



MP floats council idea

By **GEOFF VIVIAN**



THE only Aboriginal member of the Western Australian Parliament has put the idea of Noongar people being offered guaranteed local

government representation to help settle a native title claim.

Labor's Aboriginal affairs spokesman, Ben Wyatt, a Yamatji man, has suggested the state's Coalition Government could legislate to reserve a seat for a

Noongar person on each local government council in the WA south-west and the Perth metropolitan area.

His idea comes more than a year after Premier Colin Barnett offered to settle the massive, still outstanding, Noongar native title claim over much of that region.

Mr Barnett's settlement offer is understood to have included more than \$500 million and up to 200,000ha of vacant Crown land if Noongar people surrendered their claim to land stretching from Hopetoun to Jurien Bay,

including metropolitan Perth.

Mr Wyatt said that with the WA Government focusing on local government reform, a set council position could be one option.

"I think there is an opportunity there if the Government really wants to resolve the Noongar claim," he said.

"When I speak with some of the older Noongar men and women in the south-west of Western Australia, Noongar country, I find that there is a sense of a lack of ownership or a lack of involvement in the government structure."



Western Australian MP Ben Wyatt at Parliament House, Perth.