




Speech By  
**Andrew Powell**

**MEMBER FOR GLASS HOUSE**

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### **LOCAL GOVERNMENT (DISSOLUTION OF IPSWICH CITY COUNCIL) BILL**

 **Mr POWELL** (Glass House—LNP) (12.54 pm): I too rise to address the Local Government (Dissolution of Ipswich City Council) Bill 2018. As many others have already said and as I suspect many will continue to say during this debate, today is a very challenging day. This is a very challenging piece of legislation for this House to be considering. It is one that none of us should be taking lightly. It is one that all of us should be thinking through the ramifications of and making sure that we put sufficient boundaries around it so that it is not done *carte blanche* to a whole range of other local government authorities around the state.

I believe there are significant boundaries in place in the legislation to ensure that, but sacking an entire council is a significant step. We must remember that there are over 500 mayors and councillors around this state. There are 77 local government authorities. The vast majority—more than 99 per cent of them—have not had any issue of complaint or any allegation of corruption or misconduct raised against them. We applaud them for the work they do. Many of them are at the coalface of political interaction with the communities. They are the people dealing with potholes out the front of people's houses. They make sure that the rubbish gets collected. They make sure our kids have libraries to go to and parks to play in. They provide an extraordinary service to our state and should be commended for it. However, like all industries and all professions, there are a number who do the wrong thing. When that number is significantly large in one particular organisation—the Ipswich City Council—steps like this that we are discussing today need to be taken.

I want to reflect on the contribution of the previous speaker who used words like 'festering' and 'systemic issues'. Something does not fester unless it is allowed to remain in a state for a long period of time. Something does not become systemic unless it has had an opportunity over many, many years to ripple all the way through an organisation. The question then is why have successive Labor governments allowed what is occurring in Ipswich City Council to have occurred? Clearly, the Labor Party has been protecting Labor's own. Even when one of its own raised significant concerns about what was going on in the Ipswich council—

**Mr Bennett** interjected.

**Mr POWELL:** I take the interjection from the member for Burnett. One has to question whether all along there has been a cover-up. I feel for every single ratepayer of the City of Ipswich. They do not deserve what is occurring now. They need certainty. They need clarification so they can move forward, get projects going and have their rates spent appropriately, consistently and responsibly. We need to take this step, but it should never have come to this.

Even when issues were raised, it has taken three attempts to get this right. The Labor government announced the suspension of four mayors and a councillor under new laws that were not in place at the time. They then issued two failed show-cause notices to the Ipswich City Council that have cost ratepayers and Queensland taxpayers significantly. Now we are curtailing the Supreme Court so that we can fix this mess—a mess that should have been fixed when we passed legislation back in May.

I briefly want to touch on the amendments to be moved by the shadow minister. Firstly, let us not forget what I have just said. This is Labor's mess. We are cleaning up a situation in a Labor run council and so the amendment to change the long title is extremely appropriate in this instance. The second one of having the interim advisory committee members gazetted is equally important. It is one thing to know who the interim administrator is, but it is also fundamentally important for the public's benefit to know who the advisory committee is. Let us face it: the administrator and the advisory committee have one of the most important jobs to do in the state of Queensland at the moment, and that is to restore the faith of the people of Ipswich in their elected officials and in their council offices.

That is going to take significant effort. It is going to take a significant community engagement approach to regain that confidence that the ratepayers of Ipswich want and rightly should be able to place in their council, in their councillors and, ultimately, in their mayor. For the benefit of the Ipswich City Council and for the broader state, it would be good to know who the advisory committee members are. They have a significant task—a very important task—ahead of them. It is one that I think both sides of politics happily wish them all the best in. We want to see the matters rectified in Ipswich. Come the 2020 elections for local government, we want a council and a mayor elected who all of Ipswich can rejoice in and who know they have certainty and support for that coming four-year term.

I finish by noting that we should not be getting to this point in future. We have legislation in this state that has successfully allowed state governments to remove councils in the past with review by the Supreme Court if necessary. When warnings such as those given by the member for Bundamba are made, they must be taken seriously, they must be acted on and we should not have to get to this point ever again.