member for Mackay. I thank him for his conversation prior to the commencement of this debate on the legislation. I go to the heart of the issue, which is the reticence of the opposition to allow the chief executive officer of a local government to be given the opportunity to be the returning officer. By anyone's reckoning, and we only have to go back in time to see this, in terms of process and cost efficiencies the last two local government elections have not been a roaring success. In this state, historically councils have run their own elections. In reaching the point that we reached, I believe we did what good governments do, which is to find a sensible middle ground. One school of thought was that the Electoral Commission should continue to run local government elections and source the on-the-ground-resources right across the state, which is always a challenge. The other school of thought was to go back to allowing councils to run the elections themselves. I believe that the government has found the perfect middle ground, which is for the Electoral Commission to run the election as the overarching body, but for the chief executive officer of the council to use local know-how to ensure, for example, that ballot papers are in sufficient supply, that the right ballot papers go to the right regions and that some people do not receive multiple ballot papers while others receive none. It is about bringing in a bit of local knowledge with the oversight of the Electoral Commission.

The Deputy Leader of the Opposition made a comment that I cannot let go without correcting. He implied that somehow some small councils would be incapable of providing the level of integrity that is needed. I reject that categorically. I know the CEOs of those communities and I know the communities themselves. In tonight's debate the only comment that should be made about the size of councils is how difficult it is in smaller communities to get somebody who is not the CEO to be the returning officer. That is the only connection between size of a council and the returning officer that can be credibly made. To somehow suggest that it is not possible to have somebody impartial because of the size of the community shows a lack of understanding of local government and a lack of understanding of small communities.

I thank the Deputy Leader of the Opposition for acknowledging the change that has been made in regard to the undivided council. I thank him for his comments. I also thank the member for Warrego for the suggestion that he put forward. I will touch quickly on the preferential voting option for mayors in those councils. I do not believe anybody could have a problem with the parliament giving every voter the opportunity to express, as best as they possibly can, their desired intention. If that desired intention is to place the number 1 on a ballot paper to select the mayor, that is great. If they want to put numbers 1, 2 and 3 on the ballot paper, that is fine. Let us give people the best opportunity to have their intentions labelled as clearly as possible when they cast their vote.

The Deputy Leader of the Opposition mentioned voter ID. That scare may have resonated a few weeks ago, but we have had the first test of this. As I mentioned, the results from Stafford clearly show that the scare campaign was not based in fact. With all due respect to the by-election, which I know was very important for the people of Stafford, I would say that there was a greater awareness of the council election than the by-election, yet still a low percentage of people turned up without ID.

The member for Warrego made an excellent contribution. He spoke clearly about the wonderful contribution made by the committee system. I know that the member for Coomera shares the view that the committee system is wonderful. In fact, through hand gestures, he is telling me how excited it makes him to have a committee system that operates in a way that, as the member for Noosa clearly says, is leading us towards a great outcome in the government.

The member for Springwood is a great friend of local government. He spoke about his experience with chief executive officers. He debunked many of the things that the member for Mackay said. The member for Springwood spoke in detail, but two words that he said resonated with me: competency and efficiency. He also touched on voter ID.

I will conclude my comments by discussing the contribution of the member for Gladstone, which was excellent. She started by speaking about respect. As a former representative at that special level of government and as a representative of her community, she has great respect for local government. She also spoke about voter ID, the chief executive officer being the returning officer and optional preferential voting. The member for Gladstone spoke about something that no-one else spoke about in their contributions, which is the issue of the suspended sentence. Tonight we are clarifying the situation that exists at present. There is a grey area in the current law. While many would argue that these provisions already exist, this legislation clarifies the matter and puts it beyond any doubt. As the member for Gladstone so articulately said, if an elected official commits a crime of a magnitude that deserves a suspended sentence, the community deserves to have the protection that comes from knowing that that person cannot represent them. I am delighted to have made my contribution to this debate and I am most pleased with the quality of the submission from the committee.