



## House of Assembly

Wednesday, 29 September 2010

### LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Mr PICCOLO (Light) (15:16): Local government is in a very important sphere of government. Local government—

Mr Odenwalder interjecting:

Mr PICCOLO: Yes, I do reckon and that is because—

Mr Griffiths interjecting:

Mr PICCOLO: Yes, they do.

Mr Odenwalder interjecting:

Mr PICCOLO: That is right.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Kenyon): Order!

Mr PICCOLO: Mr Acting Speaker, could I have my five minutes without interruption? Is that possible?

The ACTING SPEAKER: You should, member for Light.

Mr PICCOLO: As I said, local government is important. It is a sphere of government that has the most direct daily impact on people's lives. Local government is also the sphere of government

which is closest to the people and, as a result, we need to ensure we have a very effective local government at all times. The paradox though is that, at times, it is also the sphere of government which is least accountable, and that is why I believe there is need for ongoing reform.

Yesterday in this place, the member for Finniss raised his concerns about the accountability of the Burnside council and, in particular, councillor Jim Jacobsen. I have no difficulty with the way that the member for Finniss portrayed councillor Jim Jacobsen; I would concur with him.

The Hon. M.J. Atkinson: Absolutely spot on.

Mr PICCOLO: Thank you, member for Croydon. I would concur with him. The sad thing is if councillor Jim Jacobsen should be elected mayor of the City of Burnside, in my opinion, both the council and the community will continue to suffer. Based on councillor Jim Jacobsen's performance over the years and, in particular, more recently, he will continue to be a negative influence on that council and community. I agree with the view of the member for Finniss of councillor Jacobsen. Where I strongly disagree with the member for Finniss is in his criticism of the minister (Hon. Gail Gago). His criticism is both wrong and, more importantly, inappropriate. In relation to the inquiry, the member for Finniss said:

“Minister Gago has dismally failed—or been manipulated—in a pathetically inadequate response to

the Burnside council issues, resulting in a mess.”

He goes on to say:

“What has minister Gago done? Absolutely nothing...What has minister Gago done? Nothing.”

More worrying though is when he talks about councillor Jacobsen. He says:

“If minister Gago was worth a pinch of salt, she should be able to remove such puerile people from councils under her jurisdiction. Minister Gago has failed absolutely dismally to ensure local government in Burnside has been able to run [effectively].”

The comment that the minister 'should be able to remove such puerile people from councils under her jurisdiction' is completely inappropriate and undemocratic.

The Local Government Act sets out the procedure to deal with the concerns about the capacity and functionality of a local council. In my opinion, and as far as I can tell, the minister has followed due process as established under the act and to suggest that she has done nothing is wrong and misleading. The minister has done all that is permitted by law and one would hope that the minister would act according to law – and she has.

More concerning is the member's assertion that the minister should have the power to remove people she believes are puerile. That is of greater concern. As I said, Mr Jacobsen is a disruptive ego-driven local council member who has never quite recovered from the

rejection by his community when he was mayor. That is sad for him, sad for the council and sad for the community.

The current process at the disposal of the minister enables light to be shone on that council. This light enables the community to obtain an insight into the operation of the Burnside council. This is the proper role for the minister, which in my opinion she has followed.

Barring allegations of corrupt or any other unlawful behaviour, the decision as to who should sit on the Burnside council should be made by the people of Burnside. If they wish to elect a person who has been shown to be a wrecker, they are entitled to do so. I respect the right of the people of Burnside to elect a member who will continue to make the Burnside council ungovernable for another four years.

That is their choice. It is not for the minister to act. If the people of Burnside wish to re-elect councillor Jacobsen and allow their council to be wrecked for the next four years, that is their entitlement. It is not for the minister or for the government to actually intervene. I think it is quite inappropriate for a member from the other side to suggest that somehow a minister should, in a very undemocratic way, remove an elected member. I wonder if that is Liberal Party policy.

Ms Chapman: Show us the report!

The ACTING SPEAKER: Order!

**Time expired.**