




Speech By
Ann Leahy

MEMBER FOR WARREGO

Record of Proceedings, 17 March 2016

INFRASTRUCTURE, PLANNING AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Report, Motion to take note

 **Ms LEAHY** (Warrego—LNP) (3.12 pm): I was pleased to read the Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources Committee report on the results of the audit of the local government entities. However, reading about finance and local government, unfortunately, brings back some not so good memories for me about former ALP state governments and their hostile treatment of local government. I could not help recalling how the Beattie Labor government took a billion dollars in grants and subsidy funding from local governments over a period of 10 years. I see the report mentions another word—de-amalgamations. Who could forget the treatment of communities and local governments across the state following the ALP government's forced council amalgamations in 2008? I can tell members that in my electorate and in regional Queensland they still remember the way their communities were treated and they will not forgive the Labor Party for what happened to their hardworking, community minded councillors.

Council amalgamations were supposed to make councils more financially sustainable, so after finding in this report that there is a total of \$72 billion worth of infrastructure assets managed by local government, I expected to find a combined level of debt figure that councils are incurring. I note that this figure is not reported in this report and the debt is reported in terms of ratios, and the Auditor-General does not have an opinion about the appropriateness of ratios or the council's future sustainability. I find that to be a very interesting statement from the Auditor-General. I hope the committee was advised of the total amount of debt for local governments in Queensland. It is just as important to keep track of what government is spending as it is to know what the debt is for future generations and what they may have to pay back.

I note the department of local government has been conducting sessions for councillors who are considering contesting the 2016 local government elections. A number of those sessions were held across my electorate. I was pleased to meet with the departmental officers, and they did quite a number of sessions and quite a number of candidates attended those sessions. I believe there will be some changes at the forthcoming council election, particularly in my electorate and also across Queensland. I hope we will see the department back very soon supporting and helping our new councils with their responsibilities.

Given that the 2016 local government election is this Saturday, I wish to pass on my best wishes to the retiring councillors in my electorate and also across the state for their future endeavours. I would also like to thank the councillors for the hard work they have done for all of our communities. I pass on my best wishes to the candidates and councillors in Queensland who are contesting the forthcoming 2016 local government election.