

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION

**The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD** [6.01 p.m.]: This week the Local Government Association held its annual conference in Albury. The conference is the policy-setting vehicle for local government, and this year had 360 voting delegates, including mayors and councillors from all over New South Wales representing their communities. First, I would like to acknowledge Councillor Genia McCaffery, Mayor of North Sydney, on her retirement from the New South Wales Local Government Association presidency after six years of leadership. I have worked with Genia in my role as mayor of Bankstown and as a member of the Local Government Association Executive Committee. Genia has always been a solid voice for local government in New South Wales, and indeed in the national arena. I particularly congratulate her on being such a positive role model for women in local government. I also congratulate Councillor Keith Rhodes on his election to the presidency, Councillor Allan Smith on his election as country vice-president, Councillor Allan Ezzy on his re-election as city vice-president, and Councillor Schreiber on his election as Treasurer.

It is with great delight that I report that women councillors have increased their representation on the executive committee from 25 per cent to nearly 40 per cent. This is particularly good news as 2010 is the Year of Women in Local Government. I am also proud that this has been largely due to the increased representation of Labor women on the executive. This result is a major achievement in a sector that is renowned for its male domination. I single out for special mention councillors Darriea Turley from Broken Hill and Leigh Vaughan from Greater Lakes, who were elected to the executive for the country, and councillors Julie Griffiths and Karen McKeown, elected for the metropolitan area. They are western Sydney women and were elected to the executive for the first time. I know personally all these very talented women who work so hard on behalf of, and to further the goals of, women in local government. This hard work encompasses furthering the careers not only of elected representatives but also of women working in local government.

I must say that the Local Government Association elections were not without their controversy. I should explain for those who have not been involved in local government that it is usual practice for each party to distribute their how-to-vote tickets for the various vacancies. Why do I mention how-to-vote tickets? It is because for the election of executive members at the conference the Liberal Party had five. That is right, there were five different how-to-vote tickets. There was the official Liberal ticket and then there were the other four tickets distributed by individuals who did not like their placement on the official ticket. No wonder Liberal confusion reigns supreme!

Another interesting incident was the vote for the executive committee, when apparently 20 Liberal councillors were missing. But let me digress—I will get back to them. I am sure all

members have seen today's article in the *Daily Telegraph* about the conference struggling to establish a quorum. I can confirm that the article got it wrong. It was not a matter of councillors being too busy at the pub—no, that is much too common for the silvertail Libs. The convoy of 20 were having a very civilised lunch at the Rutherglen winery. I believe that for those back at the conference it was panic stations all round. Mobile phones were buzzing, but alas it seems that there is very little or no mobile reception at Rutherglen winery. It was too late; the councillors missed the vote. Far be it from me to suggest any Liberal impropriety, or that the councillors became entangled in vines and could not escape. Perhaps the gathering was dissecting how the five voting tickets had come about. I believe many here have heard the Latin term "in vino veritas". The Australian translation would be: Liberal councillors who lunch a lot. I wonder what the collective noun is for lunch-a-lots. Perhaps it is a Liberal of lunch-a-lots!

But, seriously, when it gets widely reported in the media that the conference struggled to obtain a quorum of 180 delegates and the missing 20 became the joke of the conference, what does that say about the commitment of Liberal councillors? As local government councillors, they should be held accountable. It is well known that there has been a directive from Liberal Party headquarters to block Labor councillors, especially in the lead-up to March. That is why there were so few Labor delegates and so many Liberal delegates at the conference. We all know that this is a vindictive short-sighted view and this appalling behaviour does not give communities a representative voice or good outcomes. If this is how the Liberals govern in local government, they clearly cannot be trusted to govern the State.